GOD HAS SPOKEN!— REJOICE!
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"God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth."
Psalm 108:7.

THERE is an old promise concerning God's people which says, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." This text is one of the instances in which the Lord has dealt with His saints upon the lines of that promise. Read the preceding verse. David there prays, "Save with Your right hand and *answer* me." And while he is waiting for God to answer him, he remembers that God has already spoken. In effect, he says to himself, "I am waiting for an answer, but God has given it to me." Very often the response to a Believer's petition has been practically received before he presents his request—he only needs that God should open his eyes for him to see that before he called, God had answered his supplication! Indeed, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in one sense *all* your prayers—that is, your prayers that ought to be answered—are already answered, for whatever there may be that you may rightly ask of God, you really have it, since in giving us Christ, He has already given us all things! An important part of the duty of faith is to believe that you have what you ask in prayer and then you shall have it. This is blessed philosophy—may we all learn it!

Oftentimes, when we are crying to God and waiting for an answer to our petition, if we did but look around us—and if we had more acute powers of observation—if our spiritual faculties were keener and quicker, we would perceive that we already have the very thing for which we are asking. Some of you have, perhaps, been saying, "Oh, that we were, indeed, the Lord's people who have their prayers answered even before they offer them! Well, then, turn to the Book and you will find that the Lord has there told you that you are His if, indeed, you are believing in His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God has already given you, by that most sure word of testimony, the clearest possible evidence of your personal interest in Christ! If you are asking for some further kind assuring word to soothe your fears to rest, turn to the Bible, for there is in it the very Word of God you need. So, seek it out, for I may truly say of God's Revelation in this blessed Book—

"What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

This leads me to the practical remark that, possibly, the very thing that you have been praying for so long, you may already have obtained—and God may not intend you to pray any longer about it, but may say to you, as He did to Moses, "'Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.' Believe that you have the blessing for which you are asking and go forward in that belief! The time for praying about it has passed. This is the time for grasping the blessing by faith and using it to My praise and glory." So it seems to me, in our text, that David had prayed, and then suddenly remembered that he had already received the very thing for which he had asked. So he shakes himself from the dust and cries, confidently and jubilantly, "God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth."

I. Three things are clear in the text and the first is that GOD'S WORD IS THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH—"God has spoken in His holiness." That is the solid basis on which faith builds.

To me this is a very precious Truth of God, even for the very childhood of Christian life—*"God has spoken."* He has not merely put before us His works, which are like hieroglyphs, difficult to read at times, but He has actually broken what otherwise had been eternal silence and spoken to us in words that even a child can comprehend! Unbelieving men still say, as they did of old, "'Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' If there is a God at all, there is a great gulf fixed between Him and men; how can we know anything about Him?" Ah, Sirs, that great gulf will always be between you and your God if you do not believe in the Revelation that He has given you in His Inspired Word! Until that terrible day comes, when He shall speak in thunder-tones of wrath and summon His guilty creatures to appear at His judgment bar, you will not hear His voice, except as it speaks to you in His Word.

But "God has spoken in His holiness" and we ought to be thankful that we have not to serve a God who is dumb. He spoke, in the garden of Eden, when our first parents sinned against Him. To the serpent He said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." It was a message of hope to the world when God spoke that great promise concerning His Son. Since then, "at sundry times and in divers manners," God has spoken unto men by His servants and "by His Son," of which we have the record in this blessed Book. And, since it is a message of mercy and love to us, we ought at once to rejoice that "God has spoken." Sinner, you are pleading with God for mercy and He might well refuse to answer you even a word, but, "God has spoken" already, and the answer to your petition is already recorded in His Word! If, when Adam sinned, He had turned away from our rebellious race and said, "From now on I will hold no communication with you until that day

when, with fire and sword, I punish you for your many transgressions," we would have had no cause for complaining against Him. Certainly we could not have impeached His justice or found fault with His severity! But, "God has spoken." He has broken the silence which would have been death to us and, blessed be His name, He has Divinely spoken to us by Him who is THE WORD OF GOD—by God's great *LOGOS*—the only voice by which He could fully speak out His whole soul so that men might be able to comprehend Him! And it is upon what God has spoken to us, by His Son, that we have to place our faith, so that, had He not spoken, we would not have had any foundation for our faith—so this is our joy, that "God has spoken."

Many of us are, I trust, at least somewhat acquainted with what God has spoken, though I wish that we were all more perfectly acquainted with His Word and that our confidence more fully rested upon what the Lord has therein revealed to us.

Why is it that you are able to confide in God's Word? Surely it is because you know that *for God to speak is for Him to do as He has said.* By His Word He made the heavens and the earth—and it is by His Word that the heavens and the earth continue as they are to this day! When He shall "once more" speak, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, then shall He unmake what He made and cast away the worn-out vesture, for, as the Old Hundredth Psalm reminds us—

"He can create and He can destroy."

God's speaking is very different from man's. Very often man talks about something that he says he will do, but when he has talked about it, that is the end of the matter as far as he is concerned. Man has spoken. Oh, yes, but you can never be sure that with the talking tongue will go the working hand! He who is quick to promise is not always so prompt to perform. We have many proverbs which remind us that men set light by one another's promises, and well they may, but we must never set light by the promises of God. "He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." So, beloved Brothers and Sisters, if there is a promise of God to help you in a time of trouble, or to preserve you in the hour of temptation, or to deliver you out of trial, or to give you Divine Grace according to your day—that promise is as good as if it had been already performed since God's Word shall certainly be followed by the fulfillment of it in due season! I beseech you, then, as you read the promise, to say to yourself, "It is done as God has said." If any man of means, with whom you do business, gives you his check for the amount he owes you, do you not say that he has paid you? Yet he has not handed to you even a penny in cash—no notes or gold and silver coins have passed between you—but you rightly say that he has paid you because his signature on the check is as good as money. And is not God's Word as good as man's? Yes, that it is, and far better! Then, so regard it—oh, for faith to do so at this very moment!

Further, *what God has spoken shall never be reversed.* "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."

What He has spoken in public, He does not reverse in private. His own declaration is, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." Whatever there may be in the sealed scroll that records God's purposes in predestination, there cannot be anything there to contradict what is written on the open scroll of Divine Revelation. As to the Doctrine of Election which often terrifies seeking souls, it never should do so since there can be nothing, in the secret counsels of God, contrary to the plain promises of God recorded in His Word! He has not said, "Yes," in one place, and, "No," in another. And if He says, "Yes," today, He will not say, "No," tomorrow. He Himself said long ago, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Once let any message go forth out of His mouth and it shall stand fast forever!

Oh, then, what a firm foundation for faith this is! First, "God has spoken," and that is as good as if He had already done as He has said! And, secondly, "God has spoken," and that which He has said can never be reversed! If there is a promise in the Bible made to a penitent sinner—and you are a penitent sinner—that promise must be kept to you! If there is a blessing promised to a believing soul and you are a believing soul—that blessing is sure to you. If God has promised to sustain you when you cast your burden upon Him, and to bring you through the furnace with your hair unsinged, He will do it, for He has never yet been false to His promise and He never will be! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His Word shall ever fail. It stands, as an immutable decree, that Jehovah's will shall be done—and this is Jehovah's will—that, of all that He has promised to the sons and daughters of men, not one syllable shall ever fail! Oh, how blessedly faith ought to rest on such a foundation as this!

Our text says, "God has spoken *in His holiness*." Now, it sometimes happens that our greatest difficulty in believing a promise of God lies in His holiness. There is, for instance, a promise of pardon to the soul that believes in Jesus. We think of stern Justice, with her majestic, yet severe look. In our heart of hearts we reverence her and we ask, "How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?" We have, at times, had some idea of the perfect purity of God—the purity of Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean and who charges His angels with folly. We have trembled, sometimes, as though we were dissolved into nothingness when we have thought of His spotless purity—and we have said, "Can this holy God really mean to receive such sinners as we are whose very clothes, as Job says, abhor us? Can He purpose to bring us to His own right hand in Glory that we may be among the courtiers in His heavenly Kingdom?" Yes, He does mean to do even that! Yet the thought of His purity makes us wonder how it can be done.

Now, the joy of David was that when God spoke concerning that glorious—

"Stem of Jesse's rod"—

He spoke it "in His holiness," that is, in His whole-ness, with His whole perfectly pure Nature. He knew all that David then was and all that David would be, yet He saw it to be consistent with His infinite perfections to make, even with such a man, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And, beloved Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord entered into Covenant with Christ concerning those whom He gave to Him to be His portion forever and when, in that Covenant, He wrote down blessings exceedingly great and precious—and made promises so vast that we cannot, at present, form any estimate of their full value—He knew quite well what He was doing and He did it, knowing all about your doubts and fears concerning your sinfulness and His own holiness! And now, without in the least marring His perfect purity and inflexible justice, "God has spoken in His holiness" to poor lost sinners and said that He will save all of them who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son! And He has also "spoken in His holiness" to His poor imperfect children and said that He will bless them, and that He will not turn away from them to do them good. This is the Covenant that He has made with His people—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them. And you shall be My people, and I will be your God." All this, which "God has spoken in His holiness," He will do without obscuring that wondrous attribute, or marring the glory of His adorable perfections!

II. Now, in the second place, let us notice THE JOY OF FAITH—"God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice."

Are any of you heavy of heart just now? If so, I hope you will catch the spirit of David when he uttered these words. You ought to be glad that "God has spoken in His holiness," and you will be glad if you feel and know that He has spoken to you. "God has spoken; I will rejoice."

Observe that this joy, which faith has, is *a joy in the very fact that God has spoken*. Though nothing may yet have been done for us, God has spoken and, therefore, our heart rejoices! Every Divine promise, if it is rightly viewed by faith, will make the heart leap for joy. Suppose you do not need that particular promise just now, rejoice all the same, for you will need it by-and-by. If the promise is not made especially to you, yet it is made to somebody—therefore rejoice that "God has spoken" so as to meet the needs of somebody else's case. What if the blessing is too high for you to reach at present? Nevertheless, rejoice that there are mercies stored up for future and more advanced stages of your spiritual growth. And suppose the mercy is one that you long ago enjoyed? Still be glad that you enjoyed it in years past and so rejoice that "God has spoken." Oh, what hymns of praise there are in this blessed Book if this is the theme of our song—"God has spoken"! Then the very first pages of Genesis ought to make us rejoice and we *will* rejoice because we know how He made the worlds. Pass along through every page and feast your eyes upon every line of every page—and say all the while, "'God has spoken in

His holiness; I will rejoice.' This shall be the subject of my joy all day long and, in the night watches, will I rejoice in His Word."

You perceive, as I have said, that *this joy comes to the Believer even before the promise is literally fulfilled to him.* It is the joy of faith. You have not yet had the promise fulfilled to your sight, but, seeing that it is fulfilled to your faith, begin to be glad about it! Praise the Lord for all the good things He has laid up in store for you! Take upon your lips the words of that sweet singer who wrote—

"And a 'new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set—
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet."

When you are ill, bless God for the health you will enjoy when you get well! When you are down-hearted, bless God for the joy that you will have when He shall again lift up the Light of His Countenance upon you! When you go to the grave of a Christian friend, bless God because you will meet that friend again! Though you cannot yet see the joys that await you inside the gates of pearl, begin to bless the Lord for all that He has prepared for them that love Him! Borrow from the eternal future—you may, for there is plenty of it. There is an infinity of joy, therefore, antedate it a little while. Send your messengers across the Jordan to bring you some of the Eshcol clusters. You may do so, for they are yours and you may have some of them, even now, as foretastes of the bliss that is yet to be revealed. "God has spoken" to His servants of the great things that He will do for them for many years to come and throughout eternity! He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He has said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Therefore, as "God has spoken," though as yet my soul abides in the land of darkness, drought and barrenness, yet, because He will fulfill His promise, my heart shall rejoice! David says, in the 11th verse of this Psalm, "O God, who hast cast us off," yet here, though he is one of the cast-offs, he says, "God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice."

Perhaps I am addressing a minister whose public labors are apparently unsuccessful. My Brother, you have been exceedingly grieved because your people have been like the children of Ephraim who "being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Well now, you must not give way to discouragement, or fall into a dull and sad state of mind. You must say, 'God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice.' Though I have not, as yet, seen any success attending my efforts, He has said, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' and I believe I shall do so, for I have often sowed in tears and sowed the good Seed of the Kingdom with many tears and many prayers. Therefore, though I seem, at present, like one of the cast-offs, and little good has come of all that I have done, yet, 'God has spoken in His holiness' and, therefore, I will rejoice.'"

I may be speaking to a Brother or Sister who is tried in another way. You, dear Friend, have not enjoyed the means of Grace as you used to do. You blame yourself for the change and it is right and proper that you

should do so. You have not now those happy experiences that you once had—neither do you enjoy such blessed visits from your Lord as you had a year or so ago. You know that the fault lies with you. Still, remember that faith is never dependent upon feeling and our confidence is never to rest upon our inward condition. Otherwise it rests on the shifting sand. But, if this is the case with you, now is the time for you to exercise faith and to say, "Though I am, as it were, a cast-off and the Word of the Lord is not just now solacing my heart, yet, 'God has spoken,' and, sinner as I am, if I am not a saint, I trust to what God has said to believing sinners and 'I will rejoice,' even though I seem to be only a cast-off."

Once more, notice that David, at the time he wrote this Psalm, had discovered *the vanity of human confidence*. He says, in the 12th verse, "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man." "My best friend has proved to be a traitor; he that ate bread with me has lifted up his heel against me. Those who said that they would never leave me and who never did leave me while there was anything to be gotten out of me, are all gone. I said in my haste, 'All men are liars,' but 'God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice.'" It is grand faith that can rejoice in God when friends go as the swallows fly away in the autumn, or drop off as the leaves fade when the summer comes to an end! That was the kind of faith that Habakkuk had when he sang, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

This is a good crutch for Mr. Ready-to-Halt—no, better than that, surely this will take Ready-to-Halt's crutches away and enable him to run without weariness in the ways of the Lord! Why, Brothers and Sisters, here are the wings of eagles for you, if you only know how to use them! "God has spoken." What a mighty power your soul will have in prayer if you go to God and say, "Do as You have said." What a sword this is to flash in the face of the foe—"God has spoken." "*It is written"* is that which makes old Rome tremble and her seven hills to quake for fear! Get a rejoicing grip of this great Truth of God and the dwarf shall become a giant, the feeblest among us shall be as David and the house of David shall be like the angel of the Lord!

III. The latter part of the text shows us THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH—"God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth."

That is, David says, "As God has given me these places to be parts of my kingdom, I will go and take possession of them." Some people's so-called faith is of this order—God has promised a great blessing! Let us go—and sleep." Their philosophy is—God's promise will be sure to be fulfilled—therefore, let us eat and drink, and not trouble at all about the matter. The Lord will have His own people and He will carry out His own purposes and decrees. They stand fast forever, so the best thing for us is to do nothing at all! God says that there shall be a harvest—so there is

no need for our sowing and we can stay in bed as late as we like." That is the kind of fatalism that many carry even into their Christianity—they make the eternal purposes and blessed promises of God to become reasons for inaction! But it is not so with any sane child of God. He girds up his loins and says, "God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth."

Whenever you look into the Word of God and read what "God has spoken" to you, *see that you appropriate it.* Suppose that He has promised you comfort—do not rest satisfied without that comfort. Suppose He has promised you joy and peace in believing—never rest till you have that joy and peace. Suppose He has promised you complete sanctification, full deliverance from the power of evil—do not be satisfied till you are delivered from it all. Never say, "Ah, that is a constitutional sin—that is the result of my temperament." No, Brother, Sister, if the Lord has promised you the victory over your enemies, be not satisfied till you have planted your foot on their necks and they are in subjection to you. Some Christian people are living, spiritually, on a penny a week, when their income might be ten thousand a day! You might live like kings, yet you are starving like paupers! Your faith might lay hold on God's exceedingly great and precious promises and so fill her mouth with good things, but, instead of doing so, you are quivering with the palsy of unbelief and so not grasping what God has put within your reach! There lies Succoth, but you do not mete it out. There lies Shechem, but you do not divide it. Yet they are both of them yours by Divine donation! Oh, if our faith did but really grip the promises and believe in the promise-keeping God, she would never rest till she possessed all the blessings that are really hers!

I think that every young Christian should say, when he joins the Church, "Now, I do not want to be merely an average Christian. I am nothing and less than nothing in myself, but, if there is any blessing to be had from God I will have it. If I can have a closer walk with God than others have, I will have it. If there is more of Christ's likeness to be had than others possess, I will have it. By God's Grace, 'I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth!' If God has given me permission to take anything, why should I not have it?" If you have leave given you to go to Windsor Castle, or Buckingham Palace as often as you like and to take whatever you please that is there, and to be treated as a prince, I guarantee that you would not need anyone to remind you that you had not been to either place for weeks! If you had such privileges accorded to you, you would be sure to avail yourselves of them. Yet here are the gates of the palace of prayer always open to you and the doors of communion never shut against you—and Jesus, the great King of kings, not only inviting you to come to Him, but even urging you to abide in Him and never to depart from Him—yet, alas, you do not have fellowship with Christ by the month together! Be no longer like the starving professors that, now and then, taste a little of the heavenly manna, but, generally, live on the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt.

So, if we have faith in God, we ought to take possession of all that is ours and, further, *we ought to know what we really possess*. It is delightful to see David here mentioning his various possessions—"I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine. Manasseh is mine. Ephraim is also the strength of my head. Judah is my law-giver, Moab is my washpot. Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. Over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?" Perhaps you say, "That is very uninteresting—I do not understand it." No, but David did. He had seen Shechem and he knew that it was a place worth possessing. And Gilead and Manasseh and all the other places interested him even if they do not interest you. And when a child of God looks over his spiritual treasures and mentions them one by one, he takes an interest even in the very mention of them. The Bible is a dull book to a person who has no part or lot in it. There is no drier reading, in all the world, than the reading of a will in which one has no interest—but there is nothing that would interest you more than listening to the will of your old uncle in which he had left you a large fortune! You would lean forward and you would put your hand to your ear lest you should lose any of it, and you would think that you had never heard a more eloquent discourse than that! And when a man gets to know what "God has spoken," what He has written for him in this blessed Book which contains His will—every word is music to him and he is ready to pick out some of the choicest words and say, "Regeneration is mine! Justification is mine! Adoption is mine! Sanctification is mine! Union to Christ is mine! Resurrection is mine! Eternal life is mine! Yes, all things are mine!" And he would dwell upon each one with a holy unction, at least to his own soul.

Then, if you know what God has given you, *mind that you use it all*. What does David say? "Moab is my washpot. Over Edom will I cast out my shoe." As an Oriental who is weary, throws his sandals to one servant and then puts his foot out, that another servant may wash it with flowing water, so David says, "I will use Moab and Edom as my servitors." Now, Christian, if you have true faith and mean to do real business *with* God and *for* Him, say to yourself, "I have this, and that, and the other blessing—and I am going to use them all for His Glory. I have been adopted by God. I am His child, so I will plead with Him and will get all I can from my Father to use in His service! I am justified, I have peace with God, so I will go forth and, in the power of that peace, I will let others see what bliss Christians know! Then I also have sanctification given me in Christ, so I will use that and seek to be a true saint, that my life may be a blameless, holy, gracious, Christ-like life. By God's Grace I will not have even one unused privilege!

Once more, David, being in the spirit of full faith in God, now *manifests the spirit of enterprise*, for he says, "God has given me Edom—then I will have it. There is that strong city of Petra, the rock city. It is like an eagle's nest upon a crag—who is the bold man that can capture it and take the spoil? The fierce sons of Edom, in the gorge, will be sure to slay

the first men who dare to march into that rocky chasm." "Who will bring me into the strong city?" he asks, "who will lead me into Edom?" The spirit of enterprise and of conquest is in his soul! And then he adds, "Will not You, O God, go forth with our hosts?" "Since You have spoken as You have done, You will surely lead us to victory." In like manner, every man who has faith in God's Word ought to be a man of enterprise. I wonder, Brothers and Sisters, how many of you have any enterprise for God in view just now—storming some rocky sin, some Petra-like evil in your soul that seems almost impregnable! You know that your Savior's name is "Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Then, in the strength of that name, go up and kill your bosom sin and your constitutional sin—and never rest till you have driven your dagger through every evil that lurks within your soul!

Then think what room for enterprise you have among your fellow men. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," yet vast multitudes of mankind still sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Have any of you enterprise enough to go up against the strong cities that are still in rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ? Can any of you go and look after those who walk the streets—and seek to bring them to Christ? That would be conquering Edom itself. Have any of you enterprise enough to go down into the slums and dens of London to seek out the poorest and the vilest of the people? Have you confidence enough to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can give you that Petra-like city, that dark spot where thieves congregate, where blasphemy is the current language and where profanity seems even to pollute the very air? Have you "pluck" enough to undertake such an enterprise as that? Is there manliness enough in any one of you to attempt it? Then, having asked the question, "Who will lead me into Edom?" do not forget to pray, "Will not You, O God? You have spoken; will You not also act, through Your people, so that all flesh may see the salvation of God?"

Let each child of God say, "O my Father, I believe that weak and feeble as I am, my weakness and feebleness need be no hindrance to me if I go to Your service in Your strength! You have spoken in Your holiness; I will rejoice and, in Your name, I will conquer the foe, and gather the spoil for You." "Through God," says David, in the 13th verse, "we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies." Therefore, if you believe in God, hasten to the spoil of His enemies! Be strong! If you really are linked with Omnipotence, prove it! Do not talk about it, but let your deeds show that the Lord of Hosts is with you and that the God of Jacob is your refuge. If, indeed, the Lord's arm is with you, smite as the Lord would smite! If, indeed, He speaks through you, speak as He would speak! Be strong, very courageous and press forward in the name of God! Set up your banners and who knows whether even this feeble message of mine, in rousing you to action upon the basis of confidence in the Word of God, may not cast down some stronghold of the enemy and make the walls of some mighty Jericho to fall flat to the ground? The Lord grant it for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALMS 57:7-11; 108.

Let me say, before we begin our reading, that the 108th Psalm is made up partly of the 60th and partly of the 57th, yet we are sure that the Holy Spirit is not short of language so that He needs to repeat Himself. It is always a pity to think that any portion of Scripture can be repetitious. It cannot be! There is some good reason for every repetition and you will see that in the two Psalms which we are about to read, the latter part of the 57th coincides with the first part of the 108th. And also that in the 57th Psalm we have prayer and praise and, in the 108th, we have praise and prayer. It is well that we should see how these two holy exercises can change places—so that sometimes we begin with *prayer* and pray ourselves up into praise and, at other times we begin with *praise* and find in it the strength we need to aid us in prayer.

Psalm 57:7. *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.* Let the lions open their cruel mouths and roar, and let wicked men, "whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword," do their worst against me—let my every footstep be among the nets and pits that they have set and dug to catch me. Even in the midst of danger, "my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I still sing and give praise."

8. *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* "I will awake the dawn"—so the Hebrew has it—"I will wake up the morning and chide it for being so long in opening its eyes to look upon God's works!" David did this, notwithstanding all the trials of his surrounding circumstances. He calls on his "glory"—perhaps he means his tongue—possibly his poetic faculty—perhaps his musical skill. It may be that he means his intellect. Whatever his "glory" is, he calls upon his highest powers to awake to praise his God. Then he takes his psaltery and harp—strange companions for a man whose soul is among lions—but saints know how to evoke sweetest music even when their enemies are fighting fiercely against them. And he sings—

9-11. *I will praise You, O lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations. For Your mercy is great unto the heavens, and Your Truth unto the clouds. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Your Glory be above all the earth.* Have not some of you found God's mercy to be "great unto the heavens"? It even seemed to reach above the heavens and, as for God's Truth, you followed it till you could follow it no further, for it had ascended above the clouds! We could scarcely, I think, ever expect to understand, here, all the Truth which God has pleased to let us hear or read. It reaches "unto the clouds" and there we must leave it for the present. When God ceases to reveal anything, we may cease to enquire concerning it.

I saw, in Florence, a picture of "The Sleeping Savior." He is represented as sleeping in the manger at Bethlehem and the artist de-

picts the angels hovering round Him with their fingers on their lips as though they would not wake Him from His holy slumbers. So, when God bids the Truth of God sleep, do not try to wake it! There is enough revealed for you to know and more that you will know, by-and-by, so pry not between the folded leaves, but wait your Lord's appointed time to teach you more of His will.

Psalm 108:1-5. *O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise You, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto You among the nations, for Your mercy is great above the heavens: and Your Truth reaches unto the clouds. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens: and Your Glory above all the earth.* Here we begin with praise—the very praise with which we finished the other Psalm—praise in a very joyous, confident spirit, for the praise which precedes prayer has more of the "Jubilate" note in it than ordinary praise has. The prayer in Psalm 57:1 which preceded the praise, was earnest, and fervent and confident, yet it did not reach so high a note as this.

6-9. *That Your beloved may be delivered: save with Your right hand, and answer me. God has spoken in His holiness, I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my law-giver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.* David is claiming the kingdom which God promised to him by the mouth of Samuel the Prophet—looking first upon the kingdom, itself, and then upon the surrounding territories, and laying hold upon them all as his own because God had given them to him.

10. *Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?* In the spirit of a truly courageous leader, he means to fight with that ancient foe of Israel and, wisely, appeals to God to lead his army.

11-13. *Will not You, O God, who has cast us off? And will not You, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

—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.

FENCING THE TABLE
NO. 2865

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY JANUARY 7, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 2, 1876.

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup."
1 Corinthians 11:28.

THERE are two symbolical ordinances in the Christian Church—and only two—Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These have been so misinterpreted, perverted and abused that the wish has sometimes crossed the minds of spiritual persons that they had never been instituted. We do not wonder that there should be a denomination of Christians who have given them up, though we think that in this matter they have not acted according to the Word of God. We ourselves retain them for this reason only, because we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ ordained them—and we desire to observe them exactly as Christ ordained them. And only thus shall we find them instructive and helpful to our souls.

Baptism, the immersion of the Believer in water, is the token of his death, burial and resurrection with Christ. It sets forth the fellowship which he has with his Lord as the Apostle tells us—"Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him"—not that the plunge into the water confers any Grace upon the person who is baptized, but it is the *type*, the *emblem*, the instructive *symbol* of the new birth—which new birth consists in passing, by death and resurrection, into newness of life. You all know that we are only born once. A thing can only have one true beginning. Hence, Baptism is never to be repeated. Once done, it is done forever.

The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper and, as Baptism, sets forth, typifies, (mark you, *nothing more* than typifies), and is the emblem of the new birth, so the Lord's Supper is the emblem of the spiritual feeding of that new life. Now, though a man is born only once, he eats a great many more times than once and drinks a great many more times than once. Indeed, to eat and to drink often are necessary to the maintenance of our life. If we neglected to do so, we would soon find ourselves in an ill case. Hence, the Supper of the Lord, representing, as it does, the spiritual feeding of the new-born life upon the body and blood of Christ, (and only representing it, mark you—not really doing it in any carnal sense), is oftentimes to be repeated. We find that the early Christians very frequently broke bread together. I think they did so almost every day. It is recorded,

by some of the early fathers, that the first Christians seldom met together, on any day of the week, without commemorating the death of Christ. Augustine mentions this and he seems to have taught that at least once in the week—on that blessed day which celebrates the Resurrection of our Lord, Christians should meet for the breaking of bread. I think that the oftener we meet for this purpose, the better it is for us. The Holy Spirit specifies no particular time—we are not under a law which binds us to this period or to that. Our Lord leaves it very much to our own loving hearts, but the words that Paul quotes, "This do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me," certainly imply that we should often "do this" in remembrance of our dear Lord and Savior.

A simple feast, even of bread and wine, a feast often celebrated, would be liable to be trifled with and misapplied. Hence, as Paradise of old was guarded by cherubim, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life, so stands this simple Supper of the Lord guarded with a flaming sword, of which my text is a portion—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup."

Now, with this thought upon our minds, let us go to the text, itself, and observe how we are bidden to examine ourselves before we come to the Table of the Lord. We will speak, first, concerning *the necessity for this examination.* Next, *the person who is to perform it.* Then, *the vital points of the examination.* And, lastly, *the spirit in which we should come to the table after we have examined ourselves*.

I. First, then, THE NECESSITY FOR THIS EXAMINATION.

The sense of that necessity will be very strongly impressed upon us if we remember that many *have profaned the Table of the Lord*. Hence it is incumbent upon us to examine ourselves lest we should do the same. Years ago—our grandfathers remember it well—men had to "take the sacrament," as it was called, before they could be made mayors of towns, or hold certain offices in the municipalities and, in that way, the Communion Table became a passport to secular office. I tremble as I think how the laws of this land compelled men—though they ought never to have yielded obedience to such laws—to eat and drink judgment or condemnation to themselves as they profaned this holy ordinance! Others have made it, as I fear that some still make it, a means of obtaining alms—coming to the Communion Table because those who are members of the church are helped in the time of their poverty, or there is a distribution of alms money among the needy communicants. Ah, dear Friends, however poor you may be, it would be better for you to starve than to get help in this way if you are not really the Lord's people! If any of you have acted thus, I charge you, before Almighty God, to do so no more! If we have any suspicions that we have ever done such a thing, we may well examine ourselves concerning that matter and sincerely repent if we have so sinned against the Lord.

Others come to the Communion as a piece of sheer superstition, really believing, poor deluded souls, that when they take the wafer into their mouths, they actually eat the flesh of Christ. Such a monstrous doctrine as that is only fit for cannibals—it is not a Doctrine of Christianity! What a profanation of the ordinance it is to come to it with such a notion as

that! If any of us have the slightest idea that to partake of what is called "the sacrament"—though there is no such name as that for it anywhere in Scripture—confers Divine Grace, let all such thoughts be banished from our minds at once!

It is not a converting ordinance, nor a saving ordinance—it is an establishing ordinance and a comforting ordinance for those *who are saved*. But it never was intended to save souls, neither is it adapted to that end and if it is so misrepresented, it is apt rather to be the means of damning than of saving the soul, for he that so eats and drinks may, in very deed, be eating and drinking damnation to himself!

I fear that there are others who come to the Communion Table out of mere form. I find that it is the custom of certain persons to do this always on Christmas day and on Good Friday, though what particular sanctity there can be about those two days, I am sure I cannot tell. I see little enough of holiness about them and a great deal of sheer superstition. But let all of us be careful that we never come to the Communion simply because it is the first Sabbath in the month, or even because it is the day of our Lord's Resurrection and because, as church members, we feel that we ought to come there. I mention these things—although I hope, to the most of you, they are unnecessary—because they are necessary to a certain class of persons who, in one or other of these ways, thoughtlessly profane the Table of the Lord.

But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we need to examine ourselves because it may be that though free from these evils which I have mentioned, we have come to this solemn feast without due solemnity, without serious thought, without the proper preparation of heart or the right observance of the ordinance. We have come very often to the Communion Table, yet there has been but little real heart-fellowship with Jesus. There has been bread upon the table and in our mouths, but we have not discerned the Lord's body. There has been wine there, but we have not looked through the sign to the blood of which it is only the symbol. If it has been so with any of us, we have, to that extent, eaten and drunk unworthily—and I know not how much of deserved chastisement God may have laid upon us on that account—but the Apostle's words have often been fulfilled since his day, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

This examination is necessary, next, *because the purpose of this ordinance requires that we should be in a fit condition for its observance*. What is the objective of this ordinance? "This do in remembrance of Me," says the Lord Jesus. But you cannot remember what you do not know! how can you remember an unknown Christ? By coming to the Communion Table, you are supposed to let men see, as they look on at this ordinance, that you believe that Christ lived and died to save sinners. But suppose that you do not believe it—that you do not, at any rate, in your heart savingly believe it? Then you are not a fit person to proclaim that Truth of God to others by means of this ordinance. The Lord Jesus Christ does not want His enemies to remember Him—He wants His friends to cherish His memory and to keep the fact of His death prominently and permanently before the eyes of the world.

It must be His friends who must do this! Besides, this ordinance is one special means of communion between Christ and His people, but what communion can there be between you and Christ if you are a son of Belial? If you love sin and continue to live in sin, what possible fellowship can you have with the holy Christ? Will He have communion with a man who comes to His Table drunk? Or who comes from dishonest actions all week? Or who has been singing a lascivious song, but now turns to join with those who laud and magnify the name of the thrice holy God? Imagine not that Jesus Christ will welcome such as you are to His Table! If you do come, it will be at your most imminent peril! It can do you no good—it will be a curse rather than a blessing to you! So, let us examine ourselves because those who come to the Table of the Lord ought to be of such a sort that the purposes and objectives for which the ordinance was instituted may be realized in them.

But let us especially examine ourselves *because, if we come not aright, we shall incur very severe penalties*—the penalties which I have already mentioned to you. Let me again read to you these solemn word, "Therefore, whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And then follows the sure penalty upon true Believers who, nevertheless, come in an unfit state to the Table. I have read it to you before, but I will read it again—"He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground! Rush not into the sacred place, but come with that gracious timorousness—no, rather with that holy boldness which becomes a sinner who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and is robed in His spotless righteousness!

And, dear Friends, once more, there is a necessity for us to examine ourselves *because we must know that there are, among us, some who are doubtless partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily*. We have known, to our great sorrow, of some who have been harboring an unforgiving spirit, yet who have dared to come to the Communion Table. When I have really known that this has been the case, I have prevented the wrongdoer from sitting down with us, but, unknown to me, and to other ministers, it HAS often have happened that persons have come professing to be Christians, yet all the while not manifesting the true spirit of Christianity toward some offending Brother or Sister. You remember how even the loving Apostle John writes, "If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

Then, alas, there are some, who, by coming to the Communion, profess to be Christians, yet who, nevertheless, are all the while living in shameful sin which they dare not have discovered. This is one of the greatest sources of sorrow to true ministers of Christ and it has made us often wring our hands with agony and weep bitter tears before the Lord, when we have seen trees looking fair and green, but which, inwardly, as Bunyan said, were "so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox." Their profession was a false one, for, all the while their

moral character was unsound. There was a rottenness about them which no one discovered till, upon some fatal day—fatal to their own reputation, but good for the Church's purification—they were exposed and driven out with shame. Judas was found out at last. Ananias and Sapphira were at last found out and cut off from among the people of God—and the unclean and unholy among the early Christians were excommunicated from the assembly of the saints.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if, to your own personal knowledge, this has been the case with others, forgive me when I ask—Is there not at least the possibility that it may also be the case with you? At any rate, you will do well to examine yourselves and if, after having honestly examined, you can say, "No, that is not the case with me," then bless God that you can truthfully say so. Take no credit to yourselves, but give to God's Grace the whole of the praise. Still, do look thoroughly to this matter. "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith." I, as a minister, am bound to examine myself because there have been eminent preachers of the Gospel who, nevertheless, have lived unhallowed lives. No preacher may dare to say, "My office screens me from this test." Deacons and elders of the church, you must examine yourselves because you have known church officers who have brought disgrace upon the offices that they have filled. And you Sunday school teachers, open-air preachers, tract distributors and the like—and you members of the Church—however useful you may be and however highly you may be respected by your fellow members, I beseech you, nevertheless, shirk not this duty, but let each one examine himself before he comes to sit down at the Table of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, I am to speak about THE PERSON WHO IS TO PERFORM THIS EXAMINATION—"Let a man examine *himself*."

Let not anyone say, "I was examined by the proper officers of the church before I was admitted into church membership, so I do not need any further examination." Now, mark, it is the duty of every church, in receiving members, to judge all applicants by their fruits. "By their fruits shall you know them," is our Lord's own test. We must have a credible profession of faith, supported by a life that is consistent therewith, but that is all upon which we can form a judgment. We cannot examine the heart and we cannot infallibly judge the life. How very often have we been deceived in these matters! If anyone were to suppose that a certificate of church membership is to excuse him from the duty of personal self-examination, he is grievously mistaken. No, dear Friend, *you* know what your secret thoughts are and what your private actions are and, therefore, it is to *yourself* that this duty is committed—"Let a man examine *himself*."

"Well, but," someone may say, "my friends—my private friends—are quite satisfied concerning my spiritual condition. I have been talking to my godly mother. I have been conversing with my praying father. I have had sweet fellowship, just lately, with a good old Christian friend—and they all seem perfectly satisfied with me." I am glad they are but Paul says, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Let a man examine *himself*." There is no greater error under Heaven than to try to shift the re-

sponsibility of our own personal religion on to friends or to so-called "priests." There can be no more gigantic imposture than the supposed sponsorship of infants! It amazes me that anybody can dare to say, on any child's behalf, that it shall renounce the pomp and vanities of this world, and all else that is mentioned in the Church Catechism. But it would be an equally gigantic imposture if we were to establish a sponsorship for grown-up people! Both of them are wicked and neither of them can be carried out—we cannot guarantee the Christian character of other people—the Apostolic rule must remain, "Let a man examine *himself*." Look you well to the state of your own souls and, to this end, go to God in prayer and say, as David did, "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."

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE VITAL POINTS IN THIS EXAMINATION? There are a good many, but I have arranged them under five heads for the sake of brevity and to help your memories.

First, my dear Friends, *examine yourselves concerning your knowledge*. There are some who are too ignorant to come to the Table of the Lord. They may have taken their M.A. degree at Oxford or Cambridge, they may even be Doctors of Divinity and yet be too ignorant to come to the Lord's Table. What knowledge is necessary for coming aright to the Table? I answer—*Saving* knowledge—a *living* knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "This do in remembrance of Me." You cannot remember a person you never knew, so you must be acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ if you would observe this ordinance as He instituted it. There is the bread upon the table. Have you ever known what it was to be *spiritually* hungry? Do you know that Jesus Christ is the only Food that can relieve the hunger of your spirit? Have you learned to know Him through feeding upon Him by faith? Then you are a fit person to partake of the bread on the Communion Table because you are a person who understands what it signifies—you who have been satisfied by feeding upon Christ.

There is also the wine cup upon the Table. Were you ever *spiritually* thirsty? Did you then see how the Lord Jesus Christ, by His atoning Sacrifice, has fully met all the needs of your soul? Have you really partaken of Jesus Christ and has your heart been refreshed, revived and cheered by the application to it of the precious blood of Jesus? If so, you understand the meaning of that Communion Cup and you are a fit and proper person to partake of it. But if you have never known this spiritual hunger and thirst—if you have never realized your own spiritual needs—and if you have not known what it is for Christ to supply those needs—I charge you to stay away from this Table until you do know these things! Otherwise you will be eating and drinking in utter ignorance and the mere physical acts will be of no service whatever to you. May the Lord give you to know Him whom to know is eternal life! And when you do know Him, then come to His Table, for you will not then eat and drink unworthily.

Then, next, *examine yourselves concerning your faith*. Knowledge is all in vain without faith. And the knowledge of which I have been speaking is a knowledge that is closely allied with faith. Are you trusting alone in

the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ? I have asked myself that question many scores of times and I do not recollect that I ever had any hesitancy about how to answer it. I know that I am trusting in Jesus! If I am really living—if there is any truth in my own consciousness—I am sure that I have trusted my soul for time and for eternity wholly to the keeping of that Savior who lived, died and rose again for sinners! Well, that being so, I have a right to come to the Communion. Christ wants Believers at His Table—they are His own children. If you are believing in Him, He invites you to come and you will be welcome if you come! You will not eat and drink unworthily, dear Friend, if you apprehend, by faith, that Christ's flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed. You will come to the Table in the right manner.

In the third place, I want you to *examine yourselves concerning your repentance*. In the emblems upon the Communion Table, you can see something of what it cost your Lord to redeem you from sin, death and Hell. The bread, representing the flesh of Jesus, is separate from the wine, which represents His blood. And the separation of the blood from the flesh indicates death—a bleeding away of life in the most acute anguish. It cost your Lord untold agony to redeem you from going down into Hell, so can you ever imagine that any man is a fit person to participate in the emblems which set forth that agony if he has never felt, in his own soul, any agony on account of sin? What right has an impenitent person to come where the death of Christ, on account of sin, is especially set forth? A heart that has never been broken because of sin—shall it come and remember the broken body and broken heart of Jesus? A heart of stone that has never been melted—shall it come and remember His precious flesh that was melted in the agonies of Calvary? If your eyes have wept no tears of repentance, how can you properly remember Him whose veins wept blood to redeem His people from their sins? It is a contrite heart and a broken spirit that Christ wants here! Only with such persons will God deign to dwell and only with such will Christ commune, either at His Table or anywhere else. See to it, then, that you have genuine repentance.

The next vital point for self-examination is love. *Examine yourselves concerning your love*. I think, Brothers and Sisters, that none of us can worthily eat of this bread and drink of this cup unless we truly love our Lord. So I venture to put the question to each one of you here. I know not your names, but the name that is used by our Lord Jesus will do for you. He says, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" You answer, "Yes." Do you? Then I will put the question again. "Simon, son of Jonas, Jesus says to you, 'Do you love Me?'And yet a third time I may put it, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" 'Tis Jesus with the pierced hands and with the pierced feet who speaks, and He says, "Do you love Me?" This is the test of whether you may come to His Table, or not. Can you answer, "'Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.' Sometimes my friends hardly know it, for I am not always as consistent as I should be. Sometimes, Lord, I have even to question it myself, but You know that, deep down in my heart, notwithstanding all my coldness and forgetfulness, all my wanderings and all my faults—You know that I do love

You." Come along, Brother! Come along, Sister! You will not eat and drink unworthily if this is true concerning your love to your Lord!

There is one other matter which is vital, and that concerns obedience. *Examine yourselves concerning your obedience,* for, unless a man obeys the commands of Christ, he does not prove that he really loves Christ. If we truly love Him, we shall keep His commandments. If Paul had said that no one had a right to come to the Communion unless he was perfect, I certainly could not come and I feel sure that there is no one in the whole world who would have the right to come. Perfect? Ah, perfect weakness! And if anybody says he is perfect in any other sense than that, he must be possessed of perfect folly! But the obedience that we must have is of this sort. Do you desire to be perfectly obedient to your Lord? Do you, in your heart, desire to be rid of every sin and to forsake every false way? Is there any sin that you would harbor and indulge? Then you are not truly obedient! But can you, on the other hand, say, "Lord, I would be purged from every evil of every kind and I desire to obey You in all things. No matter how it may grate upon my feelings, or how contrary it may be to my wishes, where You bid me, I will go, and what You command me, I will do—your Grace helping me"? Is that what you say? Then you may come to the Communion, for Jesus Himself welcomes you! But if you will not give up sin—if you have even one pet sin that you are still determined to keep, you are a traitor to Christ and you have no more right to come to His Table than Judas Iscariot had!

IV. Now, in closing, I want to speak a few words concerning THE SPIRIT IN WHICH, AFTER THIS SELF-EXAMINATION, WE OUGHT TO COME TO THE COMMUNION TABLE.

Ought we not to come, dear Friends, each one of us, *in the spirit of holy wonder*? This is the Lord's Table and I am coming, with the Lord's redeemed people, to eat and drink at it—what a wonder that I am here! I never come to the Communion without being astonished at the amazing Grace of God to me and especially as I think of this great church which God has been graciously pleased to gather in this place. How much I owe to Him! How constantly am I struck with the marvels of His mercy to me! And each one of you, my fellow Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, has some peculiar reason for feeling the same kind of wonder in your own case.

Next, we ought to come to the Communion *with a sense of self-abasement.* Brothers and Sisters, we ought to think little of ourselves everywhere, but when we come to the Table of our Lord, we ought to shrink to nothing—yes, to less than nothing! In the wilderness, man did eat angels' food, but angels never ate such food as this! Yet we are permitted to come and partake of it. So, let us sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink, and sink till we are lost in wonder, love and praise that we should ever be permitted to come to this sacred feast!

Let us come, at the same time, *in a spirit of strong desire.* I believe that in a sermon people always get something good when they come desiring to get something good. A hungry congregation will be sure to be fed! And if we come to the Communion Table feeling, "My Lord and Master, I desire to meet with You. The bread alone will not satisfy me—I need to feed

spiritually upon Your flesh. The wine will not quench my soul's thirst—I need spiritually to receive Your blood into my inmost soul. I desire, with all fervor of holy ardor, to put my finger into the print of the nails and to thrust my hand into Your side!" If you come to the Communion in this spirit—longing for Christ—you shall have Him! Open your mouths and pant for Him, and the living waters shall quench your soul's thirst.

Then come to the table *with a believing hope*. Perhaps you have not seen your Master's face lately—you have been sorrowfully walking in darkness. Come to the Communion hoping that He will look through the lattice and reveal Himself to you. Do you not know that the two ordinances are windows of agate and of diamonds to the opened eyes of His people? Perhaps your loving Lord will look again through one of those windows while you are sitting at His Table. So, come expecting Him! Come with your heart wide open to receive its rightful Lord and Master and, with your eyes of love looking up to Him, surely, if the eyes of your love look up to Him, the eyes of His love will look down upon you! If you come to His Table, singing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies"—if you come passionately desiring to enjoy His company—then you may also come with the full confidence that His company will be given to you!

I have only one thing more to say. Come to the Communion Table resolved that if in the ordinance you do not find your Lord—if in the breaking of bread, He is not manifested to you and if, in the pouring forth of the wine, you get no taste of His love—*you will still trust in Him.* Do not depend on outward signs and visible evidences, but say, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' And if His Table should yield me no spiritual meat, I will still cleave to my Master. And if He will only let me be as a dog beneath His Table, I will eat the crumbs that fall there and so shall I live, for in every crumb of His mercy there is life everlasting!"

As for you who, perhaps, have never thought upon this subject, I have to say just this to you, and then I have done. Remember that religion does not begin with ordinances. While I have been speaking to professing Christians concerning the Communion, I hope that none of you have been thinking of it as a saving ordinance. You, as sinners, have to exercise faith in Christ before you have anything to do with Believers' Baptism—you have to come to Christ, Himself, before you are qualified to come to the Lords Table. As soon as you have, by faith, received Jesus Christ, Himself, as your Lord and Savior, the tokens and emblems of His death will become instructive to you. But until Jesus Christ is wholly yours, hands off all these holy things! For, as uncircumcised Philistines would have had no right to be at the Paschal Supper, so have those who are not renewed in heart with that circumcision that is made without hands, no right to come to the feast of Christian love which is reserved for the followers of the Crucified! Come to Jesus, to Jesus only, and put your trust in Him! God grant that you may do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:17-30; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:18-34.

Matthew 26:17-26. *Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began, every one of them, to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, you have said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it.* So the Jewish Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper. Indeed, so gently did the one dissolve into the other that we scarcely know whether this incident, relating to Judas Iscariot, occurred during the Passover or the Supper. According to one account, it would seem to be one and, according to another account, the other, but, indeed, the one ordinance was almost imperceptibly merged into the other. I want you carefully to notice, as we read this narrative through, whether you can see, here, any trace of an altar. Look with both your eyes and see whether you can find any trace of a priest offering a sacrifice. Watch diligently to see whether you can perceive anything about kneeling down, or about the elevation or the adoration of "the host." Why, even the Roman Catholic church knows better than to believe in what it practices! Most of you have seen copies of the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, himself a Catholic of the old school. How does he picture those who were at the institution of the Lord's Supper? Why, they are all sitting around a table, with the Lord Jesus in their midst! I wonder that they exhibit and still allow to be in their churches, a picture like that, which, painted by one of their own artists—most effectually condemns their base idolatry in which a wafer-god is lifted up, to be adored by men, who must be besotted, indeed, before they can prostitute their intellects so grossly as to commit such an act of sin! What a rebuke to that idolatry is conveyed by this simple statement—"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it."

26. *And broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said. Take, eat, this is My body*. The Romanists do not even break the bread. They have a wafer so as to avoid anything like an imitation of the example set by our blessed Lord and Master. He took a piece of the bread which was provided for the paschal feast—the ordinary unleavened bread—and He broke it and gave it to His disciples, and said to them, "Take, eat, this is My body." Not, of course, the literal body, which was there at the table—this was the emblem of His body about to be broken on the Cross on the behalf of all His people!

27. *And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it.* "Every one of you, take your own personal share." This, also, the Papists have perverted by denying the cup to the laity.

28-30. *For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.* It was a social feast, somewhat funereal and tinctured with sadness, for Jesus was about to go from them to die. Still, it was a joyous celebration, closing with a hymn. At the paschal feast, the Jews always sang Psalms 113 to 118. Probably our Lord sang all these through. At any rate, Christ and His Apostles sang a hymn and I always like to think of Him as leading the little company—going to His death with a song upon His lips, His voice full of melody and made more sweet than ever by the near approach of Gethsemane and Calvary. I would like always to sing, whenever we come to the Communion Table, after the fashion in which they sang that night—"When they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Now let us read what the Apostle Paul writes concerning the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:18-22. *For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating everyone takes before the other his own supper and one is hungry, and another is drunk. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.* These Corinthians fell into a great many errors. Everybody was a speaker and said whatever he pleased. And they had no proper order or rule. Among other evils—when they met together to observe the Lord's Supper, they brought their own food with them, thinking that eating thus together was keeping the sacred feast. So the richer ones feasted to the full and the poor went almost without anything. "One is hungry, and another is drunk," says the Apostle, and he tells them that this was not the right way of observing the Lord's Supper. Yet it is evident that the idea which was in their mind was that of feasting together. They had exaggerated it and carried it to a grievous excess, but that was the idea they had concerning it. Certainly, there was no altar, or priest, or anything of the sort. Now the Apostle tells them how the ordinance should be observed.

23-25. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I deliver unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.* How wonderfully simple it all is! There is nothing here of the paraphernalia of a "sacrament." It is a simple memorial festival, that is all.

26, 27. *For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* He shall be guilty with respect to that body—not with respect to the *bread* against which he cannot sin—but with respect to that *body which is represented by the bread*, and with respect to that *blood which is represented by the cup*. See with what holy solemnity this humble feast is fenced and invested? There is a Divinity which hedges the simple ordinance of Christ lest men should trifle with it to their eternal ruin!

28, 29. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* "Judgment" or "condemnation" is the word in the original, not, "damnation." That is *not* a fair translation, neither does it express the Truth of God. He that eats and drinks unworthily condemns himself in so doing—he comes under judgment for that act. This is the kind of judgment that falls upon Christians if they come unworthily to the Lord's Table—

30-32. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* Believers who are rendered sick, or who even die because of their offense against the Lord's ordinance, are not therefore condemned to Hell! Far from it—it is that they may not be so condemned that God visits them. "When we," the people of God—"are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned *with the world*."

33, 34. *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.* By due attention to the Apostle's injunctions, they would be able to rightly observe the ordinance. And we, also, may learn, from what Paul wrote, how we may worthily come to the Table of our Lord.

—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 NEWS
NO. 2866

A SERMON
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"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."
Proverbs 25:25.

THIS is a text for summertime rather than for a winter's evening. It is only on one of our hottest summer days that we could fully appreciate the illustration here employed. We need to be parched with thirst to be able to feel the value of cold waters to quench our thirst. At the same time, I think that we can, without any very great stretch of imagination, put ourselves into the position of some to whom cold waters have been almost like life from the dead. Look at Hagar in the wilderness with her child, whom she has cast under one of the shrubs that she may not see him die. The water in the bottle is spent and she longs for a cooling draught that might save the young lad's life. Then the Lord opened her eyes so that she saw a well of water in the desert and, as she filled her bottle from it, she understood what cold waters are to a thirsty soul. Think also of the whole nation of Israel in the wilderness crying out in agony because there was no water for them to drink. Then they began to murmur against the Lord and against Moses—but how joyful they were when the smitten Rock poured forth its cooling stream and they rushed to it and drank to the full.

If you want another personal example of the blessing of cold water to a thirsty soul, think of Samson. Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass he has slain a thousand men! But the dust of the conflict, the heat and the exhaustion had caused such an intense thirst to come upon him that he is ready to die. Then he lifts up his voice to the Lord and the same God who had made the jawbone to be so mighty a weapon against the Philistines, opens for him a spring of water in that very jawbone—and he drinks and is refreshed—and magnifies the name of the Lord. So, you see, there are occasions when cold waters are inexpressibly precious to thirsty souls. And Solomon, who seems to have known something of their value, says that good news from a far country is equally pleasant, refreshing and reviving.

This proverb is true in its most literal interpretation. When we are in a far country, separate from those we love, there is no greater pleasure than that of receiving letters with tidings of their welfare from them. Even

the little details about household affairs—the minor events which we would scarcely have noticed if we had been there—become exceedingly interesting to us and the longer we have been away from home, the more dear everything becomes to us when we hear of it in the far country where, for a while, our lot has been cast. I suppose that merchants who have costly ventures in distant parts, also long for good news from the far country which is still their home wherever they may be. Solomon had sent his ships to various foreign countries and when the news came from Joppa that the vessels were in sight which had come back from India, or from the Pillars of Hercules, bringing all manner of precious things, the merchant prince was highly pleased and felt that, "as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." And this, which is a literal fact, may become an illustration of the spiritual Truth of God—and I am going to use it in that way as God, the Holy Spirit, may guide me.

First, *good news from God for sinners* is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. Secondly, *good news from Heaven for saints* is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. And, thirdly, *good news in Heaven from earth*—the good news which reaches that far country every now and then—is to angels and glorified saints as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

I. First, then, (and may God bless this first head very richly!) GOOD NEWS FROM GOD FOR SINNERS is like cold water to the thirsty.

Sin has led the sinner into a far country. That part of the description of the prodigal son who gathered all and went into a far country aptly describes the condition of the whole human race. Man, before the Fall, was near to God. He communed with Him. But when Adam and Eve "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," after they had *disobeyed* Him, they "hid themselves from the Presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Practically, by his sin, Adam set out on a long journey away from his happy home and, soon, he was so far off that when God came where He had formerly communed with him, He had to cry to him, "Adam, where are you?" In like manner, we are alienated from God by wicked works, far off from Him in character, for He is Light and we are darkness. He is Truth and we are falsehood. He is Love and we are just the opposite. We are also far off from God in our aims and objectives, for we aim not at the good of others, nor at His Glory, but we seek earthly things. We are, by nature, far off from God in the whole bent and current of our life which no longer runs in a parallel line with the life of God as first imparted to man, but runs rather according to the fashion of the life of Satan—so that we yield ourselves up to the evil influence of that foul spirit who works in the children of disobedience.

When a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he becomes conscious of this distance and he feels, in a measure, like the lost spirits in Hell who realize that there is a great gulf fixed between them and God. At first the convicted sinner fancies that gulf can never be passed and the longer he looks into its awful depths—the longer his eyes try to gaze across it to the other side—the more he discovers that he is far off from his God and

that there is, indeed, a vast, yawning chasm between him and his Maker. If any of you, dear Friends, are conscious of being thus at a distance from God, I have come as a messenger from Him bringing to you His words of mercy and Grace which should be to you as good news from a far country!

And the first piece of good news that I have to give you is that *God has not forgotten you*. You are a lost sheep and you have almost forgotten your Shepherd. Perhaps you have altogether forgotten Him—but your Shepherd has been counting over the number of His sheep and He finds that there is one missing, for there are only 99 where there should be a hundred and He is deeply concerned about the one that has gone astray!

God has not only remembered that there is such a person as you but *he remembers you with pity*. It is wonderful to notice how He speaks. Sometimes He 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?" Like as a father pities his children, so is it with our God—He pities those who wander away from Him. "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." God takes no delight in your sin and no delight in the shame and sorrow which your sin will bring upon you unless you turn from it—but He will take delight in you if you return to Him! He still cries to you, "Return you, now, everyone from his evil way!" And He still remembers you in pity and compassion. Notwithstanding your forgetfulness of Him and your willful rebellion against Him, He does remember you, for God is Love and there is love in His heart even towards sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. That, surely, is good news to you! And if God thus thinks of you in pity, should not you think of God with deep, heartfelt penitence and contrition?

But there is even better news from God for you than this, namely, that *He has prepared the way by which you may come back to Him*. Do you ask, "How can that be, for there is a wall of partition between us? How can I ever get to God? Surely, the justice of God, on account of my sin, raises an impassable barrier between us. That justice stands like the cherubim with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the Tree of Life, lest, haply, I should attempt to return to my God." That is quite true, yet listen to this, poor, guilty Sinner. God must be just, that is certain and, being just, He must punish your sin. But have you not heard that He has given His only-begotten Son that He might stand in the sinner's place and bear the punishment that was due on account of the sinner's guilt? That cherub's flaming sword has been quenched in Jesus' precious blood! That middle wall of partition Christ has broken down, even as the veil of the Temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom! Oh, what a mighty rip was that! Not a little slit, part of the way down, but from the top to the bottom!

So has Jesus Christ demolished the barrier which stood between a justly angry God and a guilty but repenting sinner—and now there is a way of approach for the very worst of men and women—right up to the

Throne of the Most High! By the blood of Jesus, once shed for many for the remission of sins, the guiltiest foot of man may come. Yes, by that blood-besprinkled way, the most condemned sinner may come without fear of being repulsed! The chasm has been filled, the gulf bridged over and if you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you may, in His name, and for His sake, come back to your Heavenly Father! That wise resolve within your heart which says, "I will arise and go to my Father," should be at once carried into effect, for your Father has prepared the way by which you may come back to Him and, to encourage you, He has sprinkled it with the blood of His dear Son—the surest sign and token of His love to sinners that even God, Himself, could give! Here, then, is good news from a far country. Your Father thinks of you, poor prodigal, and He has paved the way for you to come back to His own house and heart!

Is there any more good news for you? Yes, that there is, far more than I can tell you! This is another piece of it—*God has sent you His Word and sent you His servants to invite you to come back to Him.* It is very gracious for God to prepare the way, but it is even more gracious for Him to invite you to make use of that way. There are, sometimes, cases of necessity when a man thrusts himself upon the notice of another and seeks his aid in some great emergency. It is a dark and stormy night and the wanderer, who has lost his way, knocks at the first door he sees and asks for shelter. But that is not your case. You, also, are a wanderer and you need shelter, but Mercy's door stands wide open and God has sent His messengers to invite you to come in! If the door had been closed, it would have been a wise action on your part to knock and ask for admission, or even to cause the Kingdom of Heaven to suffer violence and to take the blessing by force. But that is not necessary.

Think, then, of the goodness of God who invites, entreats, exhorts and persuades sinners to come to Him. No, more, there is a text—a blessed text, I think—which says, "Compel them to come in." The great King bids His servants to seize them by the mighty force of Love and to draw them in with tears and entreaties again and again repeated, until they yield! "Compel them to come in," He says, "that My house may be filled." This is good news indeed! Such gracious invitations as these make up still more good news—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: for I have redeemed you." "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." "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Is not this good news for poor sinners? O my Master, bless You, Your own Words of Grace and mercy to all who

hear or read them—and make them to be like cold waters to a thirsty soul!

There is still more good news beyond all this and I will tell you some of it. It is good news that *many have already returned to their Father and have been welcomed*. Some of these are your own friends and relatives—your brother, your sister, your father, your mother. This good news does not relate to anything which is merely a matter of experiment. The experiment has been made so often—the blessed experiment of proving whether God will receive repenting sinners or no—that it is now a matter of certainty! Why, you even know one who used to be your companion in every kind of folly and sin—and he has sought and found the Savior! Did he not tell you so the other day? And there was one who seemed to be even worse than you—at least he went further in open sin than you have ever done—yet he sought the Lord and he was not rejected! Now, when I see so many come to Christ and find that He never casts out one of them, what ought I to infer from that? Why, that, He will not cast me out if I come to Him!

If from my Master's door I saw a stream of sinners coming back with sad countenances and all shaking their heads, and saying, "We have been denied admittance. We were too guilty to go in." Or, "We were not fit," or, "We were not sensitive enough," or something of that kind, then I think I should not dare to go. But if the footprints of sinners all run towards Christ and never is there a single footprint of a penitent sinner turned back by Him—if I see Him drawing men unto Himself according to His word, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me"—and if I never see Him repelling or repulsing one sinner, however black or crimson he may be, I may well say, "Come, my poor guilty Soul, why should you not have acceptance, too?" At any rate—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try—
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.
And if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died"—

for no sinner ever did seek Jesus Christ by faith in vain! That, surely, is good news from a far country!

And, once again, we have to bring *this* good news—that the Lord has not only made a way for His poor wandering children to come back to Him, but *He has provided all the means needed to bring them back.* You remember that when Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, to come to him in Egypt, Jacob could not believe that Joseph was still alive. The news that he was, under Pharaoh, ruler over all Egypt, seemed too good to be true! But when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent, then his spirit re-

vived. "Wagons" is the word in our translation, but I expect that Joseph also sent some of the best chariots that Egypt could produce to carry poor old Jacob and all his family down into Egypt. And I do not wonder that the spirit of the Patriarch revived when he saw those wagons or chariots! There is many a poor sinner who says, "Yes, I know that there is a way of salvation, but, then, my feet are lame, so how can I run along that way? I know that there is saving Truth of God in the Bible, and blessed be God for that, but how shall I ever learn that Truth? I know that Christ is Himself the Truth, but how can that Truth be mine? I know that there is eternal life and that Christ is the Life as well as the Truth and the Way, but I am spiritually dead—can I ever have that life?"

Yes, you can, for our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely the Way, but He is also the *power* by which we run in that way! He is not only the Truth, but He gives us the illuminating Spirit to lead us into the Truth! And He is not only the Life, but He puts that Life into us and sustains and perfects it! You have nothing to do, Sinner, but to give yourself up to the leading, guiding, directing, assisting, quickening of the blessed Spirit of God! It is true that you must believe, but He will give you the Grace of faith. It is true that you must repent, but it is also true that He works repentance in us. There must and there will be a change of life in all true converts but it is the Holy Spirit who converts you and turns you completely around. There must be sanctification in genuine Believers, but it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you. There is nothing asked of you in the Gospel but what the Gospel itself *gives* you! Those things which, in one part of Scripture, are put as precepts, are, in other parts of Scripture, among the promises! What the Lord bids the sinner do, He enables the sinner to do, just as when Jesus said to the man that was paralyzed, "Take up your bed and walk"—with the command He gave the power to obey it! And when He said to another man, "Stretch out your hand, withered though it is," the miraculous power that gave the nerves and muscles force, again, went with the mandate from the lips of Jesus! In like manner, trust the Lord to give you the power to lay hold on the Gospel. The very eye with which to look at the bronze serpent is His gift—and that gift He is prepared to bestow upon all who come to Him for it. Is not this good news from a far country?

And this, too, is good news—that *you may come to Christ at once.* If, at this moment, you are enabled to trust the Lord Jesus, He is yours! The way home looks very far, but the good news I have to bring you is that you can be there in a moment. That is to say, far off as you are from God, if you believe in Jesus, you are brought to God that very instant. As soon as the Holy Spirit enables you to trust in Jesus, you are brought near to God at once. What said our Savior to the dying thief? "This day shall you be with Me in paradise." You perhaps will not have an immediate entrance into the paradise above, but may live a little longer here, but, as soon as you do believe in Jesus, you shall be reconciled to God by the death of His Son—you shall have instantaneous forgiveness and, at the same time, it shall be as permanent as it is instantaneous, and as com-

plete as it is immediate. This is the good news which comes to you by the Gospel.

And what you have to do with it is this—believe the Father's Word and trust yourself wholly to what Christ has done for sinners. May the Divine Spirit take you off from all other ways of salvation and bring you to trust to this alone, and make you abhor and loathe even to detestation anything like confidence in your prayers, or your tears, your doings, your suffering, your preparation, your repenting—or anything else—for it is none but Jesus who can bring a sinner near to God! All that you spin, you will have to unravel. All that you build, will have to come down. All that you can bring to God, you will have to take back. You must come to Him empty-handed, with nothing of your own, and simply rest where God Himself rests—in the blessed Person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus who is All in All!

Now, if you are spiritually thirsty, this good news will be to you as a draught of cold water. But if you are not thirsty, you will not partake of it. It is little use to praise cold water to a man who is already drunk with the world's intoxicating draughts, or to those who have no thirst and who will despise it. If there is anyone here who does not feel that he is a sinner, or who thinks that he has no great guilt and who has no true sorrow of heart on account of his sin—I might as well walk into St. Paul's Cathedral and talk to the statues there, or into Westminster Abbey and preach to the dust beneath my feet, as preach to you! Cold waters are for the thirsty and the good news of mercy and salvation is for the guilty. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel your deep need and give you intense spiritual thirst, for, then, Jesus Christ and the good news from the far country would be precious to you!

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject which is, GOOD NEWS FROM HEAVEN FOR SAINTS. That also is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

Does someone ask, "Is there any news from Heaven?" Yes, there is, and that shall be my first remark in this part of my theme—*that news does still come from Heaven*. There is an invisible telegraph between us and the Glory Land. We are not cut off from communication with those who are there. Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to Heaven, but it was not merely a dream. Never was there anything more real than that vision of the night, for there is a blessed means of communication between this far-off land and the goodly land beyond the river. Our prayers and sighs and tears, our praises and thanksgivings get there all right—they are not lost *en route*. They reach the great heart of God and messages come down to us from Him in response to them. How do they come? Well, they come by the Holy Spirit sealing home to the soul the promises of the Word. Do you know, experimentally, what I mean by that?

Every now and then some blessed portion of Scripture seems as if it were set on fire and, as you read it, it blazes out before your eyes just as, sometimes, we see the lamps that are being prepared for an illumination. There is some grand device and, before it is lit up, it is little more than an

array of pipes—but how different it looks after they have lit it all! So, there is many a text of Scripture which is like that design—you can see something of what it means, but you should see it when it is lit up! How very different it is then! You sometimes get a promise from the Word whispered into your ear and it is just as new to you as if it had never been written down 1,800 or three or four thousand years ago! It is as fresh to you as if the eternal pen had written it today and written it for you, alone. Some of us—I hope many of us—know how the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to us—leads us into the very heart and soul of the precious blessings of the Covenant of Grace. This is as good news from a far country, and is as cold waters to a thirsty soul!

And often, too, *the Lord Jesus Christ sends us news concerning the fellowship which He intends us to enjoy with Him*. Still do godly men walk with God as Enoch did. Do not imagine that God has gone away and that no longer may we speak to Him as a man speaks with his friend. No, for, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Still does Jesus lay bare His heart to His beloved. Still may we say with the spouse and have the prayer answered, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." There is still sweet communion and blessed love passages between Christ and His chosen, of which the world knows not, but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant." Yes, there is good news from a far country for the saints of God!

And, dear Friends, *it should be our earnest aim to keep unbroken our communion with Heaven*, for it is the most refreshing thing beneath the sun. This world is like an arid desert where there is no water except as we maintain our communion with Christ. So long as I can say that the Lord is mine, all things here below are of small account. But if I once get a doubt about that matter and if I cease to walk with God, then what is there here below that can content my immortal spirit? Without Christ, this world is to us as thorns without the roses and as bitters without the sweets of life. But You, O Lord, make earth to be a Heaven to Your saints even when they lie in dungeons when Your Presence cheers them. But were they translated to the palaces of kings and thereby lost Your blessed company, those palaces would be worse than prison to them. It is most important that you who are obliged to mingle with the world, should maintain your communion with Christ, for that is the only way to keep yourself clear from its corruptions. And you who have much to do in the Church, must keep up your communion with Christ, for that is the only way of preserving your service from becoming mechanical and of preventing you from doing good works as a mere matter of routine. You, too, who have much to suffer or even much to enjoy, must keep up this holy communion or else your soul will soon be like a thirsty land where there is no water.

It may be that I am addressing some *who have not had much news lately from the far country of Heaven*. You are going there, one day, and—

"There your best friends, your kindred, dwell.
There God your Savior reigns"—

but you have had no news from there lately. If it is so with you, I hope you feel as some of us did a little while ago, when we were in the South of France. "No letters?" we asked, as the time came for our usual post. When the next day came and there were still no letters, we enquired, "What is the matter?" And they said, "There is deep snow on the railway, the trains cannot travel, so the mails cannot be brought in." Another day passed and as the snow was not gone, we had no letters. When the letters did come, they were very sweet—and all the sweeter because we had had to wait for them. And there were more of them than usual, for those that had been delayed came tumbling in two or three at a time. I hope it may be so with you and your good news from Heaven! If there have been any snow-drifts between your soul and Christ—and that does happen sometimes in this cold world—if there is, between you and the Savior, a chilly air and a frozen mass of unbelief so that the trains cannot travel to and fro—oh, cry mightily to the Lord to melt the snows and clear them away! And, I guarantee you, if you do so, when you get communication restored and fellowship renewed, it will be exceedingly sweet.

I hope you will often feel that you cannot have too much of it and seek to have more and more. Say, as the spouse did in the Song, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him and would not let Him go." Let this dark season of interrupted fellowship into which you have passed only make you the more desperately in earnest to get out of it, so that when that fellowship is restored, you may be able to say, "I held Him, and would not let Him go." Get such a firm grip of Him, again, such a grip as you had when first you knew Him—when the love of your espousals was upon you—when you were newly married to the blessed Bridegroom and say again, "I held Him, and would not let Him go." God grant to you that there may be no more lukewarmness, no more of being neither cold nor hot—and may the cold atmosphere through which you have passed in His absence make your heart grow all the warmer towards Him now that you have Him again! May you now cling to Him with an intensity of affection that you have never reached before!

What is this good news of which I have been speaking? Well, dear Friends, I think that this good news may be summed up thus. God is working in Providence and making all things work together for your good if you belong to Him. Your heart is heavy just now and your harp is hanging on the willows. Yet God is permitting that to happen for your good. The bitter medicines you have to take are nauseous to you, but they are to work together with other things for your good—therefore, be of good cheer!

The next piece of good news is that Jesus is pleading for you. Remember how He said to Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Jesus has your name upon His breastplate—yes, "engraved on the palms of

His hands." You are not forgotten of Him! Is not that good news? When somebody comes to you in a foreign land, you like to hear him say, "When I was at your home, they were all talking about you and they all sent loving messages to you. I saw your portrait in a locket and I could tell that you were not forgotten." You are glad to hear that—and Jesus has your names engraved on the palms of His hands and He is pleading for you before the Mercy Seat—you are not forgotten up there!

Another piece of good news is that He is coming here again—coming here for you—coming to be admired by you and the rest of His redeemed family when He comes to take His people up to their eternal home. The message which He has sent is, "Behold, I come quickly." What is your answer to that? I think I hear you say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It will not be very long before you will be with Him, or else He will be with you! In a short time you will have ended your pilgrimage here. The days of your banishment from Home will be over. Wait a little longer—only a few more tears and, then—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast."

Is not that good news?

There is another piece of news which you have often heard before—that is, that a great many of the saints have got Home already. There is good news from the Fair Havens! Many have entered there—thousands, millions—who have had as stormy a sea to traverse as you, yourself, have had, but their Pilot has brought them to their desired haven. Many, whom we loved on earth, have gone Home to be "forever with the Lord." They are all right. All is well with them. The sheep are getting Home to the fold! The children are going Home to their Father's house above!

I have another piece of good news and that is, beloved Brother or Sister, that there is a house there for you! Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it ready for you. There is a crown there which nobody's head but yours can ever wear. There is a seat in which none but yourself can sit. There is a harp that will be silent till your fingers strike its strings. There is a robe, made for you, which no one else can wear. And let me also tell you that they are needing you up there. "Oh," you say, "they are so happy and so perfect that they surely do not need *me*." But they do. What does Paul say in the Epistle to the Hebrews? "They without us should not be made perfect." Nor can they—there cannot be a perfect body till all the members are there! It cannot be a perfect Heaven till all the saints are there! Jesus Christ has not all the jewels of His crown, yet, and He will have a perfect crown. So they are looking for you and waiting and watching for you—and all is ready for your reception. You shall go Home soon, therefore live in hope and having this hope within you, purify yourselves, come out from the world more and more. "Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all

things unto Himself." There is good news for you! Is it not like cold waters to a thirsty soul?

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly. SOMETIMES, IN HEAVEN, THEY GET GOOD NEWS FROM EARTH.

Our text may be applied to the angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect—"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." We do not know how they receive news about us and it is no use speculating concerning the matter, but there is one thing that we are sure of—that is, *in Heaven they know when a sinner repents*, for our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." That is, to them, good news from a far country! The angels all know about Jesus having died. And every time they see a repenting sinner washed in the blood of the Atonement, they must rejoice for Jesus' sake because He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

I believe, too, Brothers and Sisters, that they get good news from a far country *when you who are running the Christian race run well.* For how does Paul put it in the 12th of Hebrews? Does he not tell us that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses? And who are these witnesses? Why, those he had been speaking of—those brave men and women who had performed such valorous deeds by the power of faith—whose names he had inscribed on the triumphal arch of the 11th Chapter of his Epistle. These are they who gaze upon us from their lofty seats and they see us as we run the race and note how we do it. And they clap their hands, as the spectators were known to do in the old Roman foot races, and rejoice over the Grace that is manifested in us—and it is as cold water to their souls when they see what God does for His struggling, suffering people.

And, moreover, there is another piece of good news that reaches the far country. That is *when the Church of God is being built up and the Gospel is spreading in the earth*. When the world was created, did not the morning stars sing together and shout for joy? And do you not think that as this new spiritual world is being fashioned by the pierced hands, the spirits above are looking down and watching the wondrous process? I am sure they do. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory and appear, not only to those who are watching here below, who are workers together with Him, but also to those who have gone above, who rejoice together with Him in His gracious work below!

And I believe it is also good news from a far country *when the saints, one by one, finish their course*. They get tidings up there when another saint is crossing the Jordan of death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," and it must be precious, also, in the sight of the angels and the redeemed from among men. John Bunyan pictures the shining ones as coming down to the river's brink and I can easily conceive that it is so. I can well imagine their glad welcome to the spirit as, disencumbered of this poor body, it comes forth from the stream of death

and taking it up to the pearly gates of the celestial city. Then that is good news from a far country!

I sometimes like to send a message Home by some whose hands I grasp as they are in the last article of death. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, said to one aged Christian who was dying, "I hope they have not forgotten to send for old Rowley." And then he added, "Take my love up to the three glorious Johns, the Apostle John, John Bunyan and John Newton." I have sometimes felt inclined to do the same. Surely, a spirit there will not forget anything that was good here below and pass, in utter unconsciousness, into the next world. It will have enough to do to think of Christ and to behold His Glory, but, perhaps the mind will be so expanded as to be able to think of other things besides. This, however, I do not know. But this I am sure of—that as one by one they for whom the Savior died, come Home, there must be joy. As they rejoice over repenting sinners, so do they rejoice over perfected saints who are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing and who come up cleansed and delivered from anything like sin through the precious blood of the Lamb. Then is there good news for them from the far country!

I cannot help feeling that I am addressing some who know nothing about the good news of which I have been speaking. For their benefit, let me tell you a story I have heard concerning one of our English pilots. A vessel was off the coast of Kent, gently sailing, as the seamen thought, towards their desired haven. A pilot who was watching them, observing the extreme danger in which they were, went at his utmost speed to warn them of their peril. He was hardly aboard before he shouted to the captain, "The Goodwins! The Goodwins!" They were almost on to those fatal sands and they did not know it. At once the course of the vessel was changed and all possible sail was set—and they were saved as by the skin of their teeth!

So, I come to you thoughtless, careless ones, and I cry to you, "Hell lies right ahead of you—eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the glory of His power! Steer your helm hard aport, up with such sail as you have and may God send the breath of His Eternal Spirit to blow you off these breakers which already seem booming with the certainty of your eternal doom!" O God, almighty and ever-merciful, save them by Your Grace! Save them by the precious blood of Jesus, for His dear name's sake! Amen and Amen.

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

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THE LIFE-LOOK
NO. 2867

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1904.

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"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other."
Isaiah 45:22.

I HAVE preached a good many times from this text. [The following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage, have been previously published—No. 60, Volume 2—*Sovereignty and Salvation* and No. 2805, Volume 48—*Life for a Look*—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I hope to do so, if life is spared, many more times. It was about 26 years ago—twenty-six years exactly last Thursday—that I looked unto the Lord and found salvation through this text. You have often heard me tell how I had been wandering about, seeking rest and finding none, till a plain, unlettered lay preacher among the Primitive Methodists stood up in the pulpit and gave out this passage as his text—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." He had not much to say, thank God, for that compelled him to keep on repeating his text and there was nothing needed—by me, at any rate—except his text! I remember how he said, "It is Christ that speaks. 'I am in the garden in an agony, pouring out My soul unto death. I am on the tree, dying for sinners—look unto Me! Look unto Me!'

"That is all you have to do! A child can look! One who is almost an idiot can look! However weak, or however poor a man may be, he can look! And if he looks, the promise is that he shall live." Then, stopping, he pointed to where I was sitting under the gallery and he said, "That young man there looks very miserable." I expect I did, for that is how I felt. Then he said, "There is no hope for you, young man, or any chance of getting rid of your sin but by looking to Jesus." And he shouted, as I think only a Primitive Methodist can, "Look! Look, young man! Look now!" And I did look and when they sang a hallelujah before they went home, in their own earnest way, I am sure I joined in it. It happened to be a day when the snow was lying deep and more was falling, so, as I went home, those words of David kept ringing through my heart, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow"—and it seemed as if all Nature was in accord with that blessed deliverance from sin which I had found in a single moment by looking to Jesus Christ!

I have always felt inclined, when this time of the year comes round, to preach from this text. I have sometimes thought—"They will suppose I must go over the same ground again and give them the same sermon and

so, perhaps, I shall not have so attentive an audience." I cannot help it if it is so, for I must preach from this text. As it was blessed to me, I hope it will be blessed to somebody else. I wanted to preach from it last Thursday night, on the exact anniversary of my spiritual birthday, but I was led to take another text and I am glad I was, for, when I entered my vestry tonight, I found on the table this note—"Mr. Spurgeon, I want to tell you that your 'good news' [Sermon No. 2866, Volume 50—"Good News"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] last Thursday, was the means of reclaiming a wanderer. How good of Jesus to take such an one as I am back and give me the joy I had when first I knew Him!" The writer enclosed a thanksgiving offering and blessed the name of the Lord. So, this text has been reserved for tonight and who knows but that there has come here somebody who was not here on Thursday night, and whom the Lord intends to bless? I only hope it may be so! Indeed, I *know* it will be so!

Let us read the text again. "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other." This message is addressed, as you perceive, not to the Israelites, but to the Gentiles—to the nations at the very ends of the earth. Alas, many of these nations have long been looking to their idols. They do not feel at rest. They know that they lack something and very earnestly are devout heathens looking to their false gods for what they need. They make great sacrifices and spend vast sums of money upon their idol temples—but salvation does not come and cannot come through these false gods. Jehovah bids them look to Him, that they may be saved. Some among the nations are throwing off the yoke of superstition, but, sad to say, they seem to be falling into skepticism instead. The Hindu, when educated, turns from his idols only to make an idol of his own judgment. Many men worship their own wisdom. They hope, by searching, to find out the Almighty unto perfection—and this theory and that they promulgate and say—"This form of thought and the other will emancipate the human mind." Ah, it is not so! "The world by wisdom," in the old Socratic and philosophic days worked out that problem, and the result was that they "knew not God," but, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." And that is where man, with his great thought and wisdom, always drifts to some absurdity or another. Only Jehovah can save mankind! Philosophy is powerless in this matter.

The nations have been looking long, first to this thing and then to that, to save them. Sometimes they have looked for some great conqueror who will break the yoke of oppression and set the people free. But how often have they been deceived and the idols of the democracy have turned out to be the grossest tyrants that ever lived. Then there are various international and other societies formed by which men are to lift themselves up by confederation. They will look there, too, in vain—though all men should join hand in hand, they cannot do it. If they looked to God, there would be accomplished what all mankind would not be able to perform! One man advises this policy. Another pleads for that form of government. One has this idea and the other has another. And,

every now and then, there seems to be a craze for something or other. Just now we are told that civilization will do away with war and I know not what besides. All evil is to be extinguished by the growth of commerce. But the Lord of Hosts has willed it that nothing shall save the nations but Himself and this poor, bleeding earth needs to be told, again and again, that, for her wounds—and she has many of them—there is no healing liniment but that which flows from the hands, feet and side of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! From the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, she is full of "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," and for all these there is no cure but the blessed balm that flowed from Jesus' heart on Calvary—no remedy but the one Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "Look unto Me," He says, "and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is no other." O Lord, turn the eyes of the nations to Yourself and to Your Son! When this happens, then shall the day of the world's salvation have fully come!

The general principle holds good in each particular case. As it is with the nations at the ends of the earth, so must it be with me, so must it be, dear Friends, with you. There is no salvation but by looking unto God in Christ. Let us try to turn that thought over, not merely with the view of thinking of it, but that we may carry it into effect—that if there is salvation to be had, we may have it, and have it at once. O God, grant that it may be so!

First, we shall ask, *What does the word, "Look," mean in reference to God?* Secondly, *for what part of salvation are we to look to God*? Thirdly, *what is our encouragement to look?* And, fourthly, *when is the best time to look?*

I. First, Jehovah says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." WHAT DOES THIS WORD, LOOK, MEAN? It means a great deal more than I can tell you, but, among other things, it means this—

First, *consider that there is a God* and enthrone Him in your mind as a real Person, the one living and true God. You have been trying to cure yourself of your spiritual maladies. Now think of God as the great Physician of your soul. Let your mind turn towards Him. You are like that young man who left his father's house and whose circumstances became so bad, through his own fault, that he was obliged to take up very low and mean employment. And yet, with all that he did do, he did not earn enough to fill his belly. The best thing that he could do was to remember that he had a father—and the happiest day for him was when he came back to his father and received a loving welcome from him.

You say that you are not happy, you are not at rest, your conscience is disturbed and you have tried ever so many things in order to get peace. Now, think about your God. Think about the loving Father who receives His wandering prodigal children and as you think of Him, you will have begun to look to Him. While you are thinking about Him, I wish you would remember this concerning Him—that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Think of that wonderful Truth that God came here in human flesh and blood and, for us men and for our salvation died a cruel death upon the

tree. Turn that over and over, again, for it is there that your only hope of salvation lies. Do think of that. Read often—

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

Think over all the details of it. Accustom yourself to look towards God in Christ Jesus in your thoughts and contemplations. By the blessing of the Holy Spirit, this will breed faith in you. Set your face that way—look at God as He has revealed Himself in the Person of the great Propitiation, Jesus Christ, His Son.

Looking to God means, however, more than that. When you have considered Him and taken Him into your calculations, then *address yourself to Him*. Speak to Him! Tell Him where you are and what you are. Tell Him what you feel and what you do not feel, what you ought to feel and what you wish to feel. Tell Him what you want which you have not yet got. If you cannot pray, tell Him so. If you cannot repent and cannot believe, tell Him so. Only speak to Him, for that speaking will be a turning to look and I find that the Hebrew word used here is not so well expressed by the word, "look," as by the phrase, "turning to look." If I want to look at the clock above my head, I must turn to look at it. In that fashion, I want you to turn towards God, to consider Him and then to speak to Him. Tell Him that you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace. Tell Him whatever you know to be the truth—do not mock Him with mere words that do not come from your heart, but let your heart speak to Him. Address Him, for that is looking to Him.

Only, *mind that you get to God*. The mischief is, dear Friends, that we often stop somewhere short of God when we are seeking salvation. A Romanist, for instance, erects a crucifix and bows down before it. The original intention of the crucifix, no doubt, was to help the person who used it to remember the death of Christ—but frequently the thought rests on the *crucifix*, instead of upon the Christ. If the Romanist says that he does not worship the image, it is not true, because there is a certain, "Our Lady of Lourdes," and another, "Notre Dame de la Garde," and other, "Our Ladies." Why is it that the Virgin Mary, in a certain church, or a certain town, works great cures and gets more worship than "Our Lady" in a certain other place? The fact is, it is the *image that is worshipped*, and so is it with the crucifix—*that* gets the Romanists' worship—not the Christ. They stop there.

But why do I talk about this to you Protestants? Why, because many of you do the same in other respects! You say, "Now, if I am to be converted, I ought to read the Bible." Yes, that is quite right. Read the Bible, but, if you stop at the Bible, you will no more get to God than if you stop at the crucifix! What you need is to get to God through what you read and not merely o come to the Book. The Bible, or the most gracious words, or the most appropriate collects, or the most pious prayers cannot save you! You must pass through these things, which ought to be helps, and not make them into barriers, for, if you make them into barriers by stopping there, you never will be saved. You have to get to God, dear Heart—to God in Jesus Christ—and I pray you, do not stop till you feel,

"I have spoken to God in Jesus Christ. I have confessed to Him my sins. I have sought His forgiveness. I have asked Him for mercy." You are sure to get it if you have done so.

But if you stop at this point—"I have prayed so often, I have read so much," these very readings and praying will get to be idols and they will keep you away from God! I used to, when seeking the Lord, often read Doddridge's *"Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*," and an admirable book it is. I also red Baxter's "*Call to the Unconverted*." I would wake up as soon as the sun was up in the morning that I might read these books! But I must confess that for many a day I stopped at Doddridge's "*Rise and Progress*" and Baxter's "*Call*." When I had read so much and tried to feel what those good men said, there I stuck. Oh, that I had gone to Christ before! Oh, that I had got away from Doddridge's "*Rise and Progress*" and Baxter's "*Call*," and gone to Jesus Christ Himself! I am not finding fault with those books—I commend them, but I find fault with myself for making so bad a use of the books. In like manner, I do not find fault with prayer or the reading of the Scriptures—God forbid! But I do complain of putting prayer and the reading of the Scriptures into the place of getting to God, for it is looking to Him as He is revealed in Jesus Christ that will save the soul and nothing short of that, be it what it may, will do so! Therefore, looking to God means that we are to consider God and then to address ourselves to Him.

In the next place, to look to Him means that *we must know that if we are ever to be saved salvation must come from God alone.* Learn this O Man, that you are helpless and hopeless apart from God—that you are shut up and cannot come forth, bound with fetters of iron, and laid like the dead in their graves, numbered among the slain like those that go down into the pit—and no arm can help you but the arm of the Omnipotent! Nothing can save you but the blood of Jesus Christ!

Then, next, to look to Him means *expect that He will save you.* Oh, what a step that is for anyone to take! I would that, by God's Grace, you might take it, saying, "Nobody but God can save me. Salvation comes from Him, but He is gracious, He has given His dear Son to die for sinners. I, a sinner—the most unworthy, perhaps, who ever lived—will, nevertheless, dare to hope that I shall be saved. No, more—

"'He has promised to receive
All who on His Son believe'—

"so I will now trust His Son and look to Him to give me full and free salvation because I trust Him." Joseph Hart's hymn puts it—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Some have objected to the verse because, they say, it is not a venture. It is very easy to be too critical. It is a venture to the sinner's thoughts—it appears to him to be a venture—and you must not expect him to talk as you wise men talk! Do not put into a sinner's mouth words that would be above his range of thought. I know it seemed a wonderful venture to me. I thought, "Can it be true that this is all I have to do? Have I to believe

God's Grace in Christ and trust myself only to that?" Why, if the minister had said, "You must go home and take a whip and flog yourself—20 lashes will do"—I tell you I would have laid them on as heavily as I could, for I would have felt, "I will make sure work of it" and they would have been 20 of the sweetest cuts that ever a man endured! If they made me smart, I would have blessed God for them, so long as I received mercy through them. But there was nothing in the Gospel about lashing myself—nothing even about lashing my *conscience*—I was simply told to look to God as He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ—and I did so and thus I was saved!

Possibly someone asks, "Does that faith make any difference to a man?" It makes all the difference in the world! Suppose you have a bad servant who is always doing wrong things and you find out that the great reason why he so provokes you is that he does not believe in you and has no respect for you? But, one day you convince him of your kind feeling towards him and prove to him that all you wish is for his good and that you have been seeking his good all the while you have had him. Now that man is saved from his ugly temper by believing you to be good and kind and, from the moment when this change takes place, there is nothing too much for him to do for you! That is just the effect that faith in God has upon a sinner's moral character. Before you believe in God, you do not care much about Him. It is true that you may do a few good works with the hope of thereby getting salvation—just as your servant does as much or as little as he dares do for the sake of his wages. But, oh, when once you believe in God and serve Him out of love, then you become like those old-fashioned servants that our grandmothers used to have—we cannot get them now. They used to serve their masters and mistresses from motives of affection—those old body-servants that the squires and dames used to have who would cleave to them, wages or no wages, because they loved them so! What a grand thing it is to have faith in the heart! It will save a man entirely from his old ways, his old lusts and his old sins by making him love God and serve God out of love, which is the mightiest transforming motive that was ever implanted in the bosom of a lost soul! This is how God saves men—by leading them to trust in Him in Jesus Christ.

II. Secondly, FOR WHAT PART OF SALVATION ARE WE TO LOOK TO GOD?

For every part of it, from beginning to end and, first, *for the pardon of sin* you must look to God in Christ, for who can pardon an offense except the person who was offended? If somebody over there has offended a Brother, yonder, it would be no use for me to say to that person, "I forgive you the offense." The other Brother might say, "The wrong was not done to you, it was done to me! Only I, who have been offended, can forgive the offense." So, if you need the pardon of your sin, it is evident that it can only come from God. But you tell me that you feel as if you were not fit to be forgiven? Very well then, if there is such a fitness—I know there is none—but if there is any truth in what you mean, that fitness must be given you by God and you must look to Him for it—

"True belief and true repentance—
Every Grace that brings you nigh—
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

Possibly you say to me, "It is not merely that I need to have my sins forgiven—*I want to become a new man*." You must look for that, also, to God. I think that the best man to clean a watch is the watchmaker—and the best person to renew the heart is the God who made the heart. He who made you can alone remake you. There is no power under Heaven except the power that created you, which can create you anew in Christ Jesus! So you must look to God for that.

But you say, "Well, if I were made a new man, I fear that I would go back to my old sins. *Must I not trust to something to keep me* ?" No, to nothing but God, for all the bonds and all the devices that men make to keep themselves from sin are of no more strength than a spider's web. God must keep you alive as well as make you live. "For I am God," He says, "and there is no other." Rest in the almighty power of God to keep you from going back to sin after He has rescued you from it.

You know, also, that you must be perfect, or you can never enter Heaven. *How are you to become perfect?* Well, you must look to God for that, too, for He, the perfectly Holy One, can sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul and body. May your faith embrace the whole of salvation and see it to be all in God in Christ—and look to God in Christ Jesus for it all!

III. Our third question is, WHAT IS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOOK TO GOD?

I tried to show you what it was to look—to consider God, to speak with Him, to trust in Him as He is revealed in Christ Jesus and to rest wholly in Him. You say, "What is my encouragement to do that and to expect that thus I shall be saved? May I do it? I know that trusting in Christ saves men, but *may* I trust Him?"

Your encouragement to do this is, first of all, *God's command*—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." We, certainly, almost beyond the inhabitants of any other country, might have been called "the ends of the earth." There was a time when England was reckoned to be the Ultima Thule—the far-off land. It was supposed that there could be nothing beyond the British Islands. When the Prophet spoke, these were the very ends of the earth, so, surely, God commands you, my dear Hearer, to look unto Him, inasmuch as you belong to the ends of the earth! If you tell me that you come from America, well, you also come from the ends of the earth. Do you say that you come from Australia? That is another of the ends of the earth. Some of you sail round the world—well, sometime or other, you have been at the ends of the earth and you know that when God sends His command to the ends of the earth it always includes everything within its bounds. He certainly commands the middle as well as the ends. Those who are farthest off from Him are bid to look unto Him and, as He commands you to do it, what better warrant can you desire than His command? The Gospel command is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." You never ought to say, "May I believe?" for God *commands* you to do so, and

threatens you with punishment if you do not, for He says, "He that believes not shall be damned." The only warrant for a sinner's believing is the command of the Gospel! Oh, that you might be encouraged by that!

The next encouragement for you is *God's promise*—"Look unto Me, and be you saved"—as much as to say, "As surely as you look, you are saved. When you look, you are saved." Does it not mean that? If anyone said to you, "Sit down and eat and be filled," you would not say, "He only means that I am to sit down at a bare table"—you would feel sure that he meant that there should be something on the table of which you might freely eat. So, Sinner, do but look to the Lord! Turn your eyes in confidence to God in Christ Jesus, for there is no other God and no other Savior—and when you have done this, you shall be saved at once!

Still further to encourage you, you have *the fact of His Godhead*—"for I am God." You need a God to save you. You have a great load of sin resting upon you, but the Omnipotent can lift it off your shoulders. Then, there are the bonds of iniquity—the old habits of 40 years, perhaps of 50 years—but Christ can tear away the iron net, break the chains and set the captive free in a moment, for He is God! Were the Savior any less than Divine, I would not dare to encourage sinners to believe in Him! But here is a Divine Savior infinitely strong and infinitely gracious, so, you blackest, foulest, vilest sinner, why should you not obey the command of my text and look unto Him, expecting mercy and favor from Him?

Another encouragement to you comes from *God's character*. He knew that you sinners would be afraid that His justice would stand in your way and that, though able to save you, He might not do it because you have been such great sinners and He must punish you. So kindly read what He says in the latter part of the 21st verse—"There is no God besides Me: a just God and a Savior: there is none besides Me." God can justly save you by His wondrous plan of Substitution. If you look unto Him, He will not mar the integrity of His government or the severity of His justice in order to save you, for, by the blood of His dear Son, His Law has been so magnified and made so honorable that He can be as just in pardoning as He would have been just in punishing! This Doctrine of the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ is the marvelous mystery of the Gospel, the greatest of all revealed Truths of God and this ought to take away from the guilty conscience everything that makes it fear to trust God! God's justice is satisfied by Jesus' death—therefore, trust Him! I implore you, trust Him! Did you know the joy that faith brings—could you but understand the peace, the liberty, the transport, the bliss which simple confidence in Christ will bring to you—you would not need my pleadings, but you would say, "Blessed Jesus, I rush into Your arms, accepting You as my Savior and rejoicing in Your great salvation!"

IV. Our last question was to be, WHAT IS THE BEST TIME IN WHICH TO LOOK TO THE LORD?

I answer—the best time is God's time. And when is God's time? What does the Holy Spirit say is the best time? "*Today*, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." This is God's time—today. I do not remember, nor do I think there is in the whole Bible, a single precept ad-

dressed to the sinner requiring him to repent and believe tomorrow, or next week. The Gospel promise runs, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But it does not say, "Believe next February." Or, "Believe next March," or, "next year." It is understood that every Gospel precept or command is for this present moment. God Himself, my Hearer—not I, poor, feeble man, but God Himself says to you, "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." And He says this to you at this very moment!

What is your answer? What reply shall I give to Him who sent me to you with this message? Will you have Him to be the Savior, or will you not? Say one or the other, whichever you will! If I may plead with you, I urge you to say, "Yes." from your very heart. But I shall be almost satisfied if you will say one or the other, for that will bring you to the point. But if you say, "no," it may be that, having taken up that position, you may begin to think where you are and you will go home saying, "I have refused to look to Christ. I have refused the great salvation and deliberately said, 'I will not look for salvation in God through Jesus Christ.'"

I wish, Sinner, that you would even do that rather than act as so many do who say, "Go your way for this time. When we have a more convenient season, we will send for you." For that tends to quiet conscience, although the convenient season never comes and Felix is most *infelix*. There is nothing felicitous in what he says. Happy by name, he is most unhappy in his fatal procrastination concerning this all-important matter! I must have an answer to give to Him that sent me. Will you now be saved or not? God sets the time—the time is now—so, say, "Yes," or, "No."

Let me, however, remind you that *the present is the only time you have*. The past is gone—the future may never come. Should it come, it will be present when it does come. On this winged hour all eternity hangs. Possibly you are thinking of what you will do when you get home—but you do not know that you will get there. Do not many fall in the street never to rise again? You are calculating upon what you will do tomorrow. The image of death will be on your face when you are asleep—are you quite sure that you will ever awake from that form of death into real life again? May not that bed become your sepulcher? You have planned what you intend to do on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday—yet you know not what a day may bring forth! There is a seat, just there, that may speak to some of you. There used to sit, in that pew, one who was well known to you. He came home from business feeling slightly unwell. The doctor was sent for, but our friend was dead before he arrived. Why should not that which has happened to many others who have attended here, happen also to you, or to me? "Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes."

If I knew how to preach to you so that I might win men to believe in Jesus Christ, God knows that there is nothing that I would not say, or leave unsaid, that might conduce to that end. I know that there is no

power in mere rhetoric or oratory, so I have chosen to speak to you very plainly and simply, without any ornament of speech and almost without an illustration—so that he who runs may read. It is not one half as much my business, dear Hearer, that you should be saved as it is yours! When I have faithfully delivered the word of salvation, I wash my hands of you. If you refuse it, I cannot help it.

At your own door must your doom lie and at your own door alone. Yet would I pluck you by the sleeve and say, "Dear Friend, you do need to be saved. Salvation must come from God and He bids you look to Him for it. Trust His Son for it. God in Christ must be your hope. Will you trust Him? Do you understand me? Simply relying upon the Atoning Sacrifice, trusting in it, resting in it, believing God to be God and henceforth yielding yourself up to be ruled by His goodness—believing Christ to be able to save you and yielding yourself up to be saved by Him and guided in the way of holiness and peace—believing that the blood of Jesus can take away your sin and trusting to it so to do—if so it be, it is done and you are saved!"

The salvation has commenced which will never end, for, in the simple act of faith, there lies a living seed which the devil himself cannot crush—which, though it is small as the mustard seed, will begin to swell, and germinate, and send forth its shoots till it shall be such a tree that many a happy bird of the air shall come and sit and sing among its branches! And your life, made happy and shaded by this blessed faith in Jesus, shall then bring forth fruit unto God and the end shall be everlasting life! God grant that it may be so, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 45.

The first paragraph concerns Cyrus and the great work for which God raised him up.

Verses 1-4. *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; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces 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. 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.* A remarkable prophecy, issued long before the time of Cyrus, foretelling that he would conquer Babylon and destroy it. And, though for many a day Cyrus knew nothing about the Most High God, yet he was used, in the Lord's hands, for wonderful purposes! Sometimes a man may have been used of God for great ends without his own knowledge. When, however, he comes to the discovery of that fact, as he may if he will but think it over, should he not reverently bow before the Most High

and worship Him who, though unknown to him, had been his Helper and his Friend?

5, 6. *I am the LORD, and there is no other. 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 no other.* Those who believe in idols think that there may be many lords and many gods, but he who is a true follower of Jehovah knows that there can be no other god besides Him. He fills all space and there is no room for another. There is but one Creator, one Preserver and one God who alone is to be worshipped.

7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these things.* Cyrus was a believer in two gods—one, the god of light and the other, the god of darkness. Hence this declaration from God's servant, the Prophet, that there was no prince of darkness who was a god, but that all things were made by the one Most High God.

8-11. *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 your work say, He has no hands? Woe unto him that says unto his father, What did you beget? Or to the woman, What have you brought forth? 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.* Note the tone which God uses. He speaks like a God and claims to be above the questioning of His creatures. These verses remind us of what the Apostle Paul wrote—"No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God is the great Sovereign over all and He claims a Sovereign's place. He does as He wills, but He always wills to do that which is just and right.

12-17. *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. 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. Thus says the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchandise 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 no other, there is no God. Verily You are a God that hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior. 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 by the LORD with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.* If you are God's people, you have a God of whom you need never be ashamed and One

who will not leave you to be ashamed of your confidence and hope. Those that trust to false gods will be ashamed. Those that rest upon themselves will be confounded. But stay yourself upon God, O Man, and you shall never be ashamed, world without end!

18, 19. *For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; and 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 no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain; I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.* Here is the Glory of our God—that His every Word is true and that He has never said, in any place, that which contradicts what He has spoken in public to His people. You may safely rest upon the God who is always the same, who never plays fast and loose with His promises, or speaks anything in secret contrary to His pledged Word. He is as true as He is Sovereign—therefore stay yourselves upon Him.

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 engraved image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell and bring them near, yes, let them take counsel together: who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I the LORD?* He challenges all the idols to prove that they had uttered any true prophecy—that they had spoken about Cyrus, or anybody else from ancient times, so that the prophecy was literally fulfilled. There were dark double-meaning oracles with which the false priests mocked their votaries, but the true Words of God—His ancient prophecies—proved Him to be the only real and true God.

21-23. *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 no other. 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.* Glory be to God, it will be so in the latter days! It shall come to pass that the Truth of God shall be universally triumphant and the one God who made the heavens and the earth shall be worshipped both by Heaven and by earth, without any discordant note.

24, 25. *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.

"READY, YES, READY!"
NO. 2868

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"Ready to perish." Isaiah 27:13. ***"Ready to forgive." Psalm 86:5.*** ***"The graves are ready for me." Job 17:1.***

WHEN attempting to prepare for this service, I found it impossible to fix my mind upon any one subject. This afternoon I had to take rather a long journey to visit a friend who is sick unto death. And at his bedside I trust I have learned some lessons of encouragement and have been animated by witnessing the joy and peace which God grants to His children in their declining hours. Finding that I could not fix upon any one subject, I thought that I would have three. It may be that out of the three, there will be one intended by Divine Grace for a third of the audience, the second for another third and the other for the rest, so that there will be a portion of meat in due season for all. You know, dear Friends, that the motto of our navy is, "Ready, yes, ready!" That is something like my present subject, for I have three texts in which the word, "Ready," occurs, each time in a different connection.

I. The first text will be especially addressed to those who are under concern of soul, having been led, by the enlightening influence of the Divine Spirit, to see their state by nature and to tremble in the prospect of their deserved doom. The text which will suit their case is in Isaiah 27:13—"READY TO PERISH." "They shall come which were ready to perish."

By nature, all men, whether they know it or not, are ready to perish. Human nature is, like a blind man, always in danger. No, worse than that, it is like a blind man upon the verge of a tremendous cliff, ready to take the fatal step which will lead to his destruction. The most callous and proud, the most careless and profane cannot, by their indifference or their boasting, altogether evade the apprehension that their state, by nature, is alarming and defenseless. They may try to laugh it away from their minds, but they cannot laugh away the fact. They may shut their eyes to it, but they shall no more escape, by shutting their eyes, than does the silly ostrich escape from the hunter by thrusting its head into the sand. Whether you will have it so, or not, fast young man in the dawn of your days—whether you will have it so, or not, blustering merchant in the prime of your age—whether you will have it so, or not, har-

dened old man in the petrified state of your moral conscience—it is so—you are ready to perish!

Your jeers cannot deliver you. Your sarcasms about eternal wrath cannot quench it. And all your contemptuous scorn and your arrogant pride cannot evade your doom—they do but hasten it. There are some persons, however, who are aware of their danger—to them I speak. They are fitly described by the Spirit of God in these words of the Prophet—"The great trumpet shall be blown and they shall come which were ready to perish." Having passed through this anguish, myself, I think I can describe, from experience, what some of you are now suffering.

You are ready to perish, in the first place, because *you feel sure that you will perish*. You did not think so once, but you do now. Once you could afford to put away the thought, with a laugh, as a matter which might, or might not, be true, but, anyway, it did not much concern you. But now you feel that you will be lost as surely as if it could be demonstrated to you by logic. In fact, the Divine logic of the Law of God has thundered it into your soul and you know it. You feel it to be certain that you shall, before long, be driven from the Presence of God with that terrible sentence, "Depart, you cursed." If any unbeliever should tell you that there is no wrath to come, you would reply, "There is, for I feel it is due me. My conscience tells me that I am already condemned and before long I am quite certain to drink of the wormwood and the gall of the wrath of God."

You have signed your own death warrant, you have put on the black cap and condemned yourself. Or, rather, you have pleaded guilty before your Judge—you have said, "Guilty, my Lord," and now you think you see before your eyes the scaffold and yourself ready to be executed. You feel it to be so sure that you even anticipate the Judgment Day—you dreamed of it, the other night, and you thought you heard the trumpet of the archangel opening all the graves and wakening all the dead. You have already, in imagination, stood before the bar of God! You feel your sentence to be so certain that conscience has read it over in your hearing and anticipated its terrors. You are among those who are ready to perish, so permit me to say that I am glad you have come here, for this is the very spot where God delights to display His pardoning Grace! He is ready to save those who are thus ready to perish. Those who write themselves down as lost are the special objects of our Savior's mission of mercy, for, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

You are ready to perish, in another sense, for *you feel as if your perishing was very near*. You are like the dying man who gasps for breath and thinks that each gasp will be his last—his pulse is feeble, his tongue is dry with feverish heat, the clammy sweat is on his brow. The Valley of the Shadow of Death casts its gloomy shade on his pale cheeks and he feels that he will soon die. Is it not thus that some of you feel just now? You feel that you are coming near to the wrath of God. I have known the day when, as I lay down to rest, I dreaded the thought that, perhaps, I should never awake in this world, or, at mid-day I have walked in the

fields and wondered that the earth did not open and swallow me up! A terrible noise was in my ears—my soul was tossed to and fro—I longed to find a refuge, but there seemed to be none, while always ringing in my ears were the words, "The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!" "The wrath to come!"

Oh, how vividly is the wrath to come pictured before the eyes of the awakened sinner! He does not look upon it as a thing that is to come in ten, twelve, or 20 years, but as a thing that may be before long, yes, even today! He looks upon himself as ready to perish because his final overthrow appears to be so close. I am glad if any of you are in this plight, for God does not thus alarm men unless He has purposes of mercy concerning them and designs for their good! He has made you fear you are perishing that you may have no perishing to fear! He has brought it home to you in this life that He may remove it forever from you in the life that is to come! He has made you tremble now, that you may not tremble then. He has put before you these dreadful things that, as with a fiery finger, they may point you to Christ, the only Refuge and, as with a thundering voice, they may cry to you, as the angels cried to Lot, "Escape for your life, look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed!"

It may be that I am also addressing some who not only realize the sureness and the nearness of their destruction, but *they have begun to feel it*. "Begun to feel it," asks someone, "is that possible?" Yes, that it is. When day and night God's hand is heavy upon us and our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, we begin to know something of what a sinner feels when Justice and the Law are let loose upon him. Did you ever read John Bunyan's, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*? There was a man who had, even here, foretastes of the miseries of the lost. And there are some of us who can, even now, hardly look back to the time of our conviction without a shudder. I hope there is not a creature alive who has had deeper convictions than I had, or five years of more intolerable agony than those which crushed the very life out of my youthful spirit. But this I can say—that terror of conscience, that alarm about the wrath of God, that intense hatred of past sin and yet consciousness of my inability to avoid it in the future were such combinations of thought that I can only describe them in George Herbert's words—

"My thoughts are all a case of knives
Breaking my poor heart."

Oh, the tortures of the man who feels his guilt, but does not know the remedy for it! To look leprosy in the face, but not to know that it may be healed! To walk the hospital and hear that there is no physician there! To see the flame, but not to know that it can be quenched! To be in the dungeon, but never to know the rescue and deliverance! O you that are ready to perish, I sympathize with you in your present sufferings, but I do not lament them! This is the way in which God begins with those whom He intends to bless—not to the same degree in all, but yet after the same kind. He destroys our confidence in our own works and then gives us confidence in Christ's work. You know how Bunyan describes

Christian as being much tumbled up and down in his mind. And when his wife and children came round about him, he could only tell them that the city in which they lived was to be destroyed—and though his easy-going neighbors told him not to believe it and not to make such a fuss about it, the truth had come home to him with too much power to be put away. Atheist might say it was all a lie and Pliable might give slight heed to it and pretend to believe it for a season, but Christian knew it to be true, so he ran to the wicket gate, and the Cross, that he might escape from the wrath to come. To the careless, these words, "Ready to perish," should sound an alarm. May God the Holy Spirit, while I preach upon the second text, enable me to blow the great trumpet of the jubilee! May the gladsome sound reach the heart of him that is ready to perish! May he know that Divine Mercy brought him here that he might find a God ready to pardon!

II. My second text is in Psalm 86:5—"READY TO FORGIVE." Does not that ring like a silver bell? The other was a doleful note, like that of St. Sepulcher's bell when it tolls the knell of a criminal about to be executed—"Ready to perish." But this rings like a marriage peal—"Ready to forgive. Ready to forgive." What does it mean when it says that God is ready to forgive?

"Ready" means, as you all know, *prepared*. A man is not ready to go by railway until his trunk is packed and he is about to start. A man cannot be said to be ready to emigrate till he has the means to pay his passage and the different things needed for his transit, and for his settling down when he gets to his destination. No road is ready till it is cleared. Nothing is ready, in fact, till it is prepared. Sinner, God is ready to forgive—that is, everything is prepared by which you may be forgiven! The road used to be blocked up but Jesus Christ has, with His Cross, tunneled every mountain, filled every valley and bridged every chasm so that the way of pardon is now fully prepared. There is no need for God to say, "I would pardon this sinner, but how shall My justice be honored?" Sinner, God's justice has been satisfied, the sin of all who believe, or who ever will believe, was laid upon Christ when He died upon the tree! If you believes in Him, your sin was punished upon Him and it was forever put away by the great Atonement which He offered, so that, now, the righteous God can come out of the ivory palace of His mercy, stretch out His hands of love and say, "Sinner, I am reconciled to you. Be you reconciled to Me."—

"Sprinkled now with blood, the Throne,
Why beneath your burdens groan?
All the wrath on Him was laid
Justice owns the ransom paid."

In the case of the ancient Israelites, it was necessary that the sacrifice should be slain and be burned upon the altar. So, the Divine Victim has been slain upon Calvary. Once and for all, the Sacrifice for sin has been offered by Jesus, accepted by the Father and witnessed by the Holy Spirit. God is ready—that is to say, He is prepared—to forgive all who will believe in Jesus Christ! You think that much preparation is needed on your part, but you are greatly mistaken. All things are ready! The oxen

and the fatlings are killed, the feast is spread, the servants are sent with the invitations to the banquet—all you have to do, poor Penitent, is to come and sit down and eat with thankfulness to the great Giver of the feast! The bath is filled, O black Sinner, so come and wash! The garment is woven from the top throughout, O you naked, so come and put it on! The price is paid, O you ransomed ones, so take your blood-bought liberty! All is done. "It is finished," rings from Calvary's summit! God is ready to forgive!

But the word, "ready," means something more than prepared. We sometimes use the term to indicate that *a thing can be easily done*. We ask, "Can you do such-and-such a thing?" "Oh, yes!" you reply, "readily." Or perhaps we remind you of a promise you have given and ask if you can carry it out. And you say, "Oh, yes! I am quite ready to fulfill my engagement." Sinner, it is an easy thing for God to forgive you! "Indeed," you say, "but you don't know where I was last night." No, and I don't want to know. But it is easy for God to pardon anybody who is not in Hell. But you ask, "How can He do it? "He speaks and it is done! He has but to say to you, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven," and it is done! Pardon is an instantaneous work! Justification is rapid as a lightning flash. You may be black one moment and as white as alabaster the next! Guilty—absolved! Condemned—Acquitted! Lost—found! Dead—made alive! It takes the Lord no time to do this—He does it easily.

O Brothers and Sisters, if He could make a world with a word. If He could say, "Let there be light," and there was light—surely, now that Christ has offered up Himself as a bleeding Sacrifice for sin, God has but to speak and the pardon is given! As soon as He says, "I will. Be you clean," the most leprous sinner is perfectly cleansed! O Sinner, will you not offer the prayer, "Save, Lord, or I perish?" Will you not ask the Lord to forgive you? Since He can so readily forgive, will you not cry, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? Stretch forth your hand, poor trembling woman up yonder, and touch the hem of His garment and you shall be made whole, for He is ready to forgive—that is, He can do it with ease!

Again, the word, "ready," frequently means *promptly or quickly*. In this sense, also, God is ready to forgive. I know that some of you imagine that you must endure months of sorrow before you can be forgiven. There is no necessity that you should wait even another hour for this great blessing! After what I have been saying concerning the experience through which others have passed, some of you may fancy that you must be for four or five years floundering about in the Slough of Despond, but there is no need for you to do that. The plan of salvation is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Let me give you a picture. Paul and Silas have been thrust into the inner prison at Philippi and their feet made fast in the stocks. Though they have been brutally beaten, they are singing at midnight—singing of pardon bought with blood, singing of the dying and risen Lamb of God and, as they sing—suddenly there is an earthquake. The foundations of the prison shake, the doors fly open and the jailer, fearing that his prisoners have escaped,

leaps out, draws his sword and is about to kill himself! But he hears a voice crying, "Do yourself no harm! We are all here."

He calls for a light, springs in and falls tremblingly at his prisoners' feet and says, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What would some of you have said in reply to that question? "Well, you must first believe the guilt of your sin more than you do at present—you had better go home and pray about the matter." That was not Paul's answer. He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." And, to prove that he was saved, the Apostle baptized him and all his, straightway, and we are expressly told that *they all believed*. What do you say to that, you old deacons who say, as many country deacons still do, that the young converts ought to be "summered and wintered" before they are baptized? I have known scores of good old souls in the country who have said, "We must not take Mrs. So-and-So into the church. We have not had time to prove her enough." But the Apostle knew that as they had believed, they were fit to be baptized because they were pardoned—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at once He receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."

If the Lord wills, you may be pardoned this very moment. Jehovah needs not months and years in which to write out the charter of your forgiveness and put the great seal of Heaven to it. He can speak the word and swifter than the lightning flash, the message shall come to you, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." And you shall say, "I'm forgiven—

"'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.'"

The word, "ready," is also frequently used to signify *cheerfulness*. When a person says to you, "Will you give me your help?" you say, "Oh, certainly, with readiness!" That means with cheerfulness. The Lord loves a cheerful giver and I am sure that He is, Himself, a cheerful Giver. You do not know, poor Soul, how glad God is when He forgives a soul. The angels sang when God made the world, but we do not read that He sang. Yet, in the last chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah, we read, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Only think of it—the Triune God singing! What a thought—the Deity bursting out into song! And what is this about? It is over His pardoned people, His blood-bought chosen ones! O Soul, you think, perhaps, that God will be hard to be entreated and that He will give His mercy grudgingly! But the mercy of the Lord is as free as the air we breathe. When the sun shines, it shines freely, otherwise it were not the sun. And when God forgives, He forgives freely, else He were not God! Never did water

leap from the crystal fountain with half such freeness and generous liberality as Grace flows from the heart of God! He gives forth love, joy, peace and pardon—and He gives them as a king gives to a king! You cannot empty His treasury, for it is inexhaustible. He is not enriched by withholding, nor is He impoverished by bestowing!

Soul, you do libel Him when you think that He is unwilling to forgive you. I once had, as you now have, that hard thought of my loving Lord, that He would not forgive me. I thought He might, perhaps, do so one day, yet I could hardly think so well of Him as to believe that He would. I came to His feet very timidly and said, "Surely, He will spurn me." I supposed that He would say to me, "Get you gone, you dog of a sinner, for you have doubted My love." But it was not so. Ah, you should see with what a smile He received the prodigal, with what fond tenderness He clasped him to His breast, with what glad eyes He led him to His house and with what a radiant Countenance He set him by His side, at the head of the table, and said, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this My son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found."

I would that I could write upon every heart here and engrave upon every memory those sweet words, "Ready to forgive." Are there any of you who do not want to be forgiven? The day will come when you will want this blessing. Sailor, are you in this building? Within a little while you may be out upon the lonely sea, the waves may have swallowed up your vessel and you may be clinging to just an oar. When the waters surge around you, how gladly you will remember that God is ready to forgive—but how much better it would be to trust your soul to Him now! Some, whom I am now addressing, will probably die this week. I am not making a rash assertion—my statement is based upon the statistics of mortality. O Soul, you say that it is nothing to you now, but when you are in the article of death—and that may be before another Sabbath's sun shall rise—how might this note ring like music in your dying ears, "Ready to forgive"!

Am I speaking to some abandoned woman who thinks that she will destroy herself? See you do it not, for God is ready to forgive! Am I addressing some man who is cast out of society as a reprobate for whom nobody cares? Soul, give not up hope, for God is ready to forgive! Though your father has shut the door against you and your mother and sister shun you because of your vices and sins, yet God is ready to forgive you if you will repent and turn from your iniquity! Turn you, turn you—'tis a brother's voice that entreats you to turn! By the love with which He pardoned me. By the mercy which made Him pass by my innumerable transgressions, I beg you to turn, no, more, linking my arm in yours, I say to you, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord and let us say unto Him, 'Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render unto You the calves of our lips.'" Ready to perish are you, but ready to forgive is He! Blessed be His holy name!

III. My third text is intended as a hammer to drive home the last nail. This sentence, in Job 17:1, is most solemnly true of each one of us—THE GRAVES ARE READY FOR ME.

About three years ago I gazed into the eternal world. It then pleased God to stretch me upon a bed of the most agonizing pain and my life hung in jeopardy, not merely every hour, but every moment. Eternal realities were vivid enough before my eyes, but it pleased God, for some purpose which is known to Him, to spare my life and I went to spend a little season, that I might fully recover, with a beloved friend who seemed, then, far more likely to live than I was. This day, it is his turn to lie upon the borders of the grave and mine to stand by his bedside. The grave then seemed ready for me—it now seems ready for him. As I stood talking to him this afternoon, he said with greater force than Addison, "See how a Christian can die." When I asked him about his worldly goods and possessions, he said that he had been content to leave them all, some time ago. "And what about your wife and your little ones?" I asked. And he replied, "I have left them all with God." "And how about eternal things?" I enquired. "Oh," said he, "you know that God's love is everlasting and His Grace is unchanging, so why should we fear?"

He had no doubt about his acceptance in the Beloved, or about the power of Christ to carry him through his dying moments. When I said, "The battle's fought, the victory's won forever," I saw his eyes sparkle as though he heard the melodious voice of the great Captain of our salvation saying to him, "Well done! Enter into your rest." I never saw a bride at her marriage look more happy than this man upon the eve of death. I never saw a saint more peaceful, when retiring at eventide, than he was when about to undress himself that he might stand before his God. "Ah," he exclaimed, "remember what you said to me, 'Sudden death, sudden glory!'" and his eyes sparkled again at the prospect of soon beholding his Lord—

"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks"—

and you are gone, O earth, and my soul is in Heaven! One gasp and you have melted, O shadowy Time, and I have come to you, you welcome substance of Eternity! Blessed be God that the graves are ready for us! Christian, does the idea of a long life charm you? Do you want to remain long in this prison? Would you cling to these rags of mortality, to this vile body, whose breath is corrupt, whose face is so often marred with weeping and upon whose eyelids hangs the shadow of death? Would you long to creep up and down this dunghill world, like some poor worm that always leaves a slimy track behind it? Or would you not rather—

"Stretch your wings, O Soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy"?

Were we wise, we would—

"Long for evening, to undress,
That we might rest with God."

"The graves are ready for me." Young men and young women, and all of you who are here, can you look upon the grave which is ready for you with as much complacency as my friend did this afternoon? O Death,

you do not need to furbish up your darts, or whet your scythe! You are always ready to slaughter the sons of men. O Eternity, your gates need not to be unlocked and thrown back on their hinges with long and tedious toil, for they are always open! O world to come, you do not need long intervals to make yourself ready to receive the pilgrims who have finished their journey! You are an inn whose doors are always open—you are whose gates are never closed! Our grave is ready for us. The tree is grown that shall make our coffin—perhaps the fabric that shall make our winding sheet is already woven and they, who will carry us to our last home, are ready and waiting for us!

"The graves are ready for us." Are we ready for the graves? Are we prepared to die—prepared to rise again—prepared to be judged—prepared to plead the blood and righteousness of Christ as our ground of acceptance before the eternal Throne of God? What is your answer, my Hearer? Do you reply, in the words I quoted at the beginning of my discourse, "Ready, yes, ready!"? Did you say Death, that I was wanted? Here I am, for you did call me! Did you say, O Heaven, that you need to receive another blood-bought one? "Ready, yes, ready!" O Christian, always keep your houses in such good order that you will always be "Ready, yes, ready!" Always keep your heart in such a state, your soul so near to Christ and your faith so fully fixed on Him, that, if you should drop dead in the street, or some Providence should take away your life, you would be able to cheerfully say, "Ready, yes, ready! Ready for you, O Death! Ready to triumph over you and to pluck away your sting! Ready for you, O Grave, for where is now your victory? Ready for you, O Heaven, for, with your wedding garment on, we are ready, yes, ready!" The Lord make us ready, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:1-27.

Verse 1, 2. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper.* You see that particular mention is made of this one special case and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses and who thereby obtains relief from them—"Behold, there came a leper."

2, 3. *And worshipped Him, saying, Lord if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an, "if," in it, but still, it was genuine faith and our loving Lord fixed His eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it. And if He sees in you, dear Friend, even a trembling faith, He will rejoice in it and bless you because of it. He will not withhold His blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably you would have a greater blessing if you had

greater faith, but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ! The leper said to Him, "If you will, you can make me clean." So Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, "and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

4-7. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.* He had not asked Christ to "come and heal him." He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honor for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man's judgment is correct—that for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of Himself! If He will but come and abide with us, that means more than all else that He can bestow upon us.

8, 9. *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but only speak the word and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of Nature and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking, to honor the sick man with His own personal Presence. He had simply to utter the command and it would be obeyed, and the centurion's servant would be healed. Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing—so I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position—and so worked in his mind still greater confidence in Christ's power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

10. *When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.* "Not in Israel"—where the Light of God and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed! This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ—had more faith than Jesus had so far found "in Israel."

11, 12. *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into*

outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening, despite its strangeness, that the persons who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become Believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin and right away from ignorance and become believers in Christ! Oh, that none of us who sit under the sound of the Gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this Truth of God, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers and adopts them into His family!

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.* Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule—"As you have believed, so be it done unto you." If you can believe great things of Him, you shall receive great things from Him. If you think Him good, great and mighty, you shall find Him to be so. If you can conceive greater things of Him than anyone else has ever done, you shall find Him equal to all your conceptions and your greatest faith shall be surpassed! It is a Law of His Kingdom, from which Christ never swerves—"According to your faith, be it unto you."

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick of a fever, and He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them.* That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all, for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed and begin at once to attend to household matters! But Peter's wife's mother did this. Learn, therefore, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well! He can make the man who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord. And when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to Him, He can take away the consequences of evil habits and make us into bright and sanctified Believers. What is there that is impossible to Him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of healing with a touch. That was a superstition. But this King can do it—all glory to His blessed name! May He lay His gracious hand upon many of you, for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches!

16-18. *When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.* For He neither loved nor courted popularity, but did His utmost to shun it. It followed Him like His shadow but He always went before it. He never followed it, or sought

after it—"When Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side."

19. *And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go.* How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so He tests him before He takes him into the band of His followers.

20. *And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.* Christ means—"Can you follow the Son of Man when there is no reward except Himself—not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to Him when the lone mountainside shall be the place where He spends whole nights in prayer while the dews falls heavily upon Him? Can you follow Him then?" This is a test of love which makes many to be "found wanting."

21, 22. *And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.* It must be Christ, first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ—that is their proper place. To put them before Christ—to prefer the creature to the Creator—is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

23-26. *And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds; and the sea; and there was a great calm.* Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by His peace-speaking word. The calm of Nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper—these are all deceitful and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations—after the awful groundswell and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation—when Jesus gives peace, there is "a great calm."

27. *And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* We have often marvelled in the same way, but we know that it is not any "manner of Man" alone, but it was He who was truly Man, who was also "very God of very God," the God-Man, the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men!

—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 FOUND IN THE HEART
NO. 2869

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1904.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 16, 1876.

"Therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You."
2 Samuel 7:27.

IT is a very blessed thing for a child of God to be anxious to glorify his Heavenly Father, whether his wish is realized or not. The strong desire to magnify God is acceptable to Him and is an indication of spiritual health. It is certain, in the long run, to bring blessing to our own souls and I have frequently noticed that when we earnestly desire to do something special for the Lord, He generally does something for us very much of the same kind. David wished to build a house for God. "No," says Jehovah, "you have been a man of war and I will not employ a warrior in spiritual business. But I will build *you* a house." So, although David may not build a house for God, it is well that the plan of it is in his heart and God, in return, builds up his house, and sets his son and his son's son upon the throne after him. But, my dear Friend, if you should not find an opportunity to do all that is in your heart, yet, nevertheless, it is well that it is there. Carry out the project if you can, but if you cannot, it may be that as you have desired to deal with the Lord, so will He deal with you. If you have sown sparingly, you shall reap sparingly. If you have sown liberally, you shall reap largely, for, often and often, the Lord's dealings with His own people are a sort of echo to their hearts of their dealings with Him.

Sometimes it happens that God will not let His servants do what they would most of all like to do. David had long been storing up gold and silver in great quantities that he might build that house for the Lord. It had been the great project of his life that he might make a fit sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant. "I dwell," he said, "in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains." The dream of his life was that he might build a magnificent temple which would be supremely gorgeous for architecture and rich in all the treasures of the ends of the earth—that there the Ark of his God might be appropriately housed. But the Lord would not have it so. David might pray about it and think about it, and plan about it and save his money for it, but the Lord would not have it so. It was not in that particular way that David was to serve his God.

And I have known some good Christian young men who felt that they must be preachers. They had not the proper gifts and qualifications for

the ministry, but they felt that they must preach—so they have strived very hard, but at all points they have met with rebuffs. People who have heard them once, have been quite satisfied, but have not desired to hear them again. Doors have been shut against them, no conversions have followed their efforts and thus God has said to each one of them, "Not so, My son. Not in that way shall you serve Me." And there are others who have had other plans in their heads—Brothers and Sisters who have arranged wonderful schemes and plans which they have dreamed over and said, "Thus and thus will we serve God." Yet, hitherto, my Brother, you have had to keep to the workman's bench. And you, my Sister, have had to keep to nursing those little children. Up till now you have not been very successful in any special path of usefulness, or that which is commonly thought to be the path of usefulness. But God knows best and He has uses for all the vessels in His house—and it is not right for any one vessel to say, "I will be used here, or there, or not at all." It is for *God* to use us as He pleases!

Every private soldier would like to be an officer, but it is only a very few who ever will be. And if every private soldier *could* be an officer, what sort of an army would it be where all were officers and none were men in the ranks? So we would, perhaps, each of us, like to do something more remarkable than we *have done*, but it is for our great Commander to say to this man, "Stand here," or to that man, "Go there." And it ought to be equally a matter of contentment to us whether God permits us to serve Him, here or there. I think it was good Mr. Jay who used to say that if there were two angels in Heaven and God wanted one of them to go and be the ruler of a kingdom, and the other to sweep a crossing, the two angels would not have the slightest dispute as to which post they would have, provided that they knew they had the Lord's command to occupy either position. Brother, if ever the Lord should rebuff you and seem to refuse that which you desire to offer Him, do not sulk—do not get into a bad spirit, as some have done in similar circumstances—but know that the very essence of Christian service is to be willing *not* to serve in that particular way if, by not serving, God would be the more glorified! Be willing, O vessel in the house of the Lord, to be hung up on a nail in the wall. Be willing to be laid aside in a corner if so God would be glorified, for thus was it with David. God would not let him erect the temple which he wished to build, but He gave him great blessings in return for his desires. And then David, instead of sulking and saying, "Well, then, as I cannot have my own will, I will do nothing at all," went in and sat before the Lord and blessed and praised Him—he never uttered one grumbling or surly word—but blessed the name of the Lord from the beginning of his meditation even to its close. Oh, to have a heart molded after the same fashion!

In the midst of David's memorable address to God, we meet with this suggestive expression—"Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You." I am going to speak upon that subject in this way. First, concerning David's prayer—*how did he come by it?* Secondly, *how*

came this prayer to be in his heart? And thirdly, *how may we get into such a condition that we shall find prayers in our hearts?*

I. First, then, HOW DID DAVID COME BY HIS PRAYER? He tells us that he found it in his heart—"Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You."

Then it is pretty clear that *he looked for it in his heart*. How many men seem to begin to pray without really thinking about prayer! They rush, without preparation or thought, into the Presence of God. Now, no loyal subject would seek an audience of his sovereign, to present a petition, without having first carefully prepared it. But many seem to think there is no need to look for a prayer, or to find one, when they approach the Mercy Seat. They appear to imagine that they have only to repeat certain words and to stand or kneel in a certain attitude—and that is prayer. But David did not make that mistake. He found his prayer in his heart. David and his heart were well acquainted—he had long been accustomed to talk with himself. There are some men who know a thousand other people, but who do not know themselves! The greatest stranger to them in the whole world is their own heart. They have never looked into it, never talked with it, never examined it, never questioned it. They follow its evil devices, but they scarcely know that they have a heart, they so seldom look into it. But David, when he wanted to pray, went and looked in his heart to see what he could find there—and he found in his heart to pray this prayer to God.

This leads me to say, dear Friends, that *the best place in which to find a prayer is to find it in your heart*. Some would have fetched down a book and they would have said, "Let us see—what is the day of the month—how many Sundays after Advent? This is the proper prayer for today." But David did not go to a book for his prayer—he turned to his heart to see what he could find there that he might pray unto God. Others of us would, perhaps, have been content to find a prayer in our heads. We have been accustomed to extemporize in prayer and so, perhaps, bowing the knee, we would have felt that the stream of supplication would flow because we are so habituated to speaking with God in prayer. Ah, dear Friend, it is no worse to find a prayer in a book than to find it in your head! It is very much the same thing whether the prayer is printed or is extemporized—unless it comes from the heart—it is equally dead in either case.

How many, too, have found a prayer upon their lips! It is a very common thing with those who pray in Prayer Meetings and those of us who pray in public, for our lips to run much faster than our hearts move. And it is one of the things we need to cry to God to keep us from, lest we should be run away with by our own tongues, as men are, sometimes, run away with by their horses which they cannot restrain. And you know the horse never goes faster than when he has very little to carry. And, sometimes, words will come at a very rapid rate when there is very little real prayer conveyed by them. This is not as it ought to be with us. We must look into our hearts for the desire to pray—and if we do not find it

in our hearts to pray a prayer, let us rest assured that we shall not be accepted before the Throne of God.

How was it that David found this prayer in his heart? I think it was *because his heart had been renewed by Divine Grace*. Prayer is a living thing—you cannot find a living prayer in a dead heart. Why seek you the living among the dead, or search the sepulcher to find the signs and tokens of life? No, Sir, if you have not been made alive by the Grace of God, you cannot pray! The dead cannot pray and the spiritually dead cannot pray. But the moment you begin to pray, it is a sign that life has been given to you. Ananias knew that Saul was a living soul when God said to him, "Behold, he prays." "It is all right," said Ananias, "for the Lord must have quickened his heart." David found this prayer in his heart because his was a living heart!

And he found it there, also, *because his was a believing heart*. How can a man pray if he does not believe in God, or if he merely thinks that there *may* be a supernatural Being, somewhere or other in the universe, but that He is not near—and cannot be made to hear—or is not a living personality, or, if He is, He is too great to care about us, or to listen to the words of a man? But when the Lord has taught you the Truth of God about His own Existence and His real Character—when He has come so near to you that you know that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—then, in that believing heart of yours, prayer will spring up as the corn springs up in the furrows of the field! The Lord, who has sown in your heart the seed of faith, will make that seed to spring up in the green blade of prayer. It must be so, but, until you believe in God, you cannot pray. It would be useless for me to say to some men, "You should pray," when I recollect that Christ has said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And that is what these men cannot do. How can they, therefore, pray acceptably? "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Where there is that true faith in God, there is fervent prayer in the heart, but nowhere else!

David's was also *a serious heart*. Some men's hearts are flippant, trifling, full of levity. God forbid that we should condemn holy cheerfulness! As oil to the wheels of a machine, so is cheerfulness to a man's conversation, but there is a frothiness, a superficiality, a frivolity which is far too common. Some men do not seem to think seriously about anything. They have no settled principles. They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." "The Vicar of Bray" is their first cousin. Perhaps they have scarcely as much principle as he had, for they do not so steadily seek their own interests and scarcely seek any interest at all but that of the transient pleasure of the hour. If that is your case, I do not wonder that you cannot pray! A man says, "I cannot find prayer in my heart." No, how could you? Yours is a heart full of chaff, full of dust, full of rubbish—a heart tangled and overgrown with weeds—a sluggard's heart, where grow the nettles of evil desire and unholy passion—where live the docks and thistles of idleness and neglect. Oh, may God grant us the Grace to have serious hearts—hearts that are in solemn earnest—hearts that are in-

tense—hearts that can really give due heed to things according to their merits and that give to eternal things their chief concern, because eternal things deserve them best. David's heart was a serious heart and, therefore, he found this prayer in it.

And, once again, David's was *a humble heart*, for a man who is proud will not pray. A man who is self-righteous will not pray, except it is in the fashion of the Pharisee, and that was no prayer at all. But a man, humbly conscious of his soul's needs, and realizing the guilt of his sins—that is the man to pour out his heart in prayer before the living God! I pray the Lord graciously to break our hearts, for, unless our hearts are broken in penitence, we shall never find in them a real prayer unto God.

There are some of you who have got on wonderfully since your Lord called you by His Grace. You were wretched enough when He looked at you, cast out in the open field, covered with blood and filthiness. And He washed you, clothed you, nourished you and now He has even begun to use you in His service and you are already beginning to be rather proud that He has given you some success. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, not to pilfer any of the Glory that belongs to God alone! Never begin to throw up your caps and to cry, "Well done!" It is all up with us if we do that. Stay down low, my Brother. Stay down low, my Sister. The lower we are and the more we fear and tremble—not through unbelief, mark you, (that kind of fear I denounce with all my heart), but with that really *believing* trembling and *believing* fear that grows out of genuine love to Christ and is not inconsistent with that love—the more we have of that sort of fear, the more securely shall we walk and the more will it be safe for God to trust us with His goodness! When your ship floats very high upon the water, I hope that you will not have much sail spread, or else the vessel will almost certainly go over. But when it floats low, almost down to the Plimsoll line, you may crowd on as much sail as you like. If you carry but little ballast and you have huge sails up aloft, the first gust of wind will topple you over. But if you are well ballasted—that is to say, if you are weighed down with a sense of your own unworthiness—you will weather any gale that may come upon you, God the Holy Spirit being in the vessel with you and holding the helm!

I pause here a moment just to ask each one—Do you pray? Do you present to God prayers that come from your heart? I do not ask whether you use a form of prayer, or not, but does your heart really go with the prayer you offer? I think I hear someone say, "I always say my prayers." Ah, my dear Friend, there is as great a difference between saying prayers and really praying as there was between the dead child and the living one that were brought before Solomon! Saying prayers is not praying! Why, you might as well say your prayers backward as forward unless your heart goes with them! It is quite extraordinary how some people can use a form of prayer without any thought whatever as to its meaning. Some time ago, a man, 70 years of age, was asked if he prayed. He replied that he always had prayed, and he would tell the enquirer the prayer he used. It turned out that he still persisted in repeating what his mother taught him when he was a child, "Pray, God, bless Father and Mother, and

make me a good boy." He had got those words so deeply engraved upon his memory that he still kept to them at his advanced age! Naturally, you smile at the story, yet it is very pitiful. It may be an extreme instance, but still it is a clear instance of what I mean—that there is a way of merely saying prayers which is rather a mockery of God than a real approach to Him such as He desires.

"Well," says one, "I never pray." I question the truth of that assertion, but if it is true, there is another thing that I do know and that is this—the time will come when you will want to pray. Let me explain what I mean when I say that I question your assertion about never praying. I have heard men pray who would have thought themselves insulted if they had been told that they did. What awful prayers they have presented to God when they have imprecated upon their souls, bodies, eyes, limbs, children and everything else, the most terrible curses from God! There are some men who will do this at the least provocation. O Sirs, mind that God does not grant you your wicked requests! I am afraid that when an ungodly man prays in that shameless way, he does find his prayer in his heart—and I am also afraid that his heart must be full of damnation, or he would not find so many oaths in it. That which comes out of a man is what is in him, and when you hear a man swear, you know that there is a deal of "swear" in his heart, for the language in which he dares to imprecate God's vengeance proves how alienated his heart must be from God.

I would remind you, who do not pray, that you will need to pray one day. If there were to be a pledge exacted from you that you never would pray to God—if you were offered money to never pray—suppose you took the money and promised never to pray? I know what you would think—you would say to yourself, "What shall I do with this money? It is the price of my soul's salvation." It would strike you at once that it was an awful thing to never be allowed to pray and you would feel that you had sold yourself to the devil—body and soul—and you would be in dire trouble. Well, but as you say that you never pray, you might as well take the money that is offered to you. As you do not pray, I do not see what use the privilege of prayer is to you. "If it is of any use to pray to God," you say, "I shall pray at the last." Then pray now, for you never know what may be your last moment! Who knows how close you may be to your grave even while you are sitting in your pew? You saw one friend faint, just now, and we have seen hearers fall back dead even while gathered in the congregation! God grant that we may not see it again! Still, the fact that it has happened is a loud call to all of us bidding us begin to pray!

Thus I have shown you where David found his prayer. He found it in his heart.

II. Now, secondly, HOW CAME DAVID'S PRAYER TO BE IN HIS HEART?

I answer that he found it in his heart *because the Lord put it there*. Every true heart-prayer that is accepted of God, first came from God. The Lord Jesus passed by David's heart and threw this prayer in at the win-

dow and then, when the good man went down to look for a prayer, he found this prayer lying on the floor of his heart ready for him to use.

How does God put prayers into a man's heart? I answer, first, *He instructs us how to pray*. We, none of us, know how to pray aright till we have been to the school of the Holy Spirit. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit comes and shows us our need. Thus we see what to pray for. He also shows us what Christ has provided for us and thus we see what we may hope to obtain. He shows us, too, that the way to God is through the precious blood of Jesus and He leads us along that crimson, blood-sprinkled road and so, by His instruction, He puts the prayer into our hearts.

In the next place, He puts it there *by inclining us to pray*. Benjamin Beddome wrote—

"When God inclines the heart to pray
He has an ear to hear"—

and his short hymn contains a great Truth of God. God bends the heart to pray and, oftentimes, He does this by filling us with sorrow and then, in the day of our distress, we cry unto Him. But I have also known Him do it in the sweeter way, as He did with David, by filling the heart with joy till we have been so glad and grateful that we have felt that we must pray, as David did on another occasion, when he said, "Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live."

So, the Lord puts prayer into our heart by instructing us how to pray and by inclining us to pray.

Then He puts prayer into the heart *by encouragement*. You notice that my text begins with, "Therefore." "Therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You." What does David mean by that, "therefore"? Why, God had promised to do great things for him and, my Brother or Sister, you may always safely ask for that which God has promised to give! When He gives you the promise of anything, He does as good as say to you, "Come, My child, ask for this. Be not slow to come to Me with your requests." If the Lord has said that He will bestow any blessing, what greater encouragement to pray can you possibly desire? But this promise, according to the Hebrew, had been given to David in a very special manner. In our version, it is rendered, "You have revealed to Your servant," but the marginal reading is, "You have opened the ear of Your servant." A promise in the Bible is often a promise to a deaf ear—but the promise, applied by the Spirit of God, goes right through the outer organ and penetrates to the ear of the soul! I am sure, dear Friends, that you can never be backward in prayer when God opens your ear and puts a promise into it. The richness, the sweetness, the sureness, the preciousness of the promise, when the Holy Spirit seals it home to the heart, makes a man go to his knees—he cannot help doing so—and thus the Lord greatly encourages the needy soul to pray.

I will not keep you longer upon this point when I have just said that I believe God puts prayers into our hearts *by a sense of His general goodness.* We see how kind and good He is to the sons of men as a whole and, therefore, we pray to Him. By His special goodness to His own chosen

people, we see still more of His compassion and tenderness, and so we are moved to pray to Him. Especially does He put prayer into our hearts when He gives us a sight of the Cross. We see there how greatly Jesus loved us and, therefore, we pray. We rightly argue that He who gave Jesus for us will deny to us nothing that is for our good and, therefore, again we pray. Often are we stirred up to pray by the recollection of former answers to prayer and, sometimes, by observing how God hears other men and other women pray. Anyhow, it is a blessed thing when the Lord comes by and scatters the seeds of prayer in our hearts so that when we want to pray, we have only to look within our own renewed nature and there we find the prayer that we shall do well to pray unto God!

III. Our last question, upon which I must speak but briefly, is this. WHAT MUST YOU AND I DO IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO FIND PRAYERS IN OUR HEARTS?

Ah, dear Friends, I am afraid that *some of you can do nothing in this matter until, first of all, your hearts are renewed by Grace*. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" No one. And who can fetch an acceptable prayer out of an unaccepted person? No one. So, Sinner, you must first come to Jesus, confessing your sin and looking to His dear wounds, and finding a broken heart within you as the result of His pierced heart. And when the Lord has looked upon you in His pardoning love, then you will find many prayers in your heart!

I asked a young friend, "Did you pray before conversion?" She answered that she did pray "after a sort." I then enquired, "What is the difference between your present prayers and those you offered before you knew the Lord?" Her answer was, "Then, I said my prayers. But, now, I mean them. Then, I said the prayers which other people taught me. But now I find them in my heart." There is good reason to cry, "Eureka!" when we find prayer in our heart. Holy Bradford would never cease praying or praising till he found his heart thoroughly engaged in the holy exercise. If it is not in my heart to pray, I must pray till it is. But, oh, the delight of pleading with God when the heart casts forth mighty jets of supplication like a geyser in full action! How mighty is supplication when the whole soul becomes one living, hungering, expecting desire!

But some Christian people often feel as if they could not pray. They get into a condition in which they are not able to pray and that is a very sad state for any child of God to be in. How much do I personally desire to always possess the true spirit of prayer! When I was at Mr. Rowland Hill's house at Wotton-Under-Edge, many years ago, I asked, "Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?" And the answer of someone who had known him when he was there, was, "He used to pray everywhere." I said, "Yes, but did he not have a special place for prayer?" The reply was, "I do not know. I never saw him when he was not praying." "Well, but," I asked, "did he not study somewhere?" I was told that he was always studying, wherever he went, yet that he was always in the spirit of prayer. The good old man, at last, had got into such a blessed state of mind that when he sat down on the sofa, he would be going over a familiar hymn, and when he walked in the garden, he would be to-tooting something

gracious! You know how they found him, in George Clayton's chapel over yonder. His carriage had not come, after the service, and he was walking up and down the aisles, softly singing to himself—

"And when I'm to die, 'Receive me,' I'll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why.
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He'll not be in Glory and leave me behind!"

Good old Soul! He had got to find it in his heart to pray always. He used to wander down the Blackfriars Road with his hands under his coattails and stop to look in very nearly every shop-window, but, all the while, he was talking with God just as much as any man could have done who had shut himself up in a cloister! This is a blessed state of mind to be in—to find as many prayers in your soul as there are hairs on your head—to pray as often as the clock ticks—to wake up in the night and feel that you have been dreaming prayers! And when you rise in the morning, to find that your first thought is either that of praising God for His many mercies, or else pleading for somebody or other who needs your prayers!

How are you to get into this state? Well, I cannot tell you, except this—live near to God. If you live near to God, you must pray. He that learns how to live near to God will learn how to pray and to give thanks to God. Look into your hearts, also, as David did. You cannot find prayer there if you do not look for it. Think much of your own needs, for a realization of how many and how great they are will make you pray. When you see the falls of others, recollect that you also will fall unless God holds you up—so make that a reason and subject for prayer. When you see others who are slack in devotion, or who have become cold in heart, remember you will be as they are if Grace does not prevent. So, let your own needs drive you to prayer.

Then read the Scriptures very much. Study them—suck the sweetness out of them, for they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. You cannot fail to be much in prayer if you spend much time in the reading of the Word. If you will let God speak to you, I am sure you will be compelled to speak with God. Dwell much upon the Doctrines of the Gospel. Seek to understand them. Live upon them and upon the promises, too. If a man were to give me a check, I do not think I should be so foolish as not to cash it. And if God gives me a promise, which is better than any man's check, the most natural thing is for me to go on my knees to Heaven's bank to seek to have it changed—to get the blessing God really promised He would give me! So, keep hard by the promises, and still closer to the faithful Promiser! Live *to* God. Live *for* God. Live *in* God and you will find prayers come out of your soul as sparks come out of the chimney of the blacksmith's smithy! If there is a blazing fire within and the bellows blowing it up and the smith is hard at work in his calling, the sparks will fly. And in this cold weather, dear Brothers and Sisters, it is necessary to keep our hearts warm.

Have you noticed thatched cottages and other houses where the snow lies on the roof? You say, "Yes." But have you noticed where there is a good fire in the house, anywhere near the roof, how soon the snow is melted? And if you want to get warm and stay warm in the midst of a

cold, graceless world that chills the very marrow in a Believer's bones, keep a warm heart inside, for that will tend to make it warm outside, too! God grant you this blessing and keep you ever abounding in prayer—and He shall have all the praise.

I do trust that some who never prayed before, will try to pray. Nobody ever sneers at prayer but the man who does not pray. And nobody ever denies its efficacy but the man who knows nothing at all about it. And such men are out of court and have no right to speak upon this matter. But men who are honest in other things and who would be believed in a court of law, should be believed when they bear their solemn testimony that times without number God has heard their prayers! Try it, Friend. God help you to try it! Especially begin by believing in Jesus and then shall you rightly seek unto the Almighty and He will be found of you. Yes, you shall lift up your eyes to Heaven and the Lord will look down upon you and accept you, and bless you, both now and forever! So may it be, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 7:18-29; LUKE 18:1-14.

2 Samuel 7:18. *Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD.* David desired to build a temple for God and the Prophet Nathan, conceiving that such a design must be acceptable to the Most High, told the king to proceed with it. But God's mind was otherwise and Nathan had to tell David that it was well that it was in his heart, but that God intended the temple to be built, not by him, but by his son Solomon. However, the Lord gave to David very large promises and when he had received them, through Nathan, he was so overcome with gratitude that he went in and "sat before the Lord." That was his posture in prayer on this occasion. Good men have been known to pray kneeling, which seems to be the most natural attitude. Some have prayed with their faces between their knees, as Elijah did. Some have prayed standing, as the publican did. Some have prayed sitting, as David did. Probably he was mingling prayer and meditation when he "sat before the Lord."

18. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me here?* How often has a similar feeling leaped into our heart! Why should the Lord have dealt so well with us?—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

19. *And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?* No—man could not have been so kind as that! The love of Jesus surpasses the love of women and the love of God surpasses all the kindness of men.

20. *And what can David say more unto You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant.* "What I cannot utter, You can perceive in my heart, though I cannot express it."

21-25. *For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O LORD God: for there is none like You, neither is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for You great things and terrible, for Your land, before Your people, which You redeem to You from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For You have confirmed to Yourself Your people Israel to be a people unto You forever: and You, LORD, have become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as You have said.* That is a very short, but exceedingly pithy prayer—"Do as You have said." You do not need any larger promises, Brothers and Sisters, than the Lord has already given you—could He give you any larger ones?—

"What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

What you have to do is to take the promises He has given and spread them out before the Mercy Seat. And then say to Him, "Do as You have said." What strength there is in this plea! Has He said, and shall He not do it? "Will He break His promise, or shall His right hand fail to perform that which has gone forth from His lips? Far be it from us to think so, but let us say to Him, 'Do as You have said.'" That is the very essence of prayer! Take care not to forget it.

26-29.*And let Your name be magnified forever, saying, The LORD of Hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant, saying, I will build You a house: therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You. And now, O lord GOD, You are that God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness unto Your servant: therefore now let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You.* You see how he clings to God's promise—"You have promised this goodness unto Your servant." If you get a promise from the Lord and cling to it as You wrestle with the angel, You will surely prevail. You will win the blessing if you can plead, as David did, "You have promised this goodness unto Your servant."

29. *For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it.* How he dwells on it!

29. *And with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.* Now let us read two of our Lord's parables concerning prayer.

Luke 18:1-8. *And He spoke a parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge who 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. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 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 bear 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? The whole force of this parable goes to show the prevalence of *importunity*. If You cannot get your desire of God the first time, go again and, if necessary, go again seven times. Yes, if need be, in submission to His will, go seventy times seven! I am afraid there is no fear of our having to be asked the question, "Will you, also, weary my God?" Oh, no, we do not pray enough for that, neither are we so importunate as this poor widow was! Let us prove the power of importunate prayer and rest assured that Heaven's gate must open if we do but know how to knock and that the blessing must be given if we do but continue to ask for it, for praying breath is never spent in vain.

9-11. *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.* And he drew up his skirts and got upwind, for fear lest any breath that should blow from the publican should defile his sanctified person!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* It was not a prayer at all, as you perceive. It was a thanksgiving, but the thanksgiving was merely a veil for self-adulation!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off.* Not daring to come near to the inner shrine—

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.* I do not suppose that he thought he had really prayed. He scarcely dared to call it prayer. Perhaps, as he went home, he said, "I went up to the temple to pray, but I was so bowed down with a sense of my guilt that I could not pray." But that was not our Lord's verdict!

14. *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.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—992, 996, 229.

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REVELATION AND CONVERSION
NO. 2870

A SERMON
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"The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."
Psalm 19:7.

WHEN he spoke of "the Law of the Lord, David did not merely mean the Law as it was given in the Ten Commandments, although that also is perfect and is used, to some extent, in the conversion of souls. The term includes the entire Doctrine of God—the whole Divine Revelation and though, in David's day, there was not so full and clear a Revelation as we have—for the New Testament was not then given, nor much of the Old Testament, yet the text has lost none of its former force, but has rather gained more. So I shall use it as applicable to the entire Scriptures—to the Law and to the Gospel—and to all that God has revealed. And speaking of it in that sense, I may truly say that it is perfect and that it converts the soul.

A tree is known by its fruit and a book must be tested by its effects. There are some books which bear their fruit for the hangman and the jail—and such books are very widely read nowadays. They are frequently embellished with engravings and put into the hands of boys and girls—and a crop of criminals is constantly the result of their publication and circulation! There have been books written which have spread moral contagion throughout centuries. I need not mention them, but if it were possible to gather them all together in one heap and burn them as the Ephesians burnt their books of magic, it would be one of the greatest blessings conceivable! Yet, if that *were* done, I fear that other wicked brains would be set to work to think out similar blasphemies and that other hands would be found to scatter their vile productions.

The Word of God must be tested, like other books, by the effect which it produces, and I am going to speak upon one of its effects to which many of us here present can bear personal witness. The old proverb says, "Speak as you find," and I am going to speak of the Bible as I have found it—to praise the bridge that has carried me over every difficulty until now—and that has carried a great many of you over, also. We know that the Law of the Lord is good because it converts the soul and, to our mind, the best proof of its purity and power is that it has converted *our* soul.

My first objective will be to show *how the Word of God converts the soul. Then to show the excellence of the work of conversion. And, therefore, thirdly, the excellence of that Book which produces conversion.*

I. First, then, I am to show HOW THE WORD OF GOD CONVERTS THE SOUL.

Man's face is turned away from his Maker. Ever since the fatal day when our first parents broke the Law of God, we have been, all of us, guilty of the same great crime. We stand as men who have their backs to the light and we are going the downward road, the road which leads to destruction. What we need is to be turned around, for that is the meaning of the word, "converted"—turned right about. We need to hear the command, "Right about face," and to march in the opposite direction from any in which we have ever marched before. Our text truly says that the Word of God turns us around. It does not mean that the Word alone does that apart from the Spirit of God, because a man may read the Bible through 50 times and, for 50 years hear sermons that have all come out of the Bible, and yet they will never turn him unless the Spirit of God makes use of the Word of God or the preacher's sermons. But when the Spirit of God goes with the Word, then the Word becomes the instrument of the conversion of the souls of men.

This is how the work of conversion is worked. First, *it is by the Scriptures of Truth that men are made to see that they are in error.* There are millions upon millions of men in the world who are going the wrong way, yet they do not know it. And there are tens of thousands who believe that they are even doing God service when they are utterly opposing Him. Some who, as far as it is in their power, are even slaying Christ, know not what they are doing. One of the pleas that our Savior used upon the Cross was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To take my own case, I know that for years I was not conscious of having committed any great sin. I had been, by God's restraining Grace, kept from outward immoralities and from gross transgressions and, therefore, I thought I was all right. Did I not pray? Did I not attend a place of worship? Did I not do what was right towards my fellow men? Did I not, even as a child, have a tender conscience? It seemed to me, for a time, that all was well and, perhaps, I am addressing someone else who says, "Well, if I am not right, I wonder who is? And if I have gone wrong, where must my neighbors be going?"

Ah, that is often the way we talk! As long as we are blind, we can see no faults in ourselves. But when the Spirit of God comes to us and reveals to us the Law of God, then we perceive that we have broken the whole of the Ten Commandments in the spirit, if not in the letter of them. Even the most chaste of men may well tremble when they remember that searching word of Christ—"Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." When you understand that the Commandments of God not only forbid wrong *actions*, but also the *desires*, *imaginations* and *thoughts* of the heart—and that, consequently, a man may commit murder while he lies in his bed—may rob his neighbor without touching a penny of his money or any of his goods—may blaspheme God though he never uttered an oath—and may

break all the commands of the Law of God, from the first to the last, before he has put on his garments in the morning—when you come to examine your life in *that* light, you will see that you are in a very different condition than you thought you were!

Think, for instance, of that solemn declaration of our Lord, "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment." It is by bringing home to the heart such Truths of God as these that the Spirit of God, through the Word, makes a man see that he is in error and in danger! And this is the beginning of his conversion! You cannot turn a man around as long as he believes he is going in the right way. While he has that idea in his head, he goes straight on, marching, as he supposes, safely. So the very first thing to be done to him is to let him see that there is a terrible precipice right before him—over which he will fall if he goes on as he is going. When he realizes that, he stops and considers his position.

Then the Word of God comes in, in the next place, *to take the man off from all attempts to get around by wrong ways*. When a man knows that he is going wrong, his instinct should lead him to seek to get right, but, unhappily, many people try to get right by getting wrong in another direction! A good man sent me a volume of his poems the other day. As soon as I looked into it, I saw that there was one line of the verse that was too short. The good Brother evidently felt that it was, so he tried to set the matter right by making the next line too long, which, as you see at once, made two faults instead of one! In like manner, you will find that men who are wrong in one direction with regard to their fellow men, often become very superstitious and go a great deal further in another directions than God asks them to go and so, practically, make a long line towards God in order to make up for the short line towards men! And thus they commit two errors instead of one.

Here is a sheep that has gone astray. It has wandered so far to the East that, in order to get right, it tries to go just as far to the West—and if convinced that it is on the wrong road, all it does is to stray just as far to the North and, by-and-by, to the South! It is wandering all the while in a different way with the intent to get back to the fold and, in this respect, sinners are just as silly as the sheep! Now, the Word of God tells a man that by the works of the Law he cannot be justified. It tells him that his heart is defiled, that he, himself, is already condemned, that he is shut up under condemnation for having broken God's Law. And it indicates to him that whatever he may do, or however much he may struggle, if he does not seek salvation in God's way, he will only make the bad, worse, and be like a drowning man who sinks the faster the more he struggles! When the Word of God shows a man *that*—and makes him feel as though he were hopeless, helpless, shut up in the condemned cell—it has done a great deal towards turning him around!

The next thing the Word of God does is *to show the man how he might get right*. And, oh, how perfectly it shows him this! It comes to the man and says to him, "Your sin deserves punishment. God has laid that punishment upon His only-begotten Son and, therefore, He is ready to forgive you freely for Christ's sake—not because of anything good in you, or

anything you ever can do—but entirely of His free mercy! He bids you trust yourself in the hands of Jesus that He may save you." Come, then, and rely upon what Christ has done and is still doing for you, and believe in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, to all who trust Him! Oh, how clearly the Word of God sets Christ before us! It is a sort of mirror in which He is revealed. Christ Himself is up in Heaven and a poor sinner, down here on earth, cannot see Him however long he looks. But this Word of the Lord is like a huge mirror, better, even, than Solomon's molten sea—and Jesus Christ looks down into this mirror and then, if you and I come and look into it, we can see the reflection of His face! Blessed be His holy name, it is true, as Dr. Watts Sings—

"Here I behold my Savior's face
Almost in every page."

There is scarcely one chapter in which Christ is not, more or less clearly, set forth as the Savior of sinners. So the Word of God, you see, shows the man that he is in the wrong, takes him away from wrong ways of trying to get right, and then puts him in the way to get right, namely, by believing in Jesus!

But the Word of the Lord does more than that. In the power of the Holy Spirit, *it helps the man to believe,* for, at the first, he is quite staggered at the idea of free salvation—instantaneous pardon—the blotting out of sin—all for nothing—pardon for the worst and vilest freely given and given now! The man says, "Surely, it is too good to be true." He is filled with amazement, for God's thoughts are as high above him and as far out of his reach as the heavens are above the earth! Then the Word comes to him and says, "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." The Word also says to him, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." The Word says, "The mercy of the Lord endures forever." "He delights in mercy." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." I need not go on repeating the texts with which I hope many of you have long been familiar. There is a great number of them—precious promises, gracious invitations and comforting Doctrines—and, as the sinner reads them, with trembling gaze, the Spirit of God applies them to his soul and he says, "I can and I do believe in Jesus! Lord, I do gladly accept Your pardoning mercy. I look unto Him who was nailed to the Cross and I find in Him the cure for the serpent bites of sin. I do and I will believe in Jesus and venture my soul upon Him." It is thus that the Word of God converts the soul—by helping the man to believe in Jesus.

And when it has done that, *the man is converted*, for when a man looks to Christ, alone, he has turned his face towards God. Now he has confidence in God and out of this grows love to God. And now he desires to please God because God has been so very gracious in providing such a Savior for him. The man is turned right around—from rebelling against God he has come to feel intense gratitude to his Redeemer—and he seeks to live to God's Glory as he would never have thought of doing before!

I ask you who are the people of God, whether you have not felt, since your conversion, the power of the Word of God *in sustaining you in your converted condition*. Do you not often feel, as you hear the Gospel preached, your heart grow warm within you? Some time ago, when I went away for a week's holiday, I was more than a little troubled about many things. I had been, for a long while, preaching to others and I thought I should like to feel the power of the Word in hearing it myself. I went to a little chapel in the country and there I heard a lay brother—I think he must have been an engineer—preach a sermon. There was nothing very grand in it except that it was full of Christ. And as I listened to it, my tears began to flow. I wish that, sometimes, some of you, my Brothers, would preach and let me take my turn at listening. Well, on that occasion, my soul was melted as I heard the Gospel proclaimed very simply, and I thought, "After all, I do feel its power! I do enjoy its sweetness!" And while I listened to it, my heart overflowed with joy and delight—and I could only sit still and weep as I heard the simple story of the Cross.

And have not you, Beloved, often found it so, in your experience, as you have been reading the Word of the Lord? If you ever get dull in the things of God, it is not the Bible that has made you so! If ever your heart grows cold, it is not the promises of God that have made you cold! If ever you cannot sing, and cannot pray, it is not the searching of the Scriptures that has brought you into that condition. And if you ever have the misery of hearing a sermon that deadens your spiritual life, I am quite certain that that sermon is not in harmony with the mind of God and not according to the teaching of the Word of God. But when you hear the Gospel fully and faithfully preached, if your heart is at all capable of feeling its power, it stirs your spirit, it wakes you up, it produces holy emotions—love to God, love to your fellow men, heart-searching, deep humiliation, ardent zeal and all the Christian Graces in full exercise! The Word of the Lord is perfect and its effect is continually to restore and revive the soul of the Christian.

This has been to me one of the great evidences of the Truth of Inspiration. Standing alone at night and looking up to the starry vault of Heaven, I have asked myself, "Is this Gospel which I have believed, which I have preached to others for so many years, really true?" Being absolutely certain that there is a God—for none but a fool can doubt that—I have said, "Well, this Gospel has made me love God. I know I love Him with all my heart and soul. And whenever it exerts its rightful power over me, it makes me try to please Him. Whenever I am under its influence, it makes me hate all wrong, all meanness and all falseness. Now, it would be a very strange thing if a lie could lead a man to act like that, so it must be true." The moral effect of the Word of God upon one's own nature, from day to day, becomes, in the absence of all other proof—even if we had no other—the surest and best evidence to a man that "the Law of the Lord is perfect," for it converts his soul!

I once heard a charming story about Robert Hall—that mightiest of our Baptist orators—perhaps one of the greatest and most eloquent ministers who ever lived. He was subject to fits of terrible depression of spi-

rits and, one night, he had been snowed up, on his way to a certain place where he was going to preach. There was such a great depth of snow that he was obliged to stay for the night at the farmhouse where he had stopped. But he must preach, he said. He had his discourse ready and he must deliver it—so they fetched in the servants and the farm people, and he preached the sermon he had prepared—a very wonderful one to be delivered in a farmhouse parlor. And after the others had all gone, he sat down by the fireside with the good man of the house and he said to him—a plain, country farmer, "Now tell me, Mr. So-and-So, what do you think is the sure evidence of a man being a child of God, for I sometimes am afraid I am not one?"

"Oh," said the farmer, "my dear Mr. Hall, how can you talk like that?" "Well, what do you think is the best evidence that a man is really a child of God?" "Oh," replied the farmer, "I feel sure that if a man loves God, it must be all right with him." "Then," said the farmer, as he told the story, "you should have heard him speak. He said, 'Love God, Sir? Love God? If I were damned, I would still love Him! He is such a blessed Being—so holy, so true, so gracious, so kind, so just!' He went on for an hour praising God, the tears running down his cheeks as he kept on saying, 'Love Him? I cannot help loving Him! I must love Him! Whatever He does to me, I must love Him!'"

Well, now, I have felt just like that, sometimes, and then I have said to myself, "What made me love the Lord thus? Why, this that I have read about Him in this blessed Book! And this that I believe that He has done for me, in the Person of His dear Son. And that which brings me into such a state that I love Him with all my nature must be a right and a true thing."

The Word of God is perfect, converting the soul. You will find it to be so the longer you live and the more you test and try it. Whenever you go astray, it is because you get away from the Word of God. And as long as you are kept right, it is because you are drinking in the precious Truths of God concerning Jesus as they are revealed in the Bible. That is the one perfect Book in the whole world and it will also make *you* perfect if you will yield to its gracious influence. Only submit yourself to it and you will, one day, become perfect and be taken up to dwell where the perfect God, who wrote the perfect Book, will reveal to you the perfection of bliss forever and forevermore! God grant to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to know the power of this converting Book!

If any of you have backslidden, I pray that this same blessed Book may bring you back. I had a letter, the other day, from the backwoods of America that did my heart good. It was from a man who was one of my first converts at New Park Street Chapel. He had been for years a member of the Church, but he grew cold and ceased to attend the means of Grace and, at last, he had to be excommunicated from the Church. He went out to America and there, far away, he began to examine himself—and the Spirit of God brought home to his heart the old texts which he used to hear. He writes that he was brought to his knees and now he is actively engaged in the service of God, endeavoring to bring other backsliders and sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ! It is the Word of God that

will restore you, Backslider! I hope it will do so this very hour and that, soon, you will come to us, and say, "Take me into the Church again, for the Lord has restored me to fellowship with Him through His blessed Word."

II. I must be very brief upon the second part of my subject, which is, THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WORK OF CONVERSION. That is a boundless theme, but I must be content just to touch upon a few points of this excellence.

When the Word of God converts a man, *it takes away from him his despair, but it does not take from him his repentance*. He does not now think that his sin will cast him into Hell, but he does not, therefore, think that his sin is a trifle. He hates the sin as much as if he feared that it would destroy him forever. That is a grand kind of conversion—that the man, who had been in despair because of his sin, is made to know that his sin is forgiven and yet he is not led to trifle or tamper with sin. By faith he sees the wounds of Jesus and he knows how Christ bled to set him free from the bondage of sin—and that makes him forever hate sin. Is not that an excellent conversion?

True conversion also *gives a man pardon, but does not make him presumptuous*. His past transgression is all forgiven him, but he does not, therefore, say, "I will go and transgress in the same fashion again. If pardon is so easily obtained, why should I not sin?" If a truly converted man ever talked like that, or, if such a thought ever occurred to him, he must have said at once, "Get you behind me, Satan, for you savor not the things that are of God." Such talks as that would be diabolical! "Shall we sin, that Grace may abound? God forbid!" Though the man is pardoned, he hates sin as the burnt child dreads the fire. He is afraid lest, by any inadvertent step, he should grieve his Lord who has blotted out the past.

Further, true conversion *gives a man perfect rest, but does not stop his progress*. He knows that the work that has saved him is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and that he has not to add even one thread to the robe of righteousness which has been given to him! Yet he desires to grow in Grace, to become holier and holier, more like his Lord and Master. While he perfectly rests in Christ, he spreads the wings of his soul that he may fly higher and higher towards his Lord and Master.

Again, true conversion *gives a man security, but it does not allow him to leave off being watchful*. He knows that he is safe and that he shall never perish, neither shall any pluck him out of Christ's hands—but he is always on the watch against every enemy—against the world, the flesh, and the devil. One of our hymn-writers puts this double Truth of God very sweetly—

"We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose
But we would ne'er this Grace abuse,
Let us not fall. Let us not fall."

True conversion also *gives a man strength and holiness, but it never lets him boast*. He glories, but he glories only in the Lord. He knows that a great change has been worked in him, but he still sees so much of his own imperfections that he mourns over them before the Lord. He has no time for boasting because all his time is taken up with repenting for his

sins, believing in his Savior and seeking to live to the praise and glory of God!

True conversion, likewise, *gives a harmony to all the duties of Christian life*. It makes a man love his God better and love his fellow men better. I have no opinion of that religion which consists in a so-called profession of religion which makes a young woman leave her father and mother and all her family—and go and shut herself up in a convent, or become a sister of misery of some sort or other! If my child, when he says that he is converted, leaves off loving his father, I have very grave doubts about his conversion! I think it must be a conversion worked by the devil, not by God. But wherever there is true love to God, there is sure to be love to our fellow men also. The same God who wrote on one tablet certain commands in reference to Himself, wrote on the other tablet the commands with regard to our fellow men. "You shall love the Lord your God," is certainly a Divine Command—and so is the other, "and your neighbor as yourself." True conversion balances all duties, emotions, hopes and enjoyments.

True conversion *brings a man to live for God*. He does everything for the Glory of God—whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does. True conversion *makes a man live before God*. He used to try to fancy that God did not see him. But now he desires to live as in God's sight at all times and he is glad to be there—glad even that God should see his sin—that He may blot it out as soon as ever He beholds it. And such a man now comes to *live with God*. He has blessed communion with Him, He talks with Him as a man talks with his friend and, by-and-by, he shall dwell with God throughout eternity in the palace above! This ought to convince you what an excellent thing true and real conversion is.

III. I have no need to say much, in the third place, concerning THE CONSEQUENT EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD. The Law of the Lord which accomplishes such an excellent work, must itself be excellent. I will, therefore, only make one or two brief remarks and then close.

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," *right away from the beginning of conversion to the end*. Whenever we want to have converts—and I hope that is always—the best thing for us to do is to "preach the Word." There is nothing better! There can be nothing more—there must be nothing less! I do not wonder that in some churches and chapels, there are no conversions—because the sermons that are preached there are not adapted to that end. They are like a book I reviewed, the other day, of which I said that there was, possibly, one person in the world who understood it, and that was the writer of the book. And that if he did not read it through every morning, he certainly would not know, the next day, what he meant by it. In some such fashion as that, there are sermons that are so involved—perplexing, metaphysical and I know not what besides—that I do not see how any souls can ever be converted by them! The people need to have a dictionary in the pew, instead of a Bible! They need never turn to any Biblical references, but they need someone to explain to them the meaning of the hard words which the preacher is so fond of using. Have I not also read sermons which were very highly polished, and which, I daresay, were preceded by a prayer

that God would convert souls by them? But it was morally impossible that the Lord should do anything of the sort unless He reversed all His usual methods of procedure, for there was nothing in the sermon that could have been made the means of the conversion of a soul.

But, my dear Brother, if you preach the Word of God. If you lift up the crucified Christ on the pole of the Gospel you need not be very particular about the style of your speech! You need not say, "I must be a first-class speaker. I must be a brained rhetorician." I believe that a great deal of that first-class speaking is simply the means of veiling the Cross of Christ—and that fine talk about Jesus Christ is about the last thing that poor sinners need! I sat at a hotel table, in Mentone, one evening at dinner, and I wanted to speak to a friend who was sitting opposite to me, but someone had put a most magnificent bouquet of flowers in a very splendid vase between us. I was grateful that those flowers bloomed in the middle of winter, and I was pleased to see and to smell them, but, by-and-by, I moved them on one side because they stood in the way of my view of my friend's face. So I admire fine language—nobody enjoys it more than I do in its proper place—I even think that I could manage a little of it myself if I were to try. But whenever it stands between a poor soul and Christ, I would like to say, "Break that vase into a thousand pieces! Fling those flowers into the fire! We do not want them there, for we want the poor sinner to see Christ!"

It is the Word of God that converts the soul—not our pretty figures about the Word, not our fine talk about it—but the Word itself. So, dear teachers, and dear Brother-ministers, let us give them the Word! Yes, that is a very handsome scabbard, but, if you are going to fight, you must pull it off! There is nothing like the naked blade, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to cut and hew, and hack and kill, in a spiritual sense! That same Word will, by God's almighty Grace, make men alive again, so we must "preach the Word" if we want to have conversions!

There is another thing that I feel I must say to you. *We must not think that in order to have conversions, it is necessary to leave out any part of the Gospel.* I am afraid that some people think that if you stand and shout, "Believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, you will convert any number of people—but it is not so. You must tell your hearers *what* they have to believe. You must give them the Word of God, the Doctrines of the Gospel, for the people who are said to be converted without being taught from the Scriptures will very soon need to be "converted" again. There must be shot and shell in our guns if any real execution is to be done! Blowing off a lot of powder and making a great noise may sound very well for a time, but it comes to nothing in the end. Just the same Gospel adapted as to its tone and method, but the same Gospel—that I preach in this place, I would preach in a thieves' kitchen, or to the poorest of the poor—*and* the most illiterate of mankind! It is the Gospel and only the Gospel that will convert the soul.

Now, dear Friends, you who are not converted, my closing word is to you. If you really wish for strength, life, salvation—you will get it through hearing the Word of God, or through reading this precious Book. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Eye-Gate is not

usually the way by which Immanuel rides into the city of Mansoul. The lifting up of the host, the pretty decorations on the priest's robe, the crucifix, the stations of the cross, and all that Roman Catholic mummery will save nobody! That is not God's way of salvation!

Christ comes into Mansoul through Ear-Gate. "Incline your ear, and came unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live." Whenever the Gospel is preached, dear Hearer, do really hear it. Remember how our Lord Jesus Christ said, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear"? Some people do not hear. I have often been thankful, when I have heard some people talk, that I have two ears, because, though their conversation goes in one ear, I thank God I can let it go out the other, and so it does me no harm! But if you are hearing the Gospel, mind that you do not act like that. Then let your two ears be two entrances for the Word. Do not have one for entrance and the other for exit, but, "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it go in both ears and remain in your memory until it reaches your heart. I do not believe that anybody is an earnest and attentive hearer, longing to hear to his soul's profit, without his so hearing if the Gospel is preached to him. As I have already told you, the promise is, "Hear, and your soul shall live." And if you come with a willing mind—willing to judge, weigh and then to believe the Word—the moment you do believe it, you are saved! That Word of God which leads you to believe has already converted you, so, come out and confess what God has done for you, and then go on your way rejoicing! May God bless everyone of you without a single exception, for His name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 658, 561.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 19.

This Psalm teaches us the excellence of the two Revelations which God has made to man. The first is the Revelation which He has made in Nature, and the second is that which He has made in His Inspired Word. The Psalmist first sings of God as He displays Himself in His works in Creation.

Verse 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.* So much is this the case that it has been well said that "an undevout astronomer is mad." There are such traces of the Infinite and the Omnipotent in the stars, that the more thoroughly they are studied, and the science of mathematics is brought to bear upon them, in order, in some degree, to guess at the incalculable distances and mighty weights of the starry orbs, that a man must perceive in them traces of the Divine handiwork if he is only willing to do so! "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

2. *Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge.* Every day speaks to the following one, even as the day that went before it spoke to it, and each day has its own message. Its history is an echo of the Voice of God and if man had but ears to hear, he would perceive that the things which happen from day to day proclaim the Presence and

power of God. And even night, with her impressive silence, reveals the Most High in the solemn hush and stillness. In the great primeval forests, the winds seem with songs without words to declare the Presence of the Most High. There is a something there, in the stillness of the night, as weird-like and so solemn, which has made Unbelief retreat and caused Faith to lift up her eyes and see more in the heavens at night than she had seen by day—"Night unto night shows knowledge."

3, 4. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Though Nature does not speak, yet its words go to the ends of the earth and, silently, they sing the praises of God. To the inner ears of an enlightened man, there is a measure of spiritual teaching always going on.

4-6. *In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. Its rising from one end of Heaven, and its circuit to the other end: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* All this is emblematical of the spread of the Gospel—so Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Romans, "Their souls went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Our Lord Jesus, springing up from the couch where He slept awhile, has sent His Light even to the ends of the earth—

"Nor shall His spreading Gospel rest
Till through the world His Truth has run—
Till Christ has all the nations blest,
That see the light, or feel the sun."

There are brighter days yet to come to us! The strength of Christ, as He daily runs the Gospel race, has not diminished. Indeed, He puts it out yet more and more, and the day shall come when, as the full sunlight makes the perfect day, so shall the full Revelation of the Gospel to the eyes of all men fill the whole earth with the praises of God! Now let us read concerning the Book of God. We have read about His works, now let us read about His words.

7. *The law of the LORD is perfect.* "The Doctrine of the Lord (as it may be read) is perfect."

7. C*onverting [or, restoring] the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure.* Oh, what a mercy that is! What could our souls do with *ifs* and *buts* and perhapses? But the teachings of God's Word are certain, positive, Infallible!

7. *Making wise the simple.* No matter how foolish, how childlike we may be to begin with, so long as our minds are free from cunning and craftiness, and so are simple and sincere, this Book will make us truly wise.

8. *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.* You know they do. Oftentimes has your heart leaped for joy when the statutes of the Lord have been made known to you.

8-11. *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Your servant warned.* Do you not find it so—that of-

tentimes a text of Scripture comes to your mind just at the moment when you were about to suffer spiritual shipwreck? When you would have done something that would have caused you lifelong grief and vast damage, the Word of God has stepped before you with the flaming danger signal and you have been stopped in time!

11. *And in keeping of them there is great reward.* Not *for* keeping of them, for it is not of debt, but, "*in* keeping of them." It is always best to do as God bids you. You never forget a duty, or refuse to do it without suffering loss, and every mistake you make, with regard to your Lord's will, is a damage to yourselves. The keeping of His commands is most soul-enriching. The most profitable business that a child of God can carry on is the business of obedience to his Lord's commands. "In keeping of them there is great reward."

12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.* The man who searches his heart most will yet leave some sin undiscovered and he who says, "I have no sin. I am living without sin," has surely never seen into his own heart at all! He must be an utter stranger to the condition it is in. Let this be the prayer of each one of us—"Cleanse me from secret faults."

13. *Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.* "Let me never dare to do what I know to be wrong. Let me not say, 'I will go just so far and then stop.' Let me not tempt the Holy Spirit of God. Oh, let me never tempt the devil to tempt me and put myself into a dangerous position under the notion that God will keep me if I am His child! 'Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.'"

13. *Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* You will never go into apostasy if you are watchful against presumption. Those men who, like Judas, commit the great transgression and utterly perish, are men who knew nothing about watching their own hearts, but who presumed, and were sinfully bold and self-confident—and so came to an ill end. You know where John Bunyan says Heedless and Too-Bold went—and there are many like them.

14. *Let the word of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight; O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer.*

—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.

ANXIETY, AMBITION, INDECISION
NO. 2871

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1904.

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"Neither be you of a doubtful mind."
Luke 12:29.

THE chief concern of a man should be to see that his own soul is right in the sight of God. Solomon said, "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Many persons think a great deal about the adorning of the body, but do not think anything about the ornaments of the soul. The feeding of the physical frame engrosses much care, but the supply of spiritual food is often neglected. Yet, O Man, you yourself are better than your body! Your immortal soul is worth far more than that poor carcass of yours which will soon become food for worms! And all the things that you have, what are they compared with your inner self—your real self—your heart, your soul, your spirit?

In our text, our Savior bids us see to the condition of our mind—"Neither be you of a doubtful mind." He thus calls our attention to the higher and nobler part of our mind and bids us see to it that it is in a right state. No doubt there are some people who are in easier circumstances than others—some who are in positions where they enjoy many comforts, while others are in places where they suffer many hardships. But, after all, happiness lies more in the mind than it does in the circumstances in which any individual is found and the man within has far more to do with his own joy or sorrow than anything outside of him has. There have been some who have been perfectly free in a prison, while others have been in absolute bondage with wide estates to roam over. We have known some whose spirits have triumphed when all around has tended to depress them. And we have seen others who were wretched and desponding when they had, apparently, all that heart could wish.

It is the *mind* which is the main thing—it will bring you daylight or midnight, wealth or poverty, peace or war. I wish, dear Friends, that half the time we spend in trying to better our circumstances were spent in bettering ourselves after the right fashion and that even a tenth of the trouble we take to fit our circumstances to our desires were used in fitting our desires to our circumstances. If we did that, how much happier men and women we would be! Try as you may, you cannot alter the world in which your lot is cast and you cannot alter God's Providential

arrangements. So, would it not be better that you should be altered so as to suit the Providence and be resigned to the will of God?

It is beautiful to see how often the Inspired writers of Holy Scripture were busy with what I may call indoor work—the work that has to be done within one's own heart. "Bless the Lord, O my Soul," says David, in the 103rd Psalm, "and all that is within me, bless His holy name." This indoor work, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will always pay us best. And our Lord Jesus, in His exhortations, often bids us attend to it. Did He not say to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled"? A little later, He said to them, "In the world you shall have tribulation." And He says the same to His disciples in every age. It is no use for you to try to avoid it, for you will have tribulation, yet, "Let not your heart be troubled." All the water in the sea will not hurt your vessel as long as you keep it outside—the danger begins when it gets inside the ship. So it matters little what is outside you, if all is right within. Have that little bird in your bosom that sings sweetly of the love of God! Wear the flower called heart's-ease in your buttonhole and you may go merrily through a perfect wilderness of trouble and a desert of care! A hurricane of afflictions may beat about you, yet you shall be a blessed man—for all the elements of blessedness are within your own heart. God has given them to you and the devil himself cannot take them away!

In speaking upon this text, I mean to preach a good part of the sermon to myself, for I need it as much as anybody does. But I ask each Brother and Sister to take home to themselves any part that suits them. And before I have done, I shall have a word for you unconverted people—and I pray God that that word may do you good and that you may cease to be of a doubtful mind. The original of the text is not easy to explain, for the word translated, "doubtful," is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears to have something to do with meteors, so that the passage might be rendered, "Neither be you of a meteoric mind."

As the word is so unusual, there have been a great many different opinions as to its meaning. Some have said that it relates to high things that float above, such as the clouds. If they are right, our text says to us, "Do not be like the clouds—do not have cloudy minds, blown about with every wind of Doctrine." Others render it, "Do not be like the birds, high up in the air, always on the wing, unsettled and uncertain, ever flying about and never at rest." Others find an allusion to the ship that is far out upon the sea—and the text says to them, "Do not always be at sea, tossed up and down. Have some anchorage. Do not be always drifting to and fro." The word, "doubtful," means so much that I do not expect to be able to tell you all that it means, but shall rather give you a few practical thoughts concerning it.

I. "Neither be you of a doubtful mind." That is, first, CHILDREN OF GOD, BE NOT ANXIOUS. Be not tossed up and down by your outward circumstances. If God prospers you, do not ride high, as the vessel does when the tide lifts it up. And if He does not prosper you, do not sink down as the vessel does when the tide ebbs away again. Do not be so af-

fected by external things as to get into a state of worry, fretfulness, care, anxiety and distress.

Our Savior's injunction means, "Do not be anxious about your temporal affairs." Be prudent. You have no right to spend the money of other people, nor yet your own, in wastefulness. You are to be careful and discreet, for every Christian should remember that he is only a steward and that he is accountable to his Master for whatever he has and the use he makes of it. But when you have done your best with your little, do not worry because you cannot make it more. And when you have done your best to meet your expenses, do not sit down and wring your hands because you cannot lessen them. You cannot make a shilling into a sovereign, but be thankful if you have the shilling! And if you sometimes find that you must live from hand to mouth, remember that you are not the first child of God who has had his manna every morning, nor the first of God's servants to have bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening with nothing to lay by for the morrow. If this is your case, be not staggered and astonished, as though some new thing had happened to you! And do not begin to fret, and fume, and worry and trouble yourself about what you cannot help. Can you alter it with all your worrying?

Have you—you who are in the habit of worrying and fretting—ever made any profit by doing so? How much a year do you think that anybody would give you for all your fretting? How much has it brought you? Come, Brother, if it is a good business, I would like to go into partnership with you! But I should like first to know something about your profits. As I look at your face, I notice that it is care-worn and anxious. That does not seem to indicate that the business is a profitable one. If I listen to your speech, I hear you murmuring a great deal instead of praising God. That does not seem to me to be a profitable concern. In fact, as far as I have ascertained, either by my own experience or by the observation of others, I have never discovered that anxiety has comforted anybody, or that it has brought any grist to the mill, or any meal to the barrel! Well, if a thing does not pay, what is the good of it?

But perhaps you say, "I cannot help fretting and worrying." No, my good Brother or Sister, but do you not think that the Lord can help you to help it and that your faith in Him, if it were what it ought to be, would soon be the end of your distress and trouble? Have you not found out yet—I have—that the very anxiety which arises through your being in a difficulty, unfits you to meet that difficulty? You are in a great hurry to do something or other and that something or other does more mischief than could possibly have happened if you had kept still, resting in the Lord and waiting patiently for Him! Instead of doing so, you rush this way and that way, and so add to your worries instead of decreasing them. You are like the servant with the basket of eggs on her head, who shakes her head because she is afraid her eggs will fall—and makes them fall by the very process of her trembling!

So, you go and make ten troubles in endeavoring to get out of one. There is a text that is very easy to repeat, but not always so easy to

obey—"Stand still, and see the salvation of God." But you want to see your own salvation, so you cannot stand still! There is many a man who has run before God's cloud and who has been very glad to run or even to crawl back again. Some people are so anxious to carve for themselves that they cut their own fingers! They had better leave the carving in the hands of God and take what He gives them, for He knows far better than they do what is good for them—and His hand is infinitely wiser than theirs can possibly be.

"Oh, but," says one, "I feel that I must be doing *something*." That, "doing," will just be your undoing unless you stop and consider what God would have you do! The probability is that your action will be unwise and hasty while you are in your present feverish condition. Wait till you get quite cool, Brother—you will see your way far better then. At the present moment you are in such a fidget and flutter that you are very apt to mistake your right hand for your left and to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

You say again that you cannot help being anxious. Then, my dear Friend, I must very solemnly ask you what is the difference between you and the man of the world? There is an orphan child and it is afraid it will not be fed—but you have a Father in Heaven—and if you are afraid, surely, it is of little use for you to have such a Father! Are you not dishonoring His holy name by such conduct as that? Do you not think that others who see you in this condition will say, "There is not much power in religion, for these people, who profess to be Christians, are not comforted by it in their time of trouble—and it will not be of much use to them in the hour of their death." Remember Jeremiah's questions, "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trust, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?" Surely it is time that we plucked up courage and were not so easily disheartened, for we have worse trials on ahead than any we have yet been called to endure!

"That is just what I dread," says one. What would you do, then, Brother? "I have been thinking that perhaps I had better turn back." But you have no armor for your back—and the perils of going back are far worse than the perils of going forward! Therefore I charge you, if you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to play the man and let your faith overcome your fear! Obey that gracious word, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." Do you not believe that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"? You say that you do. Do you not believe that?—

"He sits a Sovereign on His Throne
And rules all things well"?

You say that you do. Do you not believe He loves you with an everlasting love? Do you not know that He spared not His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up for you? And do you think that, after having done so much for you, He will withhold from you anything that is necessary for your well-being? You must not think so. Brother, Sister, it would be un-

kind, ungenerous, ungrateful to think so! Therefore, be not of an anxious or doubtful mind concerning temporal things.

"Well," says one, "as far as temporal supplies are concerned, I can leave them entirely in the hands of God, but my anxieties arise from quite another form of trouble. There is a Christian Brother who is at enmity against me and he has been spreading an ill report about me, although I have earnestly sought to walk before God in holy fear and have watched every step that I have taken. And I feel so worried that I do not know what to do." Well, dear Friend, there is one rule which you will generally find to be applicable in such a case as yours. When you do not know what to do, do not do anything at all! And, usually, if the trouble has arisen through false reports about your own character, "the least said, the soonest mended." I believe that if there is anything you want to have well done, you had better do it yourself, but there is one exception to that rule and that is the matter of defending yourself. No defense is needed for a good man who can say, "By the Grace of God I am what I am." Therefore you may leave that matter of your own character and, as to the good Brother not getting on with you, if you have done anything that has grieved him, confess the wrong. "Well, perhaps if I did, he might not meet me in the same spirit." You have nothing to do with that, dear Friend—that is his business and God's. You go and do the right thing and then be no longer anxious about it, but leave the result with God.

I hear another Brother say, "My anxiety has nothing to do with my personal affairs. I am anxious about the cause of God—the Church over which I preside—the Bible class that I conduct—the mission field that I try to cultivate. Somehow, things do not go as I wish and I am greatly concerned that they are not more prosperous." And what are you doing, good Friend, to bring about that result? Are you telling the Lord about it and agonizing before Him in prayer? That is right, but if you are telling *yourself* about it and your anxiety is confined to yourself, no good will come of that. "But, Sir, all things seem to be going amiss." Yes, I am constantly hearing that. There are some of our friends who believe that we have fallen upon the worst days that have ever been known in this world! Well, it may be so. I cannot say much about that. But I will say this, my dear Friends—that you and I are not of anything like so much importance to the Church of God as we may have imagined! And the particular department of work which has been entrusted to us, though we ought to think well of it, and to do it well, it is not, after all, the hinge upon which the whole universe turns! God managed the world very well before we were born and He will manage it quite as well when we are dead! His Church will not die, for the Lord still lives and His Spirit still abides in the Church and, therefore, it must live.

But there will be trouble for us if we begin to think that everything depends upon us. Uzza was well intentioned, no doubt, yet God killed him for putting forth his hand to stop the Ark of the Lord from falling. Let none of us become guilty of Uzza's sin! It is our business to serve the Lord with all our heart and soul, just as Martha, with all her energy, sought to prepare a supper for Jesus. But when we begin to be cumbered

about our service, then we may expect the Master to say to us, as He did to Martha, "You are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." It is not well that we should be cumbered about our service! No, Brothers and Sisters; the Lord loves His Church far better than we do and He knows far better than we do how to manage her affairs, so we must—

"Just do the little we can do,
And leave the rest with Him."

May His blessed Spirit help us so to get rid of all improper anxieties!

II. Another meaning of the text will make a second division of our subject. "BE NOT AMBITIOUS." That is, do not fly high. Do not be as the clouds and the meteors, that not only move about and are uncertain in their movements, but are also high and lofty.

Some people are troubled because they are *aiming at amassing great wealth*. Years ago if anybody had told them they would one day possess what they have already obtained, they would have thought it was an amazing sum, more than sufficient to satisfy all their desires. If somebody had asked them, "Will you retire from business then, and be quite happy and content?" they would have answered, "Oh, yes, certainly!" Well, they have already gathered far more than that, yet they are as grasping as ever and they want more, and more, and more and they are by no means content with what they have, much as it is. We should all be happier than we are if we were more contented with what is really all that we need, namely having food and clothes, having neither poverty nor riches. Many men have been like that dog in the fable that had meat in his mouth, but did not eat it because he saw the reflection of it in the water and was so anxious to get that reflection as well as the substance that he already had that he lost the piece that he might have eaten! Such people are always trying to grasp the reflection instead of enjoying what God has given them. Let us not be of such a mind as that.

There are others who are *ambitious to attain a higher position.* They might be very well content with the kind, good friends they have, but there was a lord who once looked at them—and ever since that time they have thought it a very wonderful thing to know a real, live lord. I have heard of a man who used to boast that the king once spoke to him and though his majesty only told him to get out of the way, he was very proud of having been addressed by the king! And there are many people who think a great deal of that sort of thing. They are only shillings now, but they are anxious to get among the sovereigns. I have no sympathy with that desire—the best society in the world for me is a company of the Lord's people and whether they are poor or rich, so long as they are God's saints, I feel myself at home with them! If a Brother spoils the Queen's English and makes a great many mistakes in pronunciation, that does not matter to me. The real piety that is in the man—the Grace of God that is in his soul—that is the thing which ought to please us! To be proud of our association with the great ones of the earth is both a folly and a sin on the part of any child of God.

Sometimes we are *ambitious in the service of God beyond what we ought to be*. You are doing well in that little Chapel, my Brother—the place is full and God is blessing you—but you want a bigger place, or you want to get away from those poor people whom the Lord has helped through your ministry. Possibly, my Friend, you are a Sunday school teacher and you have charge of the infants, and they love you. And you are fitted for the work, yet you are not content to be an infant class teacher, you would like a senior class—and a great stupid you would make of yourself if you had such a class, for you are not adapted for it! It is always well to be seeking to do more for the Lord Jesus Christ, but I would earnestly discourage you from endeavoring to attain to a higher position merely for the sake of occupying it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, be not ambitious in this sense, for, after all, what is human greatness?

Have you ever met with a really great man who would have given a penny for his own greatness? Do you not know that the higher you rise, even in the Church of Christ, the more responsibility you have and the heavier burdens you have to carry? Do you not also know that the way to be really great is to be little—and that he who is greatest of all is the one who has learned to be least of all? He who is chief in the Church of Christ is he who serves the Church most and who is willing to go lowest for Christ's sake! Cultivate *that* kind of greatness as much as you like, but put aside the other, and be not of ambitious mind even in your Lord's service!

I meet, every now and then, people who are, I hope, God's children, but they seem to me to have got into a very curious state of mind. They have notions that are not at all according to the realities of everyday life—flighty notions—romantic notions about their own rights, dignities, importance and so on. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of us were, in our own estimation, very important individuals, were we not, before the Grace of God came into us? But when the Grace of God works in us, we are made to feel that the very lowest and meanest place is a better position than we have any right to take. When we are in our right senses, we never give ourselves those high and mighty airs. A truly humble Believer does not say, "So-and-So did not treat me with proper respect." Oh, dear me, what is the proper respect to which you and I are entitled? May the Lord preserve us from such a spirit as that!

But there are some people—professing Christians, too—whose heads are always being filled with that kind of nonsense. They do not seem to have learned that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of meekness which teaches us to bear and forbear, to forgive until seventy times seven, to expect to have our rights trampled on and to be willing to lay them all down for any who please to tread upon them. It is blessed to feel, "I will be content to take any place, so long as I can love others and do them good by loving them. As long as I can but love them to Christ and help them to love Christ and manifest the love of Christ to them, I will, by His Grace, be content." O Brothers and Sisters, we all need to go to school to our dear Lord and Master! You have never read that He said anything about His rights, or about defending His dignity. No, He who is the King of kings, and Lord

of lords, was the Servant of servants when He was here upon earth! And, truly, he that serves most is the most royal of all. Therefore, "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and then you will not be anxious or ambitious to be great.

III. A third meaning of the text is this, "BE YOU NOT OF AN IRRESOLUTE MIND, WITHOUT DECISION OF CHARACTER."

If you look at the connection of the passage, you will see that this meaning fits in exceedingly well. There are persons in the world who may be described as time-servers. The main consideration with them is what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or how they shall be clothed—so they are always watching to see which is the best way to go in reference to those matters. As the old proverb has it, they know on which side their bread is buttered, or, according to another familiar saying, they are waiting to see which way the cat jumps! And when they have ascertained that, their "principles" will lead them to jump in that particular direction.

Mr. John Bunyan, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, has well described just such persons—Mr. By-Ends and Mr. Fair-Speech—and some of us have known their descendants. You remember hearing of the waterman who got his living by looking one way, and pulling another. And that waterman has had a great many sons of very much the same character as himself—and they have made a certain kind of progress in the world by that sort of scheming. But you and I, Beloved, are not to be of an irresolute mind. Every Christian should say, "By the Grace of God my mind is made up to serve Him, cost what it may. Does my Lord desire me to keep the Sabbath holy? Sunday is the best day in my particular line of business, but that does not matter to me. My mind is made up to serve the Lord—and whatever it costs will make no difference to me. There is a party to be held tonight and I know that if I go to it, I shall have to witness the utmost frivolity, and I shall have to be a partaker in what will be, to me, a good deal of sin. Uncle Jonas will be angry if I don't go, but I mean to do the right thing—whether Uncle Jonas is pleased, or not." That is the way all you who have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts ought to speak. The question, "What is right?" being answered, you have only to do the right, whatever happens. This is what our Lord meant when He said to His disciples, "Neither be you of a doubtful mind."

"Oh, but," some say, "we really must look at both sides of that question. There may come a time when we know that a certain course is right, but, if we take it, we may bring ruin upon ourselves and upon others, too." Let me read the 4th and 5th verses of this chapter—and when I have done so, there will be no need for you to say anything—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him." And the 8th and 9th verses—"Whoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Does not that decide you? God grant that it may and that you may henceforth say,

"I will confess Christ and act for the right and the true and, by the aid of His blessed Spirit I will never hesitate to do as He bids me—

"'Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes'—

"neither will I be of a doubtful mind."

IV. A fourth meaning of the text is, BE YOU NOT AT SEA SO FAR AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SALVATION IS CONCERNED.

Brothers and Sisters, *there are some who are not saved, who yet imagine that they are*. There are many who know nothing of vital godliness, yet who sing as joyfully as the brightest of saints, never suspecting their real condition in the sight of God. Whenever I meet with a man who never has had a doubt about his own condition, I feel inclined to quote to him those lines of Cowper—

"He has no hope who never had a fear
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late."

Beware of all presumption! There are some who even decry anything like self-examination. They cannot bear for us to look for the signs and tokens of the Holy Spirit's work within them. And if we talk about practical holiness, they say that we are getting upon legal ground and turning aside to the "beggarly elements" of the Law of God. From all such turn away, for they can do you no good! You are exhorted in the Scriptures to examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith, and to prove yourselves. No, self-examination alone is not sufficient—you must cry with the Psalmist, "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."

But, on the other hand, *there are some who think that doubts and fears are necessary to a child of God*. I draw a very grave distinction between doubting the Truth of God's promise and questioning whether that promise is made to me—they are two very different things. To doubt the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin is one thing, but, sometimes, to question whether I really have trusted in that blood is quite another thing. The first is sinful. The second is only proper and discreet. I would advise everyone to often look to the foundation of their faith, to see whether they really have believed in Jesus and have in their heart the true life which grows out of such faith. But, Brothers and Sisters, there is really no reason in a man saying, "Whether I am a child of God, or not, I am sure I do not know. I sometimes hope I am," and so on.

I suppose there are few men who have not, at some time or other suffered pain, but it is not necessary for us to always have a toothache in order to prove that we really are men. And, in like manner, there are few Christians who have never had any doubts, yet it is not necessary to be always doubting in order to prove that we are Christians! But, as we are glad enough to get rid of pain, so are we to be glad to get rid of doubt by fully trusting our Lord who is so worthy of our trust! Dear Brothers and Sisters, you *ought* to know, you *can* know, you can know *now*, whether you are saved or not! At any rate, if I did not know myself to be saved, I would give no sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I had

found the Savior. If a shadow of a doubt about my being washed in the blood of Christ were on my soul, I would get to my knees and not rise from them until I did really know that Christ had saved me!

If you are in doubt and yet are content about your condition, I fear that you know nothing at all about the matter, for the true child of God, if he is in any doubt about his salvation, is uneasy till that doubt is gone. He cannot rest till he knows that he is saved and, after all, that is not a very difficult thing to know, for we are told, over and over again in this blessed Book, that he that believes in Christ is not condemned, but has everlasting life! If you have believed in Him, you are not condemned—you have His word for it. He who trusts to Jesus only, builds on a sure foundation! So, if you are trusting in Him, you may have the full assurance that you have passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation. Do not, Brothers and Sisters, go limping along all your life when you might run in the way of God's commandments! A good old minister of my acquaintance, when people used to say to him that they hoped, and hoped, and never got any further than that, was in the habit of replying, "You are always hoping and hopping. I hope you will learn to run one of these days—to run without weariness in the ways of God."

The last thing I have to do is to bid all here present who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do so at once. My dear Friends, my text says, "Neither be you of a doubtful mind." But you cannot help being of a doubtful mind while you remain as you are and I really wish that your conscience would trouble you even more than it now does—that your uneasiness might become even greater and your unrest yet more unrestful! Look at yourself, my dear Hearer. You have not believed in Christ, so you are in debt to Divine Justice and you are hopelessly bankrupt, for you cannot meet one in a million of the claims that are recorded against you! How can you rest as long as you are thus indebted to God? You are a prisoner, too. When Marshal Bazaine had many of the comforts of life on the Isle of St. Marguerite, off the coast of the South of France, he could not rest till he had regained his liberty. And I marvel how you can be so happy, even with the joys of this world, while you are without the great blessing of spiritual liberty! I wish you felt that you could not rest till you had become emancipated from the bondage of sin and been made the Lord's freeman. How would you like be in a condemned cell and not to know when your execution was to take place? I am sure that you would pity any poor creature, whatever his crime, if you could see him under such circumstances. Perhaps you say that you are living in a wide world and not in a prison. Yet you are condemned already! It was said of the old Roman Empire that if a man once broke the law, the whole world was a prison for him, for Caesar had almost universal sway. And God sees you wherever you are and everywhere you are in the condemned cell and, perhaps, before the sun shall rise again, your execution will have taken place.

I have been told that some years ago there went into the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud's exhibition, a young gentleman who was foolish enough to put himself under the guillotine—in the place which

had been occupied by criminals. And as he lay there, with his bare neck exposed to the terrible knife, he was so struck with horror that he was unable to move—and people who went by thought he was one of the wax figures and he could not stir until someone took him away! And, oh, if you did but know where you really are, with that dreadful axe of Divine Justice just above your head, you might well be paralyzed with horror! Only let your breath fail, or your pulse stop and down it descends to your utter destruction! But alas, you are insensible to these things. May the Spirit of God awaken you! May He make you feel your true position and then, I am sure, you will not be content to remain a moment longer of a doubtful and undecided mind!

Listen, my Friend! That sin of yours can be forgiven, for Jesus died for sinners! That heart of yours can be renewed by Grace, for Jesus lives again! You can be delivered from the wrath to come, for Jesus has gone up on high to plead for just such sinners as you are! What are you to do in order that you may have Christ as your Savior? Why, as the hymn says—

"Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 57:1-6.

Verse 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in You: yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities pass.* The heading of this Psalm—"To the chief musician, Al-Taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave"—tells us when it was written. It is one of David's "Golden Psalms." What a mixture of feebleness and strength there is in this first verse—the feebleness so beautified by being clothed with the strength of faith! What a turning away from man and what a turning wholly unto the Lord! And, in coming to the Lord, what humility and what pleading for mercy, and for mercy only! "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me." Yet what holy boldness also! "For my soul trusts in You." And what joyous confidence and what sweet repose in God! "Yes, in the shadow of Your wings, will I make my refuge." "If I cannot see the brightness of Your face, the shadow of Your wings shall be enough for me. Only let me get near You—only permit me humbly to trust You, and it shall be enough for me, 'until these calamities pass.'"

2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me.* Do you pray like that, my Brother, my Sister? I hope you do "cry unto God most high." But do you pray to Him as the One "that performs all things" for you—not merely who *can* perform all things for you, but who is actually *doing* it at the present moment—working out your lasting good by everything that is transpiring around you?

3. *He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.* If all the forces on earth are not sufficient to save His saint, God will send sufficient reserves from the ranks

of the heavenly host to preserve His people. Or if He does not determine to preserve them on earth, He will take them away from the earth, to be with Him in Glory. But, in one way or another, they shall be eternally secure!

Mark what the Psalmist says of the voracity of his enemy—he speaks of Saul as "him that would swallow me up." And the Believer in Jesus is, at times, such an objective of the unbeliever's detestation that he would annihilate him if he could. But God will sooner send help from Heaven for His people than that such a calamity should ever happen.

3, 4. *God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. My soul is among lions.* What peril David was in and what dangers often surround the best of the men—if not from arrows, swords and spears—from the hellish artillery of unbridled tongues! A human tongue is soft, but it can cut to the very quick. And the wounds from a cruel tongue are not easily healed. Many a man will bear, as long as he lives, the scars that were made by a slanderous tongue. God can save us, however, even from this great trial, and enable us to actually rejoice in this sharp affliction. It is no strange thing that has happened unto us, for so evil men persecuted the Prophets that were before us—as they said all manner of evil against them falsely. God Himself was slandered by the old serpent in the Garden of Eden, so it is not surprising that His children should be still slandered by the serpent's seed.

5. *And 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. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* A grand burst of praise and all the grander because of the condition of the man from whom it came! "My soul is among lions," he says, "but, 'be *You* exalted, O God,'" as if he would say, "It does not matter what becomes of me. I shall be content even in this den of lions, so long as You are exalted above the heavens and Your glory above all the earth."

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.* He knew that it would be so and he looked upon it as already accomplished—their nets and pits would only injure themselves.

Now look at the next verse in the light of the prayer David had been praying. See what a marvelous act of faith and what a grand result of unwavering confidence in God it is, for a man to be able to sing as David does even when his soul is among lions and fierce and powerful enemies are all round him, seeking his harm!

—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 LORD'S SUPPER
NO. 2872

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25,1904.

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

"For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."
1 Corinthians 11:26.

This solemn ordinance has been instituted and perpetuated to commemorate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but there is no ordinance to commemorate His life. One reason for this is because His death implies His life—when you commemorate His death, you testify that He lived. Another reason is that the Christian's life, better than any ordinance, is the proof that Christ lived and the testimony to this world how He lived. A Christian should so act that worldlings would be compelled to ask, "By what power, by what energy, is he actuated to live in a style so superior to that of his fellows?" The answer he should always be prepared to give is something like this, "I live thus because Christ so lived and it is no more I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The love of Christ compels me, so that I am sweetly and blessedly compelled to live, not unto myself, but unto Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." The proof that Christ came into the world should be that His followers are holy! Let their character be blameless and harmless, their conduct so devoted and so full of self-sacrifice that it shall be a constant memorial of that Redeemer whose name they profess. If the mind of Christ is in His people, it will make them so far superior to other men that it must be inferred that some superior energy is in them and that superior energy is none other than the love of Christ.

They should also so live that if any ask them how Christ lived, they may be able to say—not in words, for that might encourage pride, but in effect—"He lived as I live." It has been well said that ungodly men do not read the Bible, but they read it as it is translated into the lives of Christians. The actions of Believers are, to the worldling, the means of judging what our religion really is. Men of the world do not sit down and study our creeds, but they trade with us in the common business of life—and if we trade dishonestly, they judge that our creed is wrong and that our religion is not true. They do not wade through our Bodies of Divinity to balance our arguments and test their value by the rules of logic—they have a shorter and more practical test than that. If our religion makes us upright in our conduct towards others and compels us to fear God in all

that we do, then they pronounce our religion to be good. But if, on the contrary, we profess that we believe in Christ and yet can habituate ourselves to foul and degenerate behavior, they at once conclude that our religion is a thing of nothing. Brothers and Sisters, I repeat it, that Christ did not institute a memorial of His life because He would have *you* be the living memorials of Himself. He has not left us any ordinance in which His acts, His words, His thoughts can be set forth before the eyes of men in visible signs—He has done better than that for He has made you to be His signs and ordinances! "You are My witnesses," says the Lord. If the Spirit of God is in you, you are the testifiers to the world of the holiness and the purity of the Character of your Lord!

Our text tells us that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ as a memorial of His death. I am going to speak, first, *concerning that of which the ordinance is a memorial—Christ's death.* Then*, to point out how the ordinance itself shows forth the Lord's death till He comes*. And then, thirdly, to show how we, in this ordinance, rather than the ordinance itself—that *we, in the ordinance, do show the Lord's death till He comes*.

Allow me to observe, however, that the retrospect gives us only one aspect of this ordinance, for it also distinctly holds out a very blessed prospect. We are taught, as often as we celebrate it, to look for our Lord's Second Coming. Our text contains a very strong and a very lively anticipation of His Second Advent and of His *Personal* advent, too. Many persons say that Christ is certainly coming again, but that He is coming spiritually. This way of putting the matter seems to me to be a subterfuge. A man who is already here cannot be said to be expected to come. And it is certain that Christ is, at this moment, *spiritually* present with His people. His own declaration is, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." He is never absent, *spiritually*, from His Church. He still walks among the golden candlesticks. I cannot see, therefore, how it can be consistent with the ordinary meaning of language to say that He is to come spiritually.

My Brother, you believe that Christ is to come spiritually. Suppose that is true, what will be the result? Why, the Gospel will be better preached, more sinners will be converted and may I not also add that the ordinances will be better observed? Do you think that if Christ should come spiritually into this world, as you say He will, this ordinance would be taken away? "No," I think I hear you say, "certainly not. If Christ shall come spiritually, Believers will be more attentive to His commands than they ever have been—they will be still more strictly obedient to His Word and will." Just so, but my text says they are to show His death, "till He comes." That seems to me to infer that, when He comes, the ordinance will be no longer observed. When He is here in Person, I can see adequate reasons why the memorial of His First Advent should be dispensed with. But if His Second Advent is not an absolute reality, I can see neither Scriptural nor logical reasons why this ordinance should cease to be observed at His *spiritual* coming, whatever that expression may mean!

It is well for us to always be "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." There are

some who say that Dr. Watts did not believe this Doctrine, but he has expressed it most triumphantly in his paraphrase of Scripture where he writes—

"Nor does it yet appear
How great we must be made.
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head.
A hope so much Divine
May trials well endure,
May purge our souls from sense and sin
As Christ the Lord is pure."

I. First, I have to try to show you WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER SETS FORTH. It sets forth "the Lord's death."

There is no ordinance to set forth His birth. The Roman Catholic Church invented a feast day and called it Christ-Mass and other churches have imitated the custom—but there is no ordinance, delivered unto us by the Lord Jesus, or His Apostles, to commemorate His Nativity! Nor do I find, in the Scriptures, any record of an ordinance to commemorate His circumcision, or His first preaching, or His riding in triumph into Jerusalem, or even any ordinance to commemorate His Ascension into Glory. We generally regard the keeping of the first day of the week as a commemoration of Christ's Resurrection and of His appearance to His disciples when He showed them His pierced hands, feet and side. But even that can scarcely be called an ordinance. So, of all that Christ did or suffered, there is no ordinance enjoined upon us but that which relates to His death. Now, why is this?

It is, *first, because it was for His death that Christ was most despised.* Therefore, for His death let Him be most honored! It was the Cross of Christ that was His shame—it was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. And it is here that the enemies of Christ always begin their attacks. They deny His Divinity because He died. They mistrust His power to save on the very ground for which we are able to trust to it—because He died. Usually, the battle against Christ and His Church rages most fiercely around His Cross. His adversaries, led by the great master-spirit of evil, all seem to say, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with that great Doctrine of the Atonement, for that is as a king in the hosts of Israel." Those who preach the accursed crusade against Christ have, for their watchword and rallying cry, "Against His Cross! Against His Cross!" Therefore it is, most blessed Master, that You have provided this ordinance to be, as it were, a shield to Your own Cross, so that, if every minister should cease to preach Your atoning death, the silent bread and the voiceless wine should, louder than a thousand thunders, tell the world that Jesus died and that only through His broken body and His poured-out blood, sinners receive eternal life!

Christ's death, too, is chosen for special celebration *because it is the most important part of all that He did or suffered.* We would not depreciate His life, His Baptism, His work, or His Resurrection, but His death is the center of all. All the Doctrines of the Gospel revolve around Christ's death as the planets revolve around the sun! Take away the sun from the

solar system and you have dislocated everything. All the stupendous wheels would cease to move. Remove Your Cross, O Christ, and the keystone of the arch of the Truth of God is gone! Take away Your death, O Jesus, and it is death to all that You have taught, for all that You teach derives life from the fact that You have died! O my dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever errors may creep into the Church, they will be important only as they mar the luster of the Cross! I think it is the bounden duty of every Christian to be ready to die for the Truth of God. You know that our forefathers readily gave their lives for the defense of Believers' Baptism. Still, not in the least depreciating Believers' Baptism, I say that if it is worthwhile for one to die for that, it is worthwhile for tens of thousands to die, in one tremendous hecatomb, in defense of the fact that Jesus died! As this is the chief point of the adversaries' attack, so must we always regard it as the most important bastion of defense! Here, Christian, turn your eyes the most frequently. Here let your thoughts dwell the most intensely. Here lies the source of all your hopes! Here you shall find the wellspring of all your joys! Think it not unimportant, then, that Christ has given to His death so solemn and yet so simple a memorial.

I think the Master also appointed this ordinance *because His death is, after all, the most comforting thing in the whole Gospel system.* Where do you go, you of the weeping eyes, when your heart is breaking—where do you go for comfort but to the place where comfort was not—namely, to the Cross of the dying Savior? Where do you go, poor breaking Heart, when the woes of this life swell and gather till your soul is near to bursting—where do you go but to that spot where misery reached its climax? It is strange that the masterpiece of misery is also the masterpiece of comfort. The darkest spot in the whole world is yet the source of all our light! The dying of the Savior gives us life! His wounds heal us! His agonies bring us peace! His tortures yield us ease! The Good Shepherd knew that if His sheep desired to have green pastures, they would find them at the Cross, so He appointed this ordinance to bring them there. Well did He understand that if they would lie down beside the still waters, they must come to that place where the blood flowed from His blessed brow, and hands and feet, and side.

You have said with the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," and He does it in this ordinance. You have sometimes asked Him to bring you into His banqueting house and that His banner over you might be love. But that banner has never floated from any mast but the Cross and, therefore, He has brought you there. You have asked that you may sit under His shadow with great delight and that His fruit may be sweet to your taste. This is His fruit—His broken body and His shed blood—so He brings you here. You have said, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs there." Your Lord knows that you cannot do this except you view His Cross as that palm tree, springing up in a desert land and bearing all manner of delightful fruits. You will need no further arguments, Brothers and Sisters, to convince you of the wisdom and tenderness of Christ in bequeathing to you this most comforting ordinance that so His death may be held in perpetual remembrance!

II. Now I go on, in the second place, to show you HOW THE BREAD AND WINE IN THIS ORDINANCE SET FORTH THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

You can hardly fail to notice how the ordinance is adapted *universally* to keep in memory the fact it commemorates. You recollect what happened to the woman who looked back after she came out of Sodom. The Lord would have us "Remember Lot's wife," so He turned her into a pillar of salt. But that memorial is only to be seen by those who pass that particular spot. Now, suppose that the Master had said to His disciples, "Erect for Me a bronze column. Let it be in the form of a cross and write upon it that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried"? It would not have appealed to our observation anything like so forcibly as this ordinance, which is not restricted to any time or place. This memorial has been seen in the darkness of the catacombs of Rome, where only a tiny taper afforded light to the worshipping assembly. This memorial has been seen among the heather on the Scottish hillside where the lightning flash lent its kindly beam to the minister as he read the Sacred Word. This memorial is seen, today, in the far-off isles of the sea. From North to South, from East to West, this is the standing memorial of Him who died! Better than storied urn, or animated bust, or rare marble, or precious metals, or jewels unrivalled for their worth is this blessed memorial because it can be seen everywhere, in every land!

This is also an admirable memorial seeing that it is *perpetual*. Monuments of brass wear out. The teeth of Time devour the rugged granite, itself. Though you build, for a king, a monument like the pyramids of Egypt, yet shall his name be forgotten and even Pharaoh may lack a wise man to decipher the inscriptions on his tomb and recount the story of his mighty acts. Not so is it with this blessed ordinance—it can never wear away, it is always new. I may say to it, "O sacred Eucharist, you have the dew of your youth!" This memorial is as fresh, more than 1,800 years after its institution, as it was when, in the upper room, the disciples first celebrated it in anticipation of their Master's approaching death! So, when centuries have followed centuries, and Time himself shall have become bald and his scythe shall have lost its edge—when yon sun shall have grown dim with age and the moon shall be pale with fading weakness—even then shall this ordinance be as fresh and as new as ever! It is perpetual because the command of our King cannot be repealed! It is never to be set aside till the need of testimony shall have passed away—till Christ Himself shall come to reign among men!

And, oh, what a *simple* memorial this is! Priest of Rome, go to your sacristy and put on your millinery—your red, your blue, your silver, your scarlet and your fair white linen—play the harlot, for such you are before the eyes of men in all your wanton fineries! Prove yourself to be the true descendant of her of Babylon by the gaudiness of your apparel! But know, O priest, that we need none of your enchantments for the right observance of this ordinance! You sons of toil, you can come here with your garments still covered with the dust of your labor. What need we to fulfill to the letter our dear Master's own injunctions? What but a piece of

bread and a cup of wine? Oh, how shamefully have men mimicked this ordinance! How they have invented strange devices to make that appear wonderful which was wonderful enough in itself, because, like everything sublime, it was simple and majestic in its own simplicity!

This simple ordinance has sometimes made me smile at the useless artifices of the foes of Christ. I have smiled at the thought that our Master has given us a memorial so simple that we can observe it even when our adversaries are most opposed to us. I have broken the memorial bread and sipped the wine in Venice, beneath the Austrian sway, where, to have held a public Protestant service would have involved imprisonment! But how could they have stopped us? There were four of us in our own inn—might we not do there as we pleased? No one knew why we needed a small piece of bread and a cup of wine—and we four sat around the table and I avow that it was as much the Lord's Supper as it is when thousands of us assemble here to keep the sacred feast!

If we were in Rome itself, in a room at the Vatican, though the Pope himself were in the next room, we might observe this blessed ordinance and he would never know that we had done so unless we chose to tell him! How could he deny us bread? That would be scant hospitality! And how could he deny us wine? And having bread and wine, we need no altar and we need no priest. Wherever two or three Christians are met together, there may they celebrate the Supper of their Lord! It is as valid without a minister as with one and just as really the Lord's Supper though there are no ordained presbyters or learned Doctors of Divinity to preside at the table! Blessed memorial of the death of Jesus, they cannot put an end to you! We can laugh to scorn all the priests and the soldiers of Rome. If we had built a memorial pillar, they might have pulled it down. The sons of Moab might have stopped up our wells and cast down our towers, but who can destroy this simple ordinance? Persecution would no more avail to put an end to the Lord's Supper than would the swords of Pharaoh's soldiers have availed to put an end to the plague of flies! The craft or skill of man can never put an end to the simple memorial of bread and wine—all that he can do is but to parody or pervert it.

I think, too, that this is a very *blessed* memorial. The broken bread sets forth the broken body of our Lord and the wine, being separate from the bread, shows how His blood flowed from His body. The sign itself most touchingly sets forth the refreshing qualities of the blood which flowed from His head, hands, feet and side. The point I want to emphasize is that Christ has instituted a memorial of His death which requires, to carry it out, Christian hearts and, therefore, hearts full of love to Him and faith in Him. If you wish your name to be remembered, you may say, "It is my desire that men should keep my birthday." So they may and, in a hundred years' time, the recollection of the fact of your birth will have dwindled down into a mere fable! How many institutions we still have, the origin of which we do not know? But suppose you could have an institution kept up only by those who love you and suppose, in addition, that you had the power to always preserve in the world some hearts that

would love you? What a blessed memorial that would be! In coming to the Table of our Lord, we meet not as a company of men who have no regard for Christ, no compelling love to kindle our passions to a flame! Why, His very name makes our hearts leap for joy!—

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

His death is, to us, the most delightful topic of meditation. We come not to the Table of our Lord as the slaves of Pharaoh were flogged to build the pyramids, but we come cheerfully, joyfully, delighted to remember Him, feeling it to be less a duty than a privilege and far more a pleasure than merely a service. This Supper is, virtually, the outward and visible sign of ten thousand times ten thousand broken hearts that have been bound up, tearful eyes that have been made to flash with holy joy, aching consciences that have been eased and hearts that could sooner cease to beat than cease to love! So it is, indeed, a blessed and choice memorial of our Savior's death which can never be forgotten by His loved ones.

III. Now I come to my last point, and that is, perhaps, the most practical—HOW YOU AND I ARE TO SHOW OUR REDEEMER'S DEATH IN THIS SUPPER.

Some people are very particular about the way in which the Lord's Supper is administered, but, as long as everything is done decently and in order, I think that should be enough for us. I was staying, once, with a gentleman—a Dissenter—who had become more than a little formal. He was telling me that he had done a great deal of good in his parish and, among other excellent things, he recounted one with an air of enthusiasm which made me laugh. He said, "When I came here, these people used to bring the wine for the sacrament in a black bottle and, as I am sure that I could not celebrate the Lord's Supper if the wine came from a black bottle, I have provided something better." I thought it would have been a great deal better if he had asked the people whether they had brought black hearts, for a black bottle does not signify much—but a heart that is not right in the sight of God is the thing that needs to be taken away. If you and I have our hearts right, we need not mind how simple the mode in which the ordinance is administered!

But now, what are you and I to do in observing this ordinance? We are to show the Lord's death. Then, if we are to show it, we must show it to somebody. To whom? Why, first, *to ourselves*. My soul, be not content unless, in the bread, you discern the Lord's body for yourself. Do not eat and drink, as the Apostle says, "unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body." Take heed, O my Soul, that you are not satisfied with eating the bread unless, by faith, you realize that the body of Christ was offered up for you—unless your faith can so participate in the merit of that Sacrifice that the eating of the bread becomes to you a lively picture of your participation in the results of Christ's death! Mind, too, that the wine sets forth His blood to you. Brothers and Sisters, these symbols are but as the veil before the Holy of Holies—you must look beyond the symbols to that which is within the veil—or else, of what use are the signs to you?

The bread is nothing, the wine is nothing—*that which the bread sets forth is everything!* Feed on that! That which the wine portrays is everything—see to it that you are a partaker of that!

What multitudes of professors are quite content with the outward sign! I fear that the Lord's Supper, through being so grossly misused, has deceived many. See how eagerly they send for a clergyman when they lie dying! Men who have scarcely ever entered a church or chapel in their lives—men who fear not God and have no saving interest in the death of Christ—desire to have this bread in their mouths at the last! Let that dying impenitent know this bread shall be a swift witness against him! Not being born of God and having no right whatever to this ordinance, he ate and drank unworthily and so ate and drank condemnation to himself! If any of you have imagined that this ordinance can save your souls, let me correct that error at once! It may *ruin them*, but it cannot save them! You must get right away to Christ, right away from this ordinance. It is not as unrenewed sinners, but as saints—as Christ's disciples, as His saved ones—that you are to partake of this feast! You must come to Christ first, as a sinner, just as you are.

I have read, or heard, sermons which proved that the minister was not at all clear which was Christ—the bread upon the Communion Table or the Savior upon the Cross. There is a sermon upon this text—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"—in which the preacher invites his hearers to come to the Lord's Table. That is the very worst place to which they could come! They must first *come to Christ* and then, after they have found acceptance in Him, they may come to His Table. But they must not be invited to His Table until they have come to Him and trusted in His atoning Sacrifice! The Lord's Supper is a curse, not a blessing, to unbelievers, so let none of us think of feeding upon Christ in the sign until we have Christ in reality in our hearts.

Next, we are to show Christ's death *to others*. Some of you will be spectators while the rest of us are observing this ordinance. As we shall, in one great host, break bread together, we shall say to you, "We do, each of us, believe that Jesus died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. We have put our confidence in His death as making reconciliation for us before God. We personally avow our own vital faith in Him and we declare to you, whatever may be your judgment concerning Him, that He is all our salvation and our desire." The very poorest among the communicants will be a preacher. When you, dear Friend, take the bread and the wine, you will preach a sermon. I believe that the word used here has in it, in the Greek, the idea of preaching. You will say, by partaking of this ordinance, "I believe in Jesus Christ, in His broken body and His poured-out blood." I hope that will be an appeal to the consciences of you who will be looking on at the ordinance, asking you whether you also believe in Christ—and though the appeal will be a silent one, I pray you to answer, "Yes," or, "No," to it. As you see us partake of the bread and the wine, imagine that you hear a voice coming up from the Communion Table and saying to each one of you, "Soul, Soul, when will you, too, believe

in Jesus? When will you cast yourself on Him, that He may be your All-in-All?"

Nor, by this ordinance, do we set forth Christ's death only to ourselves and to others, but also *to God Himself*. We do, as it were, plead the merit of Christ's broken body and shed blood every time we observe this ordinance. We bring before God, not a sacrifice, as though the one Offering needed to be repeated—but a memorial of the finished and perfect Sacrifice which was once and for all offered for the sins of men. Brothers and Sisters, it is a solemn thing to think that every time we come to the Communion Table, we bring before the Eternal Father the memorial of the death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son!

We bring that memorial, too, before the holy angels hovering, as they undoubtedly are, over every Christian assembly. We say to each of them, "He who was seen of angels" is our hope! Tell the glad tidings through all the golden streets that the death of Christ is still remembered in this lower world! Speed on your swift wings to Heaven and let it be known in your glorious dwelling place that there are men and women, saved by the precious blood of Jesus, meeting to commemorate His death."

And, Brothers and Sisters, in this ordinance we show Christ's death *even to the devils in Hell*. There is nothing which they fear so much as the death of Christ. The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine are like the flaunting of a victorious banner in the face of the beaten foe. It is the flashing before the eyes of Satan of the sword that smote him in the days of old and that will make him tremble again even now! Earth and Heaven and Hell are gathered around us as we meet at the Table of our Lord and we poor, puny men become a spectacle unto the three worlds. We are said to be men wondered at, but how much more wonderful is that which is visibly set forth in this ordinance—the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ!

O my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I pray you to see to it that you now show His death to your own conscience. Does it accuse you? Then, show it the wounds of Christ and it shall be well with you. Does the Law of God condemn you? Show it your bleeding Master and it will at once absolve you. Show Christ's death to your unbelief and, surely, it will vanish away. Show Christ's death to your heart and, surely, it must melt with love to Him. Show Christ's death to the weeping eyes of your repentance and the tears shall be wiped away and you shall see your pardon bought with blood! Show Christ's death to the weak, Leah-like eyes of your faith and it shall strengthen them till they shall see even the hidden mystery and discern the substance which, by mortal eyes, cannot be seen. Show Christ's death to your wretched and miserable spirit that has been troubled and burdened with the cares of this world and it must leap for joy, and cast all its burdens away! Show the death of Christ to your old sins which have been coming back to you, today, and it will drive them all away. Show Christ's death, in fact, to the eyes of your heart, the eyes of your emotions, the eyes of all your powers of body and soul—and thus you shall be like he who said, "I shall see Him," though you shall not need to add, as he did, "but not now." You may say, "I shall behold

Him," but you will not need to spoil it by adding, as Balaam did, "but not near," for Christ shall bring you into His banqueting house and His banner over you shall be love!

Sinner, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and remember that He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Saint, come to the Table of your Lord and feast upon the emblems of His dying love, remembering that blessed are they who believe on Him, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told them by the Lord.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ROMANS 8:18-39.*

Verse 18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Paul made "the sufferings of this present time" into a matter of simple arithmetic and careful reckoning. He added them all up and saw what the total was. He seemed to be about to state a proportion sum, but he gave it up and said that the sufferings were "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." Did they stand as one to a thousand? No, otherwise they had been worthy to be compared! Did they stand as one to ten thousand—or one to a million—or one to a million of millions? If so, they would still have been worthy to be compared—but Paul saw that there was no proportion whatever between them. The sufferings seemed to be but as a single drop and the glory to be as a boundless ocean!

"Not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." That glory is not yet fully revealed. It is revealed *to* us, but not yet *in* us. What, then, shall we do in the meantime? Why, wait with patience and bear our appointed burden until the time comes for us to be relieved of it—wait, however, with hope—wait, too, as we must, quietly enduring the pains and pangs which precede so glorious a birth! In this respect, we are not alone, as the Apostle goes on to say—

19-22. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.* We live in a world that is under a curse—a world that was made subject to bondage through human sin. What does this cold mean? What do these fogs mean? What do the general mourning and sighing of the air all through the winter mean? What do the disturbances, convulsions and catastrophes that we hear about on all hands mean? It is the creation groaning, travailing, waiting—waiting till there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth, because the former things shall have passed away.

23. *And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Our soul has been delivered from the Curse. The redemption of the soul is complete, but not yet that of the

body. That must suffer pain and weariness and even descend into the tomb, but its day of manifestation shall surely come! At the appearing of our Lord from Heaven, then shall the body itself be delivered and the whole creation shall also be delivered, so we wait in a travailing condition—and we may well be content to wait, for these pangs within us and around us all signify the glorious birth for which we may wait in hope.

24, 25. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* This is our attitude and our condition now—waiting for the glory which is to be revealed in us and accepting the sorrow which is appointed to us as an introduction to the joy which is to come to us, mysteriously, through it. But while we are waiting, we are not without present comfort.

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* You must, I am sure, as children of God, often have felt that Spirit within you groaning in prayer what you could not express. How often have you risen from your knees feeling the utter inadequacy of words to express the desires of your heart! And you have felt that you had larger desires than you have been able to interpret. There have been mighty pangs within you telling of the Presence of this wrestling Spirit.

27. *And He who searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit.* When you do not know your own mind, God knows the mind of the Spirit and that is the very essence of prayer. He "knows what is the mind of the Spirit,"

27. *Because He makes intercession for (or, in) the saints according to the will of God.* Whatever the Spirit of God prompts us to pray for, is according to the mind of God, for it is not possible that the Holy Spirit should ever be otherwise than in perfect accord with the Divine Father. The eternal degrees, if we could read them, would convey to us the same Truth as the impulses of the Spirit in our heart. And this is the true explanation of prayer—that what God intends to do, His Spirit leads His people to ask Him to do and thus there is no conflict between the eternal Predestination of God and the earnest entreaties of His people. They are, in fact, the outcome of that very Predestination.

28-30. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* These great Truths of God must never be separated. Any one of these things being true of us, it is most certain that the rest are also true. Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you cannot read God's foreknowledge, neither can you enter into the secrets of Predestination, but you can tell whether you are called, or not. You can know whether you are justified by faith, or not. And if you get hold of those links, you have got a grip of

that endless chain which is firmly fastened to the granite rock of eternity past and which is also fastened to the rock of the glorious eternity which is yet to be revealed!

31-33. *What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God that justifies?* For so we think it ought to be read. That is another question. Can God lay anything to our charge after having justified us? Will He contradict Himself?

34. *Who is he that condemns?* There is only One who can, for there is only one Judge, and that Judge is Jesus. So, the Apostle puts it again in the form of a question—shall He condemn us?

34. *It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* Shall He condemn us? It is altogether impossible!

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword* ? What a long list of ills! They seem to make up a Jeremiah's roll of sorrow. Can they separate us from the love of Christ? They have all been tried—have they ever succeeded?

36. *As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* But did they succeed in separating saints from the love of Christ even in the days of martyrdom?

37-39. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* "Therefore, comfort one another with these words."

—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.

WHO LOVES CHRIST MORE?
NO. 2873

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 3,1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 3, 1876.

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave more. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged."
Luke 7:41-43.

When we commence the Christian life, it is very natural that we should say to ourselves, "We do not wish to be second-rate Christians, or ordinary Christians—much less to prove like the Laodicean professors, neither cold nor hot, or, like those of whom the Apostle John wrote, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." I like to see the holy ambition of the young convert who desires to bring forth much fruit to the Glory of God—to love Christ much and manifest that love by every possible act of devotion to Him. Truly, my dear Friends, you need not be as your fathers have been, for we have often provoked the Lord and have many times done what we ought not to have done. There is plenty of room for improvement upon the past generation and we would earnestly urge those of you who are commencing the heavenly race to run faster than we have run—to keep your eyes more steadfastly fixed upon the goal—and to continue more resolutely in the right way than we have done. We do not desire that you should imitate our mistakes, or that you should fall into our backslidings. We wish that yours might be the highest conceivable form of Christian life and we know that if it is to be so, there must be in you intense love to Christ.

My objective, at this time, is to give some directions which, perhaps, the Spirit of God will bless, especially to beginners, that they may be taught to love Christ much and manifest that love as this woman did. It may be that some of us who have been for years on the right road, may also get stirred up to greater zeal and devotion to our Lord. Possibly, we may hear our Master saying to us, as He said to the angel of the church of Ephesus, "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love." If His Spirit shall make our love to burn more vehemently, we may be able to start anew and after a better fashion in the work and service of our Lord. This were "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

With this end in view, I shall begin by speaking upon the fact that *we must all be saved in the same manner*. Whatever our desires may be to outrun others in the Christian race, we must begin by being saved in exactly the same manner as others are. Then, secondly, I shall try to show that *it will help to increase our love if we have a deep sense of our own sinfulness. A*nd then, thirdly, provided we have this deep sense of sin and, in consequence, possess a burning love to Christ, *this will lead us to show our love very much as this woman did.*

I. First, then, whatever our desires may be to serve our Master to the utmost—to be in the front rank of His servitors—yet we MUST BEGIN WHERE OTHERS BEGIN.

There is the same door of entrance for us as that which was opened to the very chief of sinners, for there is no difference between one sinner and another in the sight of God, as far as the plan of salvation is concerned. There may be many differences in other matters but, in the matter of salvation, there is nothing which places one man in a different position from another, or which allows him to be saved in any other way than the one way which God has laid down for a sinner's salvation.

You notice, in the parable before us, that both the parties were in debt—"the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty"—but they were both in debt. So, if some men have plunged into the grossest vice and defiled themselves, and polluted their lives, they are certainly in debt five hundred pence. But if others have been kept from overt acts of transgression, yet, since their hearts have gone astray from God and since, with their desires, and with their lips, and in many respects even in their actions, they have broken His holy Law, they also are in debt. Fifty pence, it may be, but still, they are in debt. There is not one among us who can stand before the Most High and say to Him, "I owe nothing to Your justice for I have never infringed Your righteous Laws." Any man who would say that would be a liar, and the truth would not be in him. If we say that we have no sin, or that we have not sinned, we lie in the face of the living God and in the teeth of our own conscience, too! So, we are all in debt, even if the amount differs in each case.

We also learn from the parable that, although *both the parties were in debt, neither of them had anything with which to meet the liability*—"they had nothing to pay." One only owed fifty pence, but, then, he had not the fifty pence. No, he had not even one penny out of the fifty required to meet the amount. The other debtor owed five hundred pence and his plight was just the same, for he had nothing to pay. It sometimes happens that the man who owes the most, has the most to pay, but it is not so here. He has *nothing* to pay. And sometimes the man who owes but very little, may be the one who has something with which to meet his obligations. He has pulled up just at the right time and though he is insolvent, yet he can almost meet the debt.

But it is not so here. He has nothing to pay. Neither of them could produce so much as a single penny and that is your case and mine, dear Brothers and Sisters—we have nothing to pay. All that we have, or ever shall have, is already due to God. If there were any assets, they would

not belong to us and there is nothing in reserve—nothing that we can look for, that will drop in, towards the close of life, with which all our old scores can be wiped out. Under the Law of God, there is nothing for us but debt, debt, debt! And even if we had the power to pay our old debts, new ones would soon swallow up all our capital. But we have nothing with which to meet our old debts. "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," is still God's daily demand upon us. And if we were able to meet it, it would not in any way make up for the deficiencies of the years that have gone by. Here we all stand upon an equality—we are all in debt and we have, none of us, anything with which to pay that debt.

And here is the glory of God's mercy in dealing with sinners who believe in Jesus. In the parable of the two debtors, we are told that *the creditor freely forgave them both*. He did not say to either of them, "I will set you a certain time and you shall pay me so much a week until you clear it off." Oh, no, he forgave them both—wiped the score out altogether! He did not ask anything of them, for he knew that they had nothing. He forgave them, says the text, *frankly,* that is, freely. He did not forgive one of them because his debt was a misfortune which he could not avoid, but he frankly forgave them both. He did not look for any worthiness in either of them, or expect anything from either of them, but, as an act of pure gratuitous favor, because he delighted to show kindness to his poor debtors, he said, "There, go home, both of you. I shall never ask you for the amount of your debts again. I have crossed it off my book though I have received nothing whatever from you."

Now, this is just what the Lord, in His infinite mercy, does for all poor sinners who come and trust His Son. He gives them a receipt in full, for there is One who has paid the debt for them! All glory be to His name—it has been paid in full! But, as far as we are concerned, the Lord does not give us pardon because of our tears, or prayers, or repentances, or even because of any merit in our believing, for our very believing is marred by unbelief—but He forgives us freely. And He does not forgive us because He thinks that in the future we shall improve upon the past. Oh no, we are His workmanship when we do improve and it is He who must have the credit of our improvement. But He forgives us freely, "according to the riches of His Grace," passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin, and remembering not the wickedness of His people, "because He delights in mercy."

Here, then, we are all on the same level and if any young Christian thinks that he starts with an advantage over others, he makes a great mistake—and he had better go back and start where all pilgrims to Zion must start—at that wicket gate which John Bunyan describes, or, better still, at that Cross where Christian lost his load and from where he went on his way rejoicing! You must come down from that high horse, young man—your birthright is not worth a farthing to you, your church attendance and your chapel attendance are not worth a single penny to you—you must trust in Christ just as a harlot or as a thief must! It is true that

you have been moral and I thank God for it. It is true that you have been preserved from contamination with an ungodly world and I thank God for it. But, still, in the matter of the soul's salvation, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Faith in the atoning Sacrifice of Christ is the way of salvation for the most immoral and for the most moral, too! You and I, dear Friend, must go together to the Lord Jesus and see in Him the full Atonement made and the utmost ransom paid—and then we must accept, as poor bankrupt sinners, the free gift of a full discharge through the Sovereign Mercy of God whom we have offended.

It is absolutely essential for us to begin here, for, if we do not start our Christian life rightly, we shall never make progress in it. If there is a mistake in the first course of bricks laid, or if the foundation is not well dug out, or if things are done improperly at the beginning, there are sure to be all sorts of mischief in the rest of the building. Therefore, I charge you, begin by coming to Christ as naked sinners needing to be clothed. Do not come to Him in the filthy rags of your self-righteousness, seeking to have a piece of His spotless robe of righteousness tacked on, for that can never be! If you think of passing your counterfeit coin with Christ's pure gold, you are making a fatal mistake. I charge you to begin as lost, ruined and condemned sinners—for that is what you really are. Coming to Christ like that and trusting in Him, you shall be saved, you shall be adopted into the Divine family, you shall be sanctified in Christ Jesus and, in due time, you shall be glorified through Him, and through Him alone!

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you how our lives may become more intense than the lives of many other professing Christians are through our love being more fervent than theirs. In order to attain that end, WE MUST HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF OUR OWN SIN. "Which of them will love him more?" "I suppose he to whom he forgave most."

I can imagine someone saying, "I was never, in very deed, as great a sinner as some have been. Must I, therefore, love Christ less than those who have been greater sinners than I have? Will this morality of mine—in which I do not trust for a moment and concerning which I do not speak boastingly—will this put me at a disadvantage in comparison with others? Shall I never attain to such love as that woman had who was a sinner?" Listen, my Friend. Suppose that the man who owed 500 pence only thought that he owed fifty. He would not love the creditor, who forgave him, any better than the one who really did owe the 50 pence, would he? It was not the amount forgiven, as you will readily see, which was the cause of the greater or lesser love—it was the *consciousness* of the amount—the realization of its greatness, which would be the cause of the greater love! I do not doubt that there are some very great sinners who have been forgiven, who yet do not love Christ much and, on the other hand, there are some who, in the judgment of men and, perhaps, in the judgment of God, are nothing like such great sinners, who, nevertheless, love Christ more—the reason being that these greater sinners never had such a deep sense of the enormity of sin as these, comparatively speak-

ing, lesser sinners have had. The question turns, you see, not so much upon the actual amount of debt, as upon the consciousness of the magnitude of that debt—not so much, in the matter of love, upon the indebtedness, as upon the *sense* of that indebtedness, so that you who have been kept in the ways of morality before you were converted, may rightly place yourselves among the greatest debtors and, perhaps, may love Christ even more than some others do who have actually been grosser offenders, but who have never been awakened to such a full sense of their sinfulness as you have had, and, consequently, do not think themselves to be the greatest debtors to God. It is, dear Friends, a deep sense of our sinfulness, coupled with the perfect consciousness of our forgiveness, that will work in us intense love to Christ.

Let me further say that *anyone who has been forgiven very great open sin ought, certainly, to have the greatest and strongest motive for love to Christ*. You cannot always tell how love comes into the heart. I do not deny the duty of love, but love does not come merely as a duty. You love your mother, or you love your wife and it is your duty to do so, but you could not be made to love either of them simply by being told that it was a duty! You do it because of the natural impulse within your heart which moves you to love. In like manner, love to our Heavenly Father and love to Christ is, no doubt, a duty, but it is much more than a mere matter of duty. That is a cold sphere for love to live in and she soon gets away from the polar regions of duty to the more tropical climate of the Garden of Gethsemane and the place called Calvary. She loves because she cannot help loving—because she must love! The gratitude within her heart is so great that she cannot help loving the Lord who has done so much for her!

I hope that is the case with any of you who were once drunkards, or who had lost your character, or who had sinned against God in an open way and even dared, perhaps, to blaspheme His holy name. As you think that over, oh, how your heart ought to burn with love to your Lord! You remember how Paul writes concerning adulterers, drunks and all sorts of grossly sinful people—and then says, "Such were some of you, but you are washed." This should bring tears to the eyes of all whom it concerns—"But you are washed"—you are singing your Savior's praises, though once a profane or licentious song would have suited you better! You are now bowing your knees in prayer, though once those knees never knew what it was to make an obeisance before the Most High! You are loving Him, now, with all your heart, though once you saw no beauty in Him that you should desire Him. Brothers and Sisters, I will not say that you ought to love Christ much—rather will I say that I feel sure that you do! If you realize what He has done for you, you cannot help loving Him much! And I trust that in the outpouring and manifestation of love, yours will be a life as vigorously good as once it was shamefully bad—a life as full of the fire of Heaven as once it was full of the fire of Hell—a life as much above the common life of men as once it was below what the life of men really ought to be. God grant that it may be so with you!

Now I will address myself to those who thank God—without any of the Pharisaic spirit—but very humbly thank God that they were not allowed

to run into the same excess of riot as others, but were early brought to a knowledge of the Savior. I say to you, dear Friends, that *you, also, may be among those who love Christ much if you have a very deep sense of sin.* A venerable servant of God whom most of you know and respect, has made a remark which I fully endorse. He says that he has noticed that the deepest convictions of sin do not come, as a rule, to men of coarse life, but to those who have been of upright moral character. My own observation has taught me that, very often, drunks and other persons who have lived openly evil lives, when they are converted, are brought all of a sudden to Christ and made to rejoice in Him—while some of us who were kept from such sins as they have committed, have had a far greater sense of horror and terror indicted upon us than they have ever experienced! I have many times found that the deepest sense of sin has been felt where the actual sin has been the least. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this rule, but I believe it is the rule—and the explanation is that the ungodly man, by a long life of sin, has so seared his conscience that even when the Spirit of God comes to him, he has not that delicate, acute sense of sin which another man has, who, by God's Grace, has never been permitted to blunt the edge of his conscience.

I will tell you another thing. I believe that in many Christians, the sense of sin is much stronger 10 years after they have been saved than it is at the time of their conversion. There is not any despair mixed with it and the fear of punishment has gone—but a sense of horror at the terrible guilt of sin will sometimes come over a Christian who is far advanced in the Divine life. No, the further he is advanced in the Divine life, the more will horror take hold of him whenever he sees sin, even in others, but still more in himself! Some glib professors talk of having got out of the 7th of Romans—I hope they will grow in Grace until they get *into* the 7th of Romans! It seems to me as if they were in the 1st of Romans, so they have a long way to travel before they will get into the 7th of Romans. The nearer you get to perfection, the more horrified you feel because of the sin that still remains in you! And the more horror you feel at your sin, the more intense will be your gratitude to the bleeding Savior who has put that sin away. And, in consequence, the more intense will be your love to Him.

I charge you, Christian people, if you want your piety to be increased, never to blunt your sensibility of sin. Do not begin to look at sin in any light which takes away any of it blackness. The devil himself is not as bad as sin is, for it is sin that made the devil. Satan was a holy angel until sin came into him, but sin itself was never anything else but sin—a horrible thing, and it never will be anything else but sin, look at it in whatever way you may! Some have spoken of sin as being merely a failure, or a slight slip. God keep you, Beloved, from ever using such language as that! Sin, in a child of God, is a damnable thing—as damnable as it is most atrociously wicked—and if it were not for the Grace of God, which takes it away, the brightest saint would soon be banished from God's Presence. Sin is always an evil thing, but in a child of God it is a

worse thing than in worldlings, for he sins against greater light and knowledge than they possess.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you desire to cultivate, as I trust you do, the feeling that you owe your Lord 500 pence which He has freely forgiven you, *you must often think of the spirituality of the Law of God.* We think, at first, that the Ten Commandments only mean what we see on the surface. And if we have not broken them, we feel happy. Or if we *have* broken them, then we feel some conviction of sin. But the longer we live and the more the Spirit of God deals with us, the more we discover that the Law contains the condemnation of every evil thought, temper and imagination. Think, for instance, when we come to discover, in connection with the command, "You shall not kill," that he who is angry with his brother without a cause is a murderer! Who among us has completely escaped that sin? Do angry thoughts ever arise in our heart? Ah, then we begin to discover that we have broken that Commandment and that, in this sense, we are murderers! And we find that there are more men who have broken that Law than have been put to death by their fellow men. It is just the same with each of the Commandments. I need not go into the details of them, but may the Spirit of God make *you* often go into the details till you look into your own life and are horrified and say, "Why, where we fancied we saw righteousness, we see ourselves altogether condemned before the all-seeing eyes of God."

If you would have a sense of sin, in the next place, *endeavor more and more to appreciate the excellency of God.* O You holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, when I think of some of Your creatures and compare myself with them, self-conceit may set my mind at ease—but when I look up to You and remember that the heavens are not clean in Your sight, and that You charge Your angels with folly, I feel afraid to come into Your Presence! In the visions of the night, when we have thought upon the purity and spirituality of God, our hair has been ready to stand on end as we have realized how far we are from such perfection as His—and we have been ready to cry with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If the Holy Spirit will teach you to feel like that, then you will love Jesus Christ for having had pity upon you and provided a way by which all your sinfulness could be taken away!

Another blessed sharpener of our sense of sin is *a consciousness of sin's tendency*—knowing what sin really is and what it would do if it could have its way without those blessed checks which Omnipotence put upon it. What would sin do if it could? What *did* it do when God gave it liberty? It took God Himself and accused Him, brought Him before its bar and there the sinner dared to sit and judge his God—yes, and to condemn his God and even to slay his God! This is what sin always does whenever it can. "The fool"—that is, the ungodly man—has said in his heart, "There is no God." He means, "No God for me. I do not need any God. If I could have my own way, there would not be any God." And every offense against God's Law is a wish, on our part, to be greater than God—to have our way instead of God having His way—in a word, to push

God off His Throne that we might sit there in His place! O Sin, I cannot but hate you, now that I see you red with the blood of the Son of God! I cannot but abhor you, now that I see that you would let Hell loose into this world if you could do so! A Christian cannot help hating sin in proportion as He loves God who has forgiven Him all His trespasses.

One thing which has often made me feel great tenderness of soul is *a sense of the Divine Love*. If you ever offend a person and that person, instead of being in the slightest degree angry, lets fall a tear, but says nothing. And if you hear afterwards that he has been laying himself out for your good and that the very thing about which you were angry was really intended to be a blessing to you, oh, you feel as if you could never forgive yourself! To do a wrong thing is bad at any time, but to do a wrong to the One who is so good and so kind as God is—oh, have you not often said to yourself, "How could I have done this? I am one of God's chosen people. He loved me before the foundation of the world, though I did not know it. Christ wrote my name on His hands and on His heart—and shed His blood to redeem me—yet I did not know it. I even ridiculed His name and yet, all the while, He had prepared a place in Heaven for me and He had made up His mind that He would save me, that His Grace would seek me! I did not know anything about it and I went on in the frivolity and foolishness of my heart against Him." This thought makes sin appear exceedingly sinful, as being committed against a God who is all goodness and altogether love and mercy—and so we feel ourselves to be indebted 500 pence—not merely fifty.

Above all, dear Friends, I know of nothing that can make us more sensitive about our guilt, and conscious of it, than *the realization of what Jesus Christ is to us*. I think this poor woman was helped to weep by the sight of His feet. They had not been pierced, then, but I know that it helps us to weep in penitence when we can see His dear, His blessed feet that were pierced for our sins, and look upon His hands and remember His words, "These are the wounds that I received in the house of My friends." And then look into His side and see that the gash goes right to His heart and, all the while, realize that each of our sins became a nail and unbelief the spear to pierce His hands, and feet, and side. That wonderful love of Jesus Christ to us has never changed. It has never been repressed by our ingratitude, or made to cease even by our forgetfulness of Him. He loved us even to the death and, after death, He has continued to love us still! He loves us so that He cannot be content even in Heaven until He gets us there with Him. Being Himself there as our Head, He is determined to bring all His members there.

Just look at Jesus Christ a minute, and then look at sin. Oh, what a loathsome thing, what a monster it then appears! I am sure, dear Friends, if you are beginning to think little of sin, it must be because you have been thinking little of Jesus Christ. You cannot have met your best Friend lately, or else you would never parley with His enemy. O Beloved, lie in Christ's bosom where all the sweetest perfumes are! Rest your head upon His breast where the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia are to be found and you will never crave the leeks and garlic of Egypt! After having been

with Him and eaten of the heavenly manna, you would not be able to eat the dust and ashes of this foul world! So, in proportion as you get near to Jesus, you will hate sin and you will love Him who bore your sin, and carried it all away that you might be free from it forever!

There are many other topics I might mention so as to sharpen your sense of sin, but I pray the ever-blessed Spirit to keep your mind and heart sensitive towards sin, for you can be sure of this—that you can never exaggerate your own guiltiness in God's sight. When you have the lowest notion of yourself, you are getting the nearest to the truth. When you feel your sin to be exceedingly sinful, you do not even yet know how sinful it is, for—

"God only knows the love of God"—

and God only knows the sinfulness of man! Perhaps, if any man among us could see his sin as it really is, he would go mad. I am persuaded that, sometimes, God spares men who have been great sinners, the horrible revelations which He gives to others because they could not bear them! If they did ever see themselves as they are, they might be driven to despair. So He sometimes leads them by easier ways than He does some others and He thus gives to others the opportunity of putting themselves down among the 500 pence debtors and to love Him more because, after all, they are conscious of having had the most forgiven.

III. My time has fled, so I must only say very briefly, in the third place, that IF WE GET A BURNING LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST, IT WILL BE WELL FOR US TO SHOW IT AS THIS WOMAN DID. How shall we do it?

First, *by desiring to be near Him*. This woman, in her desire to be near Christ, came right up to His feet. Augustine admires the gracious audacity of this woman. She had been very bold when she was a sinner—her shamefacedness was gone when she was a sinner and it was also gone when she was a saint. May we, too, love Christ so much that we cannot be content to live at a distance from Him, but may we be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and abide close beside Him!

The next point in her for us to imitate is *the boldness of her confession*. Some of Christ's disciples came to Him by night, but this woman came to Him by day. They dared not approach Him when anybody saw them, but she cared not who saw her. I would that you who love Jesus much were as bold as she was in the acknowledgment of your faith. Come out and confess Christ, saying, "I have had much forgiven—therefore I will tell the whole world of what the Lord has done for me."

Then, next, *this woman had deep humility,* for, bold as she was, she rendered the lowliest service that she could to Christ. May you be such willing slaves to Him that washing His feet will be the work in which you delight! If I may but wash His feet—help His poor people—look after a few infants in the Sunday school—do any little thing for Him—if I can only have some smiles from Him, though they are only such as come to menials, I will be glad to get them.

Then, *imitate this woman's penitence*. She bathed His feet with her tears—so you show Him how deep and true is your repentance. It is well not to make a show of repentance to men except by your actions. But let

your whole life and your inmost soul make a show of it before Christ. Wash His feet with your tears. Refresh Him with your contrition.

After washing His feet with her tears, this woman wiped them with the hairs of her head. *Imitate her self-denying service*. Show your love to Jesus in some special way. I do not know what particular form your service may take, but let it be some loving, tender, self-denying work for your dear Lord and Savior. Make a perfect consecration of yourself to Him, as this woman did. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so! But you will never do it unless you have a deep sense of sin, so, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I come back to that point because that is the chief thought I want to leave in your mind. Do you feel sin to be a bitter and hideous thing? And do you feel yourself to be a great sinner? You will never pray so well as when you have a tear in your eye. You will never serve God so well as when you have been standing in the publican's place and saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

I am persuaded that we, ministers, do not preach with effect if we preach as if we were wonderful saints looking down on you, poor sinners. Oh, no! When we are, ourselves, tender in spirit, God helps us to be tender to the humble and contrite among our hearers! Out of our hearts, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, comes power that helps others to be humble and contrite before God. We are nothing to boast of, so let us never boast. Though we are accepted in the Beloved, and perfect in Christ Jesus, forgiven, saved forever, (blessed be His name!), yet this is no reason for us to lift ourselves up, but to lift Christ up! It is a cause for gratitude, but not for conceit. So we will feel that we have had much forgiven, and will love Him much who has freely forgiven us all our trespasses. May He help us to do so, and His shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116.

In this Psalm, David tells us his experience with regard to God and with regard to men.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* Answered prayer is a good reason for loving God. David was in his right senses and he was, by no means, a fool, yet he declared that God had answered his prayers and, therefore, he loved Him. And this is not only David's experience, but there are thousands of us who can say that God has heard our prayers and, therefore, we love Him. How can we help doing so?

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* If a beggar in the street were to say to us, "Because you have relieved me once, I will beg of you as long as I live," we would not be pleased to hear him say that—but God loves to hear us say that to Him! He wishes us to resolve that because we have been successful in prayer once, we will call upon Him as long as we live! Now David explains the circumstances which led him to pray.

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* "I seemed to be shut in—surrounded by a circle of difficulties and terrors! 'The sorrows of death compassed me.'"

3. *And the pains of Hell got hold upon me.* They seemed to seize him as a lion seizes his prey.

3, 4. *I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* His prayer was a very short one, but very much to the point. Words make not prayer—they often burden it, and prevent it from flying—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire"

and David, in a few earnest words, expressed that desire—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul."

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.* All who have ever tried Him have proved Him to be so—merciful to forgive our sin—merciful to help us in the time of trouble—merciful to strengthen us in the performance of our duty. "Our God is merciful."

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* Those who are of a single mind—who have no double meanings and concealed motives—those who know their own ignorance and weakness and who, therefore, dare not trust in themselves.

6. *I was brought low, and He helped me.* David could speak for himself and he did so without the slightest hesitation. Can you, dear Friends, after making trial of God's love and Grace, say of Him, "I was brought low, and He helped me"? If you can, then bear this testimony to His praise and glory!

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* Man's soul is like the dove that Noah sent out from the ark. It flew over the wide waste of waters, seeking rest, but finding none, so, at last, with weary wings, it made its way back to the ark. And, Soul, you will never rest till you come back to your Creator and Redeemer! You may fly to the pleasures and follies of this world but they can furnish no real rest for you. If you would rest, you must come back to your God.

8, 9. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* "Let my fellow creatures think what they will of me, I will not care about their judgments, I will only think of God." This is the highest, noblest, happiest style of living—to "walk before the Lord." Why, there are some men who dare not even call their souls their own! They are afraid of their next-door neighbors, or of some great kinsman who sets the fashion for them. But the man who walks before the Lord will think only of the verdict of the Most High and will care nothing about what men will say.

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, all men are liars.* He felt that he could not trust them. He had come into such trouble that men would be deceivers even against their own will, for, even when they would have helped him, he found that they could not. He had looked to them as worthy of his confidence and had found them fail him. Therefore he said that as far as reliance upon them was concerned, "All men are liars." Well, what then?

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* "Though men have failed me, the Lord has not. If friends all prove to be false, He is still true. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?'"

13-15. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* It matters not where they die—in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or on the sickbed of poverty and obscurity—God is always with them. The deathbed of a saint is one of the places where God often makes His Glory to be best seen. From the lips of dying men and women some of us have heard strange sayings—sweeter than any that ever fell from poet's tongue or pen! We have heard words which it was almost unlawful for a man to utter, save only for those who were in the very suburbs of Heaven—almost in Glory—even while they spoke with us on earth. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Will yours be a saintly death, dear Friend, or will it, on the other hand, be a death of gloom and sorrow? God grant that you may die the death of His people because you have lived the life of His people!

16. *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.* How pleased David was to be God's servant! Yet he says, "You have loosed my bonds." To serve God is to be free! We are never truly free until we bow our willing necks to the yoke of the Most High. Then we break every chain and snap every fetter. He is the free man whom our God makes free—all the rest are slaves.

17-19. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—411, 606, 538.

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

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

PRECEPTS AND PROMISES
NO. 2874

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 13, 1876.

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." John 12:26.

I HAVE already said, in expounding the chapter from which my text is taken, that the sight of these Greeks who desired to see Jesus seems to have very greatly affected our Savior's mind. [See Exposition at end of sermon.] He had not had much to do with Gentiles, for, as far as His personal ministry upon the earth was concerned, He was not sent to the Gentiles, but only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But now He sees, in those enquiring Greeks, the advance guard of that mighty host of Gentiles who, for these 1,800 years and more, have continued to seek Him out and to call Him their Leader, Friend and Savior! The thought of this great result of His life's work naturally led Him to also think of the Cross from which that result would spring. "These are the redeemed," He seemed to say to Himself, "then it is time for Me to think of the Redemption which I have yet to present on their behalf. These are the first fruits of My great harvest. Then I must see to the sowing of the Seed and I must set my mind steadfastly to think of that sowing, for unless the grain of wheat is cast into the ground, and die, it abides alone." So He began to feel the throes of desire for that Baptism wherewith He was to be baptized, for the joy that was set before Him was, just then, clearer than usual—the joy of winning souls and, especially, the joy of winning Gentile nations unto God and, therefore, His mind fixed itself more than ever upon the plan by which His people's redemption was to be achieved. Hence, I think, arose the words to which I called your attention while we were reading the chapter.

The sight of these Greeks also led the Savior to feel that He must again explain the conditions upon which He could receive disciples. There have been religious teachers who have been content to gather followers through falsehood or error. They have never properly explained what allegiance to them meant, or they have caught men by craft and guile. Our Lord Jesus Christ never did that. He said to any who proposed to follow Him, "Have you counted the cost?" He bade them not to begin to build their house if they were not able to finish it, nor to commence a warfare in which they could not reasonably expect victory. It seemed, sometimes,

to be rather repelling men, than attracting them, to say to would-be disciples, "If you will follow Me, do this and do that"—perhaps some very trying ordeal—yet that was the Savior's usual habit. So, now, lest these Greeks should say that they would become His disciples without knowing what discipleship involved, He said to them, "I, Myself, will have to die in order that I may produce others like Myself, and you, if you become My disciples, will have to follow Me in this respect as well as in all other things. You will have to deny yourselves and to undergo self-sacrifice, for, otherwise, if you will not do this, it is no use for you to pretend to be My servants, for My servants you cannot be. If any man would serve Me, He must follow Me." It was the coming of these Greeks to Christ which led to the utterance of these words—and that incident, in a measure, explains them. Now may the Spirit of God impress the Savior's words upon your hearts as I try to speak to you about them!

Our text is divided into three sentences. The first is *a sentence of precept*—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." *The second is a sentence of precept and promise*, for, to this day, no scholar can tell whether it ought to be rendered, "Where I am, there *let* My servant be," or, "Where I am, there *shall* also My servant be." Either may be a correct interpretation of the original and, therefore, I take it in both senses as a sentence of precept and promise. Then the third is *a sentence of pure promise*—"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

I. First, then, we have A SENTENCE OF PRECEPT. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

The Greek term used here might be translated, "If anyone will become a deacon—do a deacon's work, be My minister, My servant and wait upon Me—then let him follow Me." By which is intended, first, that, *if you become Christ's servant, you must obey Him*. This does not seem to occur to many professing Christians. They say they are Christians and, therefore, Christ's servants—yet they dare to sit in judgment upon Him and upon His precepts! They are a law unto themselves—they obey this precept because they like it and they disobey that other precept because they do not like it! They call Him Master and Lord, but He is not really their Master and Lord, for they do not obey Him. Paul rightly says, "To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey." But if you simply take the name of Christ upon you and call yourself His servant, yet do not obey Him, but follow your own whim, or your own hereditary prejudice, or the custom of some erroneous church—you are no servant of Christ. If you really are a servant of Christ, your first duty is to obey Him.

In the Church of Christ, He is the only Legislator. Not all the bishops and clergy, nor the whole Church, if it could be summoned in one solemn conclave, could pass an ordinance that would have even the slightest force upon a Christian's conscience if it were contrary to the teachings of Christ, Himself! There is but one Head of the Church—one spiritual Rabbi and Infallible Teacher—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and we are to understand, when we enter His Church and enlist under His banner, that we are to serve Him, and Him alone! We may

serve others, as far as they are commissioned by Him, and as far as what they say is in harmony with His teaching, but no farther, for, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." Did you understand that, young Man, when you became a Christian? Did you understand that, my Sister, when you professed to be a follower of Christ? I am afraid some professing Christians did not.

I bless God that this was one of the things which I learned when I first trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I felt, "Now I am going to be Christ's disciple, through His Grace, and I am going to do, as far as the Holy Spirit will help me, everything that I believe He commands me to do." I turned to the New Testament and read it for myself. I did not enquire of this teacher or that, but said to myself, "What does Jesus say? I will find out what He has revealed as His will concerning me." This way of acting gives a man independence of mind towards his fellow men and, at the same time, humble yet firm confidence in what he does in the sight of God. When he knows that he has submitted himself to the teaching of Christ and that he would not knowingly hold anything that Christ would not endorse, and would not willingly, either himself learn, or impart to others anything that Jesus Christ does not teach, it gives him a firm footing in the things of God.

Christian men and women, do you stand thus firmly? You know that many of you do not. You have another book, besides the Bible, which is your guide. The Bible alone is not the religion of many professing Christians. It is to some, but there are many who have another book to which they bow with almost equal reverence—and courts of law have to decide as to the shape of this garment or the other, or whether they shall turn their noses to the East or to the West, for they cannot do anything without calling in lawyers and judges! Yet God knows the Bible alone is quite enough. And if we did but follow its guidance, it would lead us rightly enough. I call you back, Christian men and women, to your allegiance to God's Holy Word! You owe none to any book except the one that He has given—and you are to regard no teaching but the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and that which comes to you upon His sole authority. In this respect, He says to you, "If anyone serves Me, let Him follow Me"—that is, by obedience to His commands.

The next teaching of the text is this. If any man serves Christ, *his service will be most like his Lord's when he does, as nearly as he can, what Christ did.* He is your Master, but He is also your Exemplar. Suppose that you say to Him, "Blessed Lord Jesus, I am willing to obey You, but what is Your Law?" He replies, "I am My own Law. Imitate Me. Follow Me." If you want to obey Jesus instead of merely keeping the Law written upon stones, you can see the Law written out in His life—

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

If you would obey Christ and so serve Him, be like He, for the sum and substance of His teaching is, "Follow Me." Watch, then, His every footstep, and ask for Grace to put your foot down where He put His. Whatev-

er you see to be His temper under any circumstances, cultivate that temper when you are in similar circumstances. If you want to know what you should do at any special time, think what He would have done if He had been in your place, for what He would have done is what you should do. And if you know that any course that you are pursuing would not have been pursued by Christ and would not have been according to His mind, do not follow it any longer. If it is not in harmony with Christ's life, it is not the way for you to walk. If it is not that which you would have done if Christ stood by you and looked at you with His tender but piercing eyes of everlasting love—if it is not what you would have done in His immediate Presence, do not do it, for it is clearly not what you ought to do. You are His servant, so you are to obey Him and, in order to obey Him, you are to imitate Him.

I must, however, warn you, dear Friends, that if you do this—and you must if you mean to be His faithful follower, for this is the only way of being Christ's servant, indeed and of a truth—this following of Christ will bring you into very much the same condition as that in which your Lord was, that is, you will become a marked man! In the midst of the company that you frequent, you will be a speckled bird! You will not need to adopt any different mode of dress, for Jesus did not. He wore the common garb of the country and dressed just like any other man of His class. He affected no singularity in meat, or drink, or language, but He was singular, essentially, because the greatest singularity under Heaven is *holiness*. If you will just do the right and be the right before God, men will soon find you out—and you will first become the subject of their observation—by-and-by, of their reproach—perhaps, also, of persecution. But, whatever the consequences are, this is what you have to do. Hear what your Lord says—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

"But, Lord, You had to go outside the camp." "Then follow Me there." "But, Lord, You had to endure the Cross." "And he who would be My disciple must take up his cross daily and come and follow Me." You cannot be Christ's servant if you are not willing to follow Him, cross and all! What do you crave? A crown? Then it must be a crown of thorns if you are to be like He!! Do you want to be lifted up? So you shall, but it will be upon a cross! In following Christ, you must be prepared to suffer persecution, loss and, if necessary, even death itself! Will you have Christ as your Lord and Master on these terms? If not, you cannot have Him at all! He does not want, as His followers, cowards who will sneak away from Him as soon as the first shot in the battle is fired. He does not want another Judas who will sell Him for the price of a slave. He wants true-hearted men who are determined, out of love to His glorious Character, and devotion to His Divine mission, that they will follow Him because they desire to serve Him.

Our Lord would also have us understand that if we mean to be His servants, we must follow Him even to the extent of being put into the ground to die—that is, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation and even self-annihilation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is at His best when He makes Himself of no reputation. I do not know any time when Christ seems so glo-

rious as when He lays aside all His Glory and takes upon Himself all our shame. So, Brothers and Sisters, if you would follow Christ, you are not to bargain to be honored. On the contrary, you are to commence to strip off from yourself the garments of honor. You are not to bargain for ease, but are to put on the harness of a warrior who will get but little rest and who must constantly be on the watch. You are not to stipulate for this indulgence or that. What indulgence had your Lord? He had not where to lay His head! His life was spent amidst poverty and hardship! He kept nothing back from the sons of men—He emptied Himself that we might be filled.

There was not a grain of self-seeking in Him. He saved others—Himself He could not save. Oh, that we had even a few Christians who were like their Master in this respect! Few are there, in these evil days, who seem willing to sacrifice all for Christ's sake. The brave Covenanters could give up house, home and everything—and die for King Jesus on Scotland's bleak mountains. But we, in these easier times, are content to make money, as other people do—to live in ease and luxury, as other people do—to contribute our cheese-parings and our candle-ends to the cause of Christ and to think that we have done a great deal if we have done even as much as that! But where is the self-sacrifice? Where is the burying of one's self in the ground to die, like a grain of wheat? Where is the wish—the willingness—to lose reputation, to sever friendships, to sacrifice respect, to endure hardness so that we may be true to our conscience, faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ? May the Lord soon raise up among us more men and women of noble principle who will count God, and Christ, and truth, and eternity to be worth living for—and worth dying for—and who will count all things else but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!

I will leave that first sentence of my text when I have made one more observation upon it. Perhaps somebody says, "I want to serve Christ and I am willing to make some self-denial for His sake. I have been thinking about saving my money and building a church or a chapel." Possibly another friend says, "I want to serve Christ, so I should like to give a painted window in His honor." Yes, but Christ Himself says to you, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." The very best way of serving Christ is to do just what Christ was accustomed to do, as far as that is possible to you. This is a very blessed text for a poor man, for a sick man, for an illiterate man—in fact, for every man who really wants to serve Christ. If I want to serve Christ, what have I to do? To *follow Him*. If I am very ill, how am I to follow Him? Why, by bearing the affliction as patiently as He would have borne it! If I am very poor, how am I to follow Him? Why, by trusting in God, as He did! Suppose that I am very much maligned and slandered, what am I to do? I am to try to bear it as meekly as He would have borne it! You can accomplish a great deal, in that way, if you really try to do it. You nursery maids and you other servants who have to work hard to earn your daily bread—and you boys and girls, who are still at school—there is something that you can be, or do, or suffer by which you

may prove your love to Christ—and that something is the best way in which you can follow Him.

It is sometimes the case that a person says, "I want to serve Christ, so I shall go into a nunnery, or into a monastery." Now, let me just ask this question—Did our Lord Jesus Christ ever act like that? He said, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." Can you imagine Christ shutting Himself up in a monastery? What? The great battle of the ages to be fought and the Captain of our salvation concealing Himself and so setting us an example of how to be cowardly? You know He did not do that! So fight it out, man, even as He did, and do not go sneaking away and hiding yourself under the pretence of so serving the Lord Jesus Christ! That is sheer selfishness—there is a far better course than that for you to take! Give yourself up wholly to Jesus and do as Jesus would have done if He had been in your place, for so you will serve Him in the best possible fashion.

II. Now I turn to the second clause of my text which seems to me to be both A PRECEPT AND A PROMISE.

First, read it as *a precept*—"Where I am, there *let* My servant be." Wherever Jesus was and is, there you are to be if you are really His servant. In His relationship to God, how did Jesus stand? Well, He was wholehearted in His consecration—be you likewise. He began His public life by being baptized in Jordan, saying to John, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." If you are really His servant—you act in the same way. He came out into the midst of mankind to bear witness for God's Truth and He kept on bearing that witness. And He was content to be found in His place, as the faithful Witness, when the time came for Him to seal His testimony with His blood. Be you a witness-bearer for Him, whatever that witness bearing may cost you—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer"—

so let midnight witness the fervor of your prayer, too. The attitude of Jesus towards God is shown by His saying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as You will." Servant of Christ, be you also found in the same attitude—bow before the Lord in the spirit of resignation to His holy will even though it should bring the death-sweat to your brow! Whatever it involves, mind that you say to God, "Your will be done." Wherever you see the Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship towards God—with the one exception of His substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners, in which you cannot follow Him—in everything else, if you would really serve Him, follow Him! Where the Master is, there let His servant be.

Then, next, what was Christ's position with regard to men? He was in the midst of them and in all His relationships He was always the example of what His servants should be. As a child, He was subject to His parents. Godly children, that is what Christ would have you, also, to be. As a child, He grew in the knowledge and understanding of the Word, and in favor with God and with men. So seek, dear young people, to be always making progress in the Divine Life and to be growing up, as Christ did, well-pleasing unto God. When He had reached maturity, what was His attitude towards men? Why, He was the Lover of men! He was seldom

angry with them, but often bearing their reproach. He was never selfish, but always ignoring Himself and living entirely for others. Someone has called Him "the great Philanthropist." I hardly like such a title for Him, for He rises far above all ordinary philanthropy—yet is it true that no one else ever loved men as He loved them and no one else ever made such sacrifices for them. Be you like Jesus in this respect, also, and wherever you see His footprint, seek to set your feet there.

Wherever there was a battle to be fought for truth and right, Christ was always to the front. And wherever there was reproach to be borne for God's sake, Christ was ready to bear it. The Pharisees could not silence Him, the Herodians could not make Him seek His escape. He was ready for every emergency that arose. Did God want a Witness? There was Christ. Did man need a Teacher? There was Christ. Were men sick? He was their Physician. Were they hungry? He was their Provider. Were His disciples liable to sink in a storm? He walked on the waters and rescued the frightened men. He was always giving Himself to the service of men and, Beloved, wherever your Master was in relation to men, there should you be. If you can conceive of a place where Christ would not go—do not go there. If you know of any company where Christ would not be found, do not be found there. But if you know of a place where Christ *would* go, there you also can go with safety, for it is your business to be where your Master would have been if He had been in your place—and never to be where your Master would not have gone!

We have thus looked at this sentence as a precept. Now let us regard it as a *promise*—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be." This is a very blessed promise. I do not recollect one that has more sweetness in it to my heart. We expect, Brothers and Sisters—unless Christ shall speedily come—we expect to die. When we fall asleep in Jesus, we shall be carried to the grave, even as Jesus was. We shall be in good company! It is, to my mind, a beautiful thought that when our Lord rose from the dead, He took off the grave clothes and left them in His sepulcher. And He unwound the napkin that was about His head and laid it by itself. So the grave is not an empty tenement without furniture. Christ has left the linen in which He slept to wrap His followers in—and He has put the napkin by itself for those who are left behind to wipe their eyes with. We rightly sing, with good Dr. Watts—

"The graves of all His saints He blessed,
And softened every bed—
Where should the dying members rest,
But with the dying Head?"

Where will our spirits be when we have left the body behind? We do not know much about the unseen world, but we are content with what Richard Baxter sings—

"My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him."

Our Savior's words are certainly true, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Some people are anxious to know more concerning the con-

dition of the redeemed between death and the Resurrection, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I am satisfied to know that I shall be with Jesus where He is! I feel like the little child who had been a long while away from its mother and who was told that it should soon go home to her. That was all the child wanted, to be in mother's bosom—and all I want is to be with Jesus. This He has promised us and this is our comfort, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." As soon as ever we fall asleep in Him, absent from the body, we are present with the Lord!

What about the Resurrection? Well, Jesus rose and so, in due time, our bodies shall also rise. These very bodies of ours—for Christ has redeemed not a part of our manhood, but the whole of it—and these bodies of ours are the temple of the Holy Spirit—they shall rise again and in our flesh we shall see God. And so shall we be "forever with the Lord."

But what is Heaven, Brothers and Sisters, and what will eternal Glory be? Although eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God has prepared for them that love Him, He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit, at least, in part. But it is enough for us to know that we shall be with Jesus, where He is—that we may behold His Glory. It is wonderful what new discoveries are constantly being made. Many books have come out, lately, filled with what I believe to be nothing but rubbish, but, for my part, I do not care about where I am going to be in the millennium or afterwards, for I know that I shall be with my Lord—and I want nothing else. I do not stipulate for a golden harp, or a place by the sea of glass. I do not ask, even, to be among the angels. I am quite content with my Lord's promise, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." My Lord and I shall fare alike and it will do for me if it will do for Him! Are you not of the same mind, Beloved, and is not this all you wish to know about the future—that you shall be with Him, where He is, and behold His Glory?

III. Now, thirdly, we have A SENTENCE WHICH IS ALTOGETHER A PROMISE—"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Brothers and Sisters, if you serve Christ in the way I have feebly tried to describe, that is, by an out-and-out consecration of yourself to Him and to His service, you will not get much honor among men. You know what many want, at the present day, in a minister. He must have no principles at all, or, if he has any, he must keep them to himself and never say anything about them. Above all, he must be perfectly neutral and never say a word against any error. Do you not know that it is uncharitable to attack what others believe? Preach always what everybody would like you to preach. If you see anything wrong, put the telescope up to your blind eye, as Nelson did—then you will find all the brethren will praise you because you praise them! Pat them on the back and they will pat you on the back! And you will get through the world very smoothly. I know that path and I know how many friends we might have if we would but follow it—wriggle in and out and be anything and everything, or nothing—just to suit the tastes of others! Brothers and Sisters, if you believe anything to be true and stick to it, some will call you sectarian and others will be offended with you, but, mark this, if you do not get any

praise from men for clinging to the right, you will have an easy conscience! I would sooner have all the demons in Hell enraged against me and all the dogs on earth howling at me, than feel that I had kept back anything I believed to be true!

If we do what our conscience tells us is right. If we serve Christ outright and follow Him fully, *God will honor us by setting His seal upon our work*. If you preach Christ and not the fancies of men, God will give you souls, make you useful and help you to build up His people. That is the honor which you will receive. Faithfulness will not be without its reward. "In due season, you shall reap, if you faint not."

Then, by-and-by, it will come to pass that even those who censured you as too strict, too punctilious and, perhaps, litigious, will come round to see that you are truthful and right. And, so, *God will give you honor in their sight*. It is wonderful how even bad men are compelled to honor consistency and uprightness. They may hate it, but they respect it. Whereas if you do not fully follow Christ and do not act as His servants should, God will not honor you, neither will men do so long, for they will find you out and then they will drive you from them in derision.

The best honor that comes from God will come to His people, by-and-by. I have been thinking over those words, "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor," and I feel that I cannot preach from them at all. What would some people think if the Queen were to honor them? But what is *that* compared with our Father, who is in Heaven, honoring us? I do not know whether you can conceive what it means. I cannot. God makes His creature love Him, but for Him to honor that creature—to put honor upon him—is something so amazing that I am lost in contemplation of it! Yet He will do it. If you faithfully serve Jesus Christ on earth, God will bid the angels make way for you in Heaven. While you live here, they will be your servants and when you ascend to Heaven, you shall have a place nearer to the Eternal Throne than even they have. And then, in the presence of all the holy angels, God will do you honor and your spirit shall be known among them as one that God loves. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor?" was the question asked of old, but I put another question, "What shall be done unto the man whom the eternal God, the Creator, the Possessor of Heaven and earth, delights to honor?" Do you aspire to that honor? Are you ambitious to share it? Then you have only to do this—serve Christ faithfully, follow Christ fully.

Some of you cannot do this—you who are not renewed in heart and life. I might as well urge the dead to dance as bid you attempt this, for you cannot do it. You must believe in Jesus! You must be born again and receive the new life. But, oh, you who have believed in Him, remember that this is your road to honor—willingness to be dishonored, willingness to be counted as the mud in the street for Christ's sake and for His Truth's sake! Then let this be your strong resolution that come what may, Christ's life shall be your rule—Christ's Word shall be your marching orders and whether you have to die a martyr's death, or not—to Him who loved you and bought you with His blood, you consecrate yourself entirely, henceforth and forever!

May God raise up many who will feel the power of these words! If we only get a few of such men who will follow the Lord fully, happy will be the churches to which they belong, blessed will be the age in which they live, highly privileged will be the land in which they dwell—for such men are God's heroes! These are the soldiers who will stand firm in the day of battle and who will help to save our country from ever becoming Roman Catholic again! May we have many such men and many such women in every age till Jesus comes, and glory dawns! May this be your happy lot, my dear Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:20-41.

Our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead and this miracle had excited great attention in Jerusalem. In consequence of this, the people had led Him in triumph through the streets, and everywhere there was great excitement. Everybody was speaking of the wonderful miracle which He had worked.

Verses 20, 21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.* There is no doubt that these men were Gentiles—probably proselytes. They had come up to worship at the feast and their curiosity had been excited and their interest had been awakened by what they had seen and heard about Jesus. There appears to have been at least some measure of reverence for Him in their minds. Hence they addressed one of His disciples, whose purely Greek name may lead us to suppose that he had some Greek relatives. They said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

22, 23. *Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.* They did not expect Him to say that! Surely, the coming of a few Greeks to see Him was not very much in the way of glorification! But, to Him, the coming of these Greeks was a sort of prophecy of the myriads of other Gentiles who would, by-and-by, come to His feet and, therefore, He looked forward to that death which would be the means of their salvation. Christ came into the world to preach the Gospel, but He came on a greater errand than that, namely, to provide a Gospel that could be preached—and He knew that the time was approaching when He must provide that Gospel by dying upon the Cross. See how He proceeds—

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* The preservation of the grain is the prevention of its increase, but the putting of it into the ground, the losing of it, the burial of it is the very means of its multiplication. So our Lord Jesus Christ must not care for Himself and He did not. He surrendered Himself to all the ignominy of the death of the Cross. He died and was buried in the heart of the earth but He sprang up again from the grave and, ever since then myriads have come

to Him through His death, even as these Greeks came to Him in His life. Now, as it was with Christ, so is it to be with us—at least, in our measure.

25. *He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* His love is ruinous to his true life, but to destroy self-love, to make a sacrifice of ourselves, is the truest way to really preserve ourselves.

26, 27. *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save Me from this hour? But for this came I unto this hour.* This seems to be a sort of rehearsal of the dread scene soon to be enacted in Gethsemane. At the sight of these Greeks, our Savior seems to have been led especially to think, as we have already said, of that death by which they and multitudes like they, were to be redeemed. Thinking of it, He enters so fully into it, by a sort of foretaste, that He feels something of the same shiver and throe of anguish which came upon Him in Gethsemane. He seems to say here, "Father, save Me from this hour," just as He said there, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Yet He says here, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name"—just as He afterwards said in the garden, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

28, 29. *Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said an angel spoke to Him.* This was the third time that that mysterious Voice had been heard—first, at His Baptism. The second time on the Mount of Transfiguration. And now a few days before He died upon the Cross. The voice of God had been heard on a much earlier occasion—at Sinai—and then it was attended with thunder, as it was here. Those who had not ears to understand the voice of God only perceived the loudness of its thunder peals. But there were others, like John, who understood what the Lord said—"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This Voice came not because of Me but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* The old Roman empire seemed to stand as fast as the eternal hills, but God had come to judge the whole state of affairs as it was then in the world and, inasmuch as Christ the pure and perfect Son of God was condemned to die, that action condemned the society of that period! Yes, the whole of the ungodly world, in taking its part in crucifying Christ, bore evidence against itself and pronounced sentence upon itself as being guilty of the death of the Christ of God. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The overthrow of the usurper began from that time—and that overthrow of the devil is still going on—and, blessed be God, it will reach its completion one of these days and we shall yet rejoice in a new Heaven and a new earth on which the trail of the serpent shall never be traced!

32. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.* Christ on the Cross draws all men up to Himself. I have heard this text

quoted as if it referred to Christ being extolled in preaching. Well, it is true that when Christ is lifted up in the ministry, there is an attractive power—but that is not the first meaning of the text. Let us read on.

33. *This He said, signifying what death He should die.* He alluded to His Crucifixion which is the great attractive center of mankind.

34-36. *The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how can You say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.* It is always well to use the Light of God that we already have. If any man will use the Light he already has, God will be sure to give him more. That is a good saying of an old Puritan, "If you have starlight, thank God for it and He will give you moonlight. And when you have moonlight, give thanks to God for it and He will give you sunlight." And so it shall be. Nothing is worse than sinning against the Light of Good. If it is only the light of conscience, even if you know it is not perfect, yet, nevertheless, never sin against it, for, if you do, you will quench it, and to quench the Light you have, is the way to effectually prevent your having any more. "While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

36-41. *These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him.* There is such a thing as judicial blindness. If men can see and yet will not see, God is at last so provoked by their wickedness that He takes away the Light of God altogether and removes from them the very faculty of sight. It is not surprising that it should be so, for it was so with the generation in which Christ lived. They had so long rejected the true Prophet—so long refused to listen to the voice of God, that, at last, He abandoned them to their own ways—and nothing worse can happen to a man than to be abandoned of God! If God casts you off, you are lost indeed.

—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.

CONFIRMING THE WITNESS OF CHRIST
NO. 2875

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1904.

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

"Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."
1 Corinthians 1:6.

IT is not always the most gifted church which is in the most healthy state. A church may have many rich, influential, or learned members—many that have the gift of utterance and understand all sciences—yet that church may be in an unhealthy condition. Such was the case with the church at Corinth. Paul, in the opening of his Epistle, tells them that he thanks God always on their behalf for the Grace of God given unto them by Christ Jesus, that in everything they were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that they were behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthians were what we would call, nowadays, judging them by the usual standard, a first-class church. They had many who understood much of the learning of the Greeks. They were men of classic taste and men of good understanding, men of profound knowledge and yet, in *spiritual* health, that church was one of the worst in all Greece and, perhaps, in the world! Among the whole of them, you could not find another church sunk so low as this one, although it was the most gifted.

What should this teach us? Should it not show us that gifts are nothing unless they are laid on the altar of God? That it is nothing to have the gift of oratory? That it is nothing to have the power of eloquence? That it is nothing to have learning, that it is nothing to have influence unless they all be dedicated to God and consecrated to His service? I said, "it is nothing"—I mean, it is nothing *good*. Alas, it is worse than nothing good—it is something evil, it is something dreadful, it is something terrible for a man to have these gifts and yet to misuse them, for they shall only furnish fuel for a fiercer flame than he would have endured had he not possessed such abilities! He who buries his ten talents may well expect to be given over to the tormentor.

This is the next lesson that is taught us—let us never judge men by their talents—but by the use which they make of their powers, by the end to which they devote their talents, by the interest which they bring to those pounds which their Master has entrusted to them. Paul, in the commencement of his Epistle, very gently hints at the right use of gifts and talents. And he tells us that they are sent to us that we may "con-

firm the testimony of Christ." If we do not use them for this purpose, we misuse them! If we do not turn them to this account, we abuse them! We ought to use our endowments as the Corinthians did *not* use theirs, but as they ought to have done—in confirming the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Corinthians had more powers than any of us have. Many of them could work miracles—they could heal the sick, they could restore the lepers, they could work wonders by the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some of them could talk several languages and, wherever they went, they were able to speak the language of the people among whom they abode. This was because they were not able to spend much time in learning languages and there needed something special to support the infant Church. It was then but a sapling—it required a stake in the ground by its side, that it might lean upon it, and might grow and be strong. It was a little plant that needed to be sustained and, therefore, God worked miracles. But now it is the stalwart oak and has its roots bent round the staunchest rocks in creation—now it needs not any support by miracle and, therefore, God has left us without extraordinary gifts. But whatever gifts we have, we are to use them for the purpose mentioned in the text—that is, for the confirmation of the testimony of Christ Jesus.

There are two points which we shall speak of as the Holy Spirit may enable us. First, *The testimony of Christ.* And, secondly, *What is meant by our confirming it?*

I. First, then, THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST. We are told, in the text, that there was a "testimony of Christ" which was "confirmed in you." Our first enquiry is, What is meant by the "testimony of Christ"?

That this world is fallen is the first Truth of God in all theology. "We have gone astray like lost sheep," and had there not been mercy in the mind of God, He might justly have left this world to perish without ever calling it to repentance. But He, in His wondrous long-suffering and His mighty patience was not pleased to do so. Being full of tender mercies and loving kindness, He determined on sending the Mediator into the world, whereby He might restore it to its pristine glory and might save for Himself a people whom "no man could number," who are to be called the elect of God, loved with His everlasting love! In order that He might rescue the world and save those elect ones, the Lord of Hosts has constantly ordained and sent forth a perpetual priesthood of testifiers. What was Abel with his lamb, but the first martyred witness of the Truth of God? Did not Enoch wear his mantle when he walked with God and prophesied concerning the Second Advent of Christ? Was not Noah a preacher of righteousness among a gainsaying generation? The glorious succession never fails! Abraham comes from Ur of the Chaldees and from the hour of his call till the day when he slept in Machpelah, he was a faithful witness. Then we might mention Lot in Sodom, Melchisedec in Salem, Isaac and Jacob in their tents and Joseph in Egypt. Read the Scripture history and can you fail to observe a golden chain of united links, hang-

ing over a sea of darkness, but yet uniting Abel with the last of the Patriarchs?

We are now arrived at a new era in the history of the Church, but it is not destitute of light. See there the son of Amram, the honored Moses. That man was a very sun of brightness, for he had been where darkness veiled the unutterable light of the skirts of Jehovah. He climbed the steep sides of Sinai. He went up where the lightning blazed and the thunders lifted up their awful voice. He stood upon the mountain-burning summit and there, in that secret chamber of the Most High, he learned, in forty days, the witness of forty years and was the constant enunciator of justice and righteousness. But he died, as the best men must. Sleep on in peace, O Moses, in your secret grave. Fear not for the Truth of God, for God will be with Joshua as He was with you!

The times of the judges and kings were sometimes densely darkened, but amid their civil wars, their idolatry, their persecutions and their visitations, the chosen people still had a remnant according to the Election of Grace. There were always some who walked through the earth, like the ancient Druids in the woods, wrapped in white garments of holiness and crowned with the glories of the Most High. The river of the Truth of God might run in a shallow stream, but it was never utterly dry. Next, come to the times of the Prophets and there, after traversing a dreary period when the world was only illumined here and there by such lamps as Nathan, Abijah, Gad, or Elijah, you find that you have come to the light of meridian day, or rather to a cloudless sky crowded with stars! There is the eloquent Isaiah, the lamenting Jeremiah, the soaring Ezekiel, the well-beloved Daniel and lo, behind these four high priests of prophecy, there follow twelve, clothed in the same garb, performing the same service! I might style Isaiah the pole star of prophecy. Jeremiah resembled the rainy Hyades of Horace. Ezekiel was the burning Sirius. And as for Daniel, he resembles a flaming comet, flashing on our vision but for a moment and then lost in obscurity.

I am not at a loss to find a constellation for the minor prophets. They are a sweet group, of intense brilliance, even though but small—they are the Pleiades of the Bible. Perhaps, at no former season, were the stars of God marshaled in greater numbers, but yet, amid all preceding and succeeding gloom, the sky of time was never in total darkness! There was always a watcher and a shining one there. God has never abandoned the world, He has never quenched its lamp of Testimony, He has never said, "Go, you vile thing," and spurned it from His Presence. He might deluge it once with water. He might rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom. He might drown a nation in the sea. He might destroy a generation in the wilderness. He might devour kingdoms and root them up—but never, never would He extinguish the perpetual flame of the Testimony of His Truth!

I was thinking, just now, of a picture which I saw, a few days ago—a beautiful painting of a brook with steppingstones in the water, upon which the traveler crossed. And the idea has just flashed upon my

mind—surely the stream of man's wickedness and the stream of time may be crossed by those steppingstones of Testimony. There you have Noah, and he is a steppingstone, to step on to Abraham. And from him to Moses, and from Moses to Elijah and so on—from Elijah to Isaiah, from Isaiah to Daniel, and from Daniel down to the brave Maccabees. And what is the last steppingstone? It is Jesus Christ, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth! Jesus was, in one sense, the last Testifier of the Truth of God. We are left to confirm it to others and we shall, just for a few moments, enlarge on what the testimony of Jesus Christ was.

First of all, in order to justify me in calling Jesus Christ a Testifier, I want to refer to one or two passages of Scripture where you will see that He came into the world to be a Testifier and Witness to the Truth. Turn to the 3rd chapter of John, and the 31st verse. John the Baptist says, "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 who has received His testimony has set to His seal that God is true." There we find John, who was the harbinger of our Savior, speaking of Christ as giving a testimony, speaking of Him as One who came into the world for the special purpose of testifying to the Truth of God.

Turn further on in the same Gospel and you will find, in the 8th chapter and 18th verse, our Savior says this of Himself, "I am One that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me bears witness of Me." I refer you, also, to the 18th chapter of John and the 37th verse where Pilate says to Jesus, "Are You a king then?" And He replies, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." There, again, you find our Savior speaking of Himself as a Witness. I might refer you to some passages in Isaiah where he speaks of Christ as a Witness, but I will only keep to the writings of our friend, John, so we will now turn to the Book of Revelation. In the first chapter, at the 5th verse, you find him saying, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness." In the third chapter of the same Book, at the 14th verse, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." Now, then, I think I am not dishonoring my Master by calling Him a "Witness." I have placed Him side by side with a glorious cloud of witnesses and I have said He is the last Witness. And I think I have not dishonored His blessed name when I find He calls Himself a "Witness." Let us enlarge upon this head for a moment or two. Christ is the very King of witnesses! He is the greatest of all witnesses and superior to every other! He does not differ from any other in the things He testifies, for they all testify to the same Truth of God which this glorious Witness is superior to every other!

First, let me remark that *Christ witnesses directly from Himself* and that is one thing in which He is superior to all the Prophets and the other holy men who testified to the Truth. What did Isaiah say? What did Elijah say? Or Jeremiah? Or Daniel? They only said second-hand things—

they spoke what God had revealed to them. But when Christ spoke, He always spoke directly from Himself. All the rest only spoke that which they had received from God. They had to tarry till the winged seraph brought the live coal. They had to gird on the ephod, the curious girdle and the Urim and Thummim—they must stand listening till the Voice said, "Son of man, I have a message for you." They were but instruments blown by the breath of God and giving forth sounds only at His pleasure. But Christ was a Fountain of living water. He opened His mouth and the Truth of God gushed forth and it came directly from Himself. In this, as a faithful Witness, He was superior to every other. He could say, "What I have seen, and heard, that do I testify. I have been inside the veil. I have entered into the sanctum sanctorum. I have dived into the depths, I have soared into the heights—there is not a place where I have not been, there is not a Truth of God which I cannot call My own. I am no voice of another." In this respect, He surpassed every other witness!

Secondly, Christ was superior to every other witness from the fact that *His testimony was uniform.* It was always the same testimony—we cannot say that of any other witness. Look at Noah. He was a very good testifier to the Truth of God, except once, when he was intoxicated—he was a sorry testifier to the Truth then. David was a testifier to the Truth, but he sinned against God and put Uriah to death. What shall we say of Elijah, that man in shaggy garments? He was a testifier to the Truth, but he was not so when he fled from Jezebel and God sent an angel to say to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Abraham was another witness, but he was not so when he said his wife was his sister. The same might be said of Isaac. And if you go through the whole list of holy men, you will find some fault in them and you will be obliged to say, "They were very good testifiers, certainly, but their testimony is not uniform. There is a plague-spot which sin has left upon them all. There was something to show that man is nothing but an earthen vessel, after all."

But Christ's testimony *was* uniform. There never was a time when He contradicted Himself. There never was an instance in which it could be said, "What You have said, You now contradict." See Him everywhere, whether on the cold mountaintop at midnight in prayer, or in the midst of the city. Observe Him when He walked through the cornfields on the Sabbath, or when on the lake He bade the waves, "Be still." Wherever He was, His testimony was uniform. This cannot be said of any other witness. The best men have their faults. They say that the sun has spots and so I suppose that the most glorious of men, whoever they are, who will shine most brightly in the firmament forever and ever, will have their spots while on earth. Christ's testimony was like His own coat, woven from the top throughout—there was not any seam in it at all.

Yet, further, *Christ's testimony was perfect in testifying to all the Truth of God.* Other men only gave testimony to parts of the Truth, but Christ manifested it all. Other men had the threads of Truth, but Christ took the threads and wove them into a glorious robe, put it on, and came forth clothed with every Truth of God. There was more of God revealed by

Christ than in the works of Creation, or in all the Prophets. Christ was a Testifier to all God's attributes and He left none of them unmentioned. Do you ask me whether Christ bore testimony to the Justice of God, I tell you, "Yes." See Him hanging there, languishing on Calvary, His bones all dislocated. Did He bear testimony to God's Mercy? Yes. See those poor creatures who were limping just now—the lame man is leaping like a hare, the poor blind man is beholding the sun and rejoicing! Did Jesus witness to the Power of God? I say, "Yes." You see Him standing in the little boat and saying to the winds, "Be still!" and holding them in the hollow of His hand. Has He not borne testimony to everything in God? His testimony was perfect! Nothing was left out—everything was there.

We could not say that of any mere man. I believe we cannot say that of any modern preacher. Some people say that they can hear Mr. So-and-So because he preaches so much Doctrine. Another likes all experience and some want all practice. Very well, you do not expect that God has made one man to say everything, do you? Certainly not. One class of men defends one class of Truths and another, another. I bless God that there are so many denominations. If there were not men who differed a little in their creeds, we would never get so much Gospel as we do. One man loves high Doctrine and he thinks he is bound to defend it every Sabbath—so much the better! Some do not speak of it at all, so that he helps to make up for other people's deficiencies. Some men are fond of fiery exhortations—they give them every Sabbath and they cannot preach a sermon without them. But, then, others do not give them at all, so that the lack of one is supplied by the superabundance of the other. God has sent different men to defend different kinds of Truth, but Christ defended and preached all! He took them, bound them in one bundle and said, "Here is myrrh, aloes, cassia and all precious spices altogether—here is the whole Truth of God." Christ's testimony was perfect.

Mark, once more, before I come to the confirmation of this testimony, *Christ's testimony was final.* His was the last testimony, the last Revelation that will ever be given to man. After Christ, nothing. Christ comes last—He is the last steppingstone across the brook of time. All who come after Him are only confirmers of the testimony of Christ. Our Augustines, our Ambroses, our Chrysostoms, or any other of the mighty preachers of olden times, never pretended to say anything fresh. They only revived the Gospel—the same old-fashioned Gospel which Christ used to preach. And Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli, and Knox—they only came to confirm the Truth of God. Christ said *"finis"* to the canon of Revelation and it was closed forever! No one can add a single word to it and no one can take a word from it. We Dissenters are sometimes charged with inventing a new Gospel. We deny it. We say that our Owen, Howe, Henry, Charnock, Bunyan, Baxter, or Janeway and all that galaxy of stars of the pulpit did not pretend to say anything new—they only revived the things that Christ said, they only professed to be confirmers of the Witness. So has it been with the great men we have lost during the last century. Whitefield and his brother evangelists and men who stood in the same posi-

tion as Gill, or Booth, or Rippon, or Carey, or Ryland or some of those who have just been taken away—they did not pretend to say anything new. They only said, "Brothers and Sisters, we come to tell you the same old story. We are not testifiers of new things—we are only confirmers of the Witness, Christ Jesus."

II. Now we come to the second part of our subject and that is THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST IS TO BE CONFIRMED IN YOU. There are two points here. First, *the testimony of Christ needs to be confirmed in ourselves*. And, secondly, *it needs to be confirmed in others*.

First, then, to every Christian the testimony of Christ needs to be confirmed in his own heart. O Beloved, that is the best confirmation of Gospel Truth which every Christian carries about within him! I love *Butler's Analogy*—it is a very powerful book. I love *Paley's Evidences*, but I never need them myself, for my own use. I do not need any proof that the Bible is true. Why? Because it is confirmed in me! There is a Witness, which dwells in me, which makes me bid defiance to all infidelity, so that I can say—

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."

I do not care to read books opposing the Truths of the Bible, I never need to wade through mud for the sake of washing myself afterwards. When I am asked to read an heretical book, I think of good John Newton. Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, said to him, "Have you read my *Key to the Romans*?" "I have turned it over," said the Doctor. "And is this the treatment a book must meet with which has cost me so many years hard study? You ought to have read it carefully, and weighed deliberately what is said on so serious a subject." "Hold," said Newton, "you have cut me out full employment for a life as long as Methuselah's! My life is too short to be spent in reading contradictions of my religion. If the first page tells me the man is undermining the faith, it is enough for me. If I had the first mouthful of a roast tainted, I do not need to eat it through to be convinced—I ought to send it away." Having the truth confirmed in us, we can laugh all arguments to scorn! We are placed in a sheet of mail when we have a witness to God's Truth within us. All the men in this world cannot make us alter one single iota of what God has written within us! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we need to have the Truth confirmed within us! Let me tell you a few things that will do this.

First, *the very fact of our conversion tends to confirm us in the Truth*. "Oh," says the Christian, "do not tell me there is no power in religion, for I have felt it! I was thoughtless like others, laughed religion to scorn and those who attended to it. My language was, 'Let us eat and drink, and enjoy the sunshine of life.' But now, through Christ Jesus, I find the Bible a honeycomb which hardly needs to be pressed to let the drops of honey run out it is so sweet and precious to my taste that I wish I could sit down and feast on my Bible forever! What has made this alteration?" That is how the Christian reasons. He says, "There must be a power in

Grace, otherwise I never should be so changed as I am. There must be the Truth of God in the Christian religion, otherwise this change would never have come over me." Some men have ridiculed religion and its followers and yet Divine Grace has been so mighty that those very men have become converted and experienced the new birth! Such men cannot be argued out of the truth of religion. You may stand and talk to them from dewy morn to the setting of the sun, but you can never get them to believe that there is no Truth in God's Word, for they have the Truth of God confirmed in them.

Then, again, another thing confirms the Christian in the Truth and that is, *when God answers his prayers*. I think that it is one of the strongest confirmations of the Truth of God when we find that God hears us. Now I speak to you, on this point, of things which I have tasted and handled. The wicked man will not believe this. He will say, "Ah, go and tell those who know no better!" But I say that I have proved the power of prayer a hundred times because I have gotten to God and asked Him for mercies and have received them. "Ah," say some, "it is only just in the common course of Providence." "*Common course of providence?"* It is a blessed course of Providence! If you had been in my position, you would not have said that. I have seen it just as clearly as if God had rent the heavens and put His hand out and said, "There, My child, is the mercy you asked for." It has come so plainly out of the way that I could not call it a common course of Providence!

Sometimes I have been depressed and downcast—and even out of heart at coming to stand before this multitude—and I have said, "What shall I do?" I could fly anywhere rather than come here anymore. I have asked God to bless me and send me words to say, and then I have felt filled to the brim, so that I could come before this congregation or any other! Is that a common course of Providence? It is a *special* Providence—a special answer to prayer! And there are others here who can turn to the pages of their diary and see, there, God's hand plainly interposing. So we can say to the infidel, "Begone! The truth of God is confirmed in us and so confirmed that nothing can drive us out of it!"

You have had the Truth confirmed in you, my dear Friends, *when you have found great support in times of affliction and tribulation*. Some of you have passed through deep trouble. Some of you have been sorely tried and have been brought very low, but can you not say with David, "I was brought low and the Lord helped me"? Can you not recall how well you bore that last trouble? When you lost that dear child, you thought you could not bear it so well as you did. But you said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Many of you have loved ones under the sod—your mother, father, husband, or wife. You thought your heart would break when you lost your parents, but when your father and your mother were taken from you, then the Lord took you up. He told you, poor widow, that He would be a Father to your children—and have you not found it so? Can you not say, "Not one good

thing has failed of all that the Lord has promised"? That is the best confirmation of the Truth of God.

Sometimes, persons come to me, in my vestry, and they want me to confirm the Truth of God outside of them. I cannot do that, I want them to have the Truth confirmed *in* them. They say, "How do you know that the Bible is true?" "Oh," I reply, "I never have to ask such a question as that, because it is confirmed in me. The Bishop has confirmed me!" I mean, "the Bishop of souls," the Lord Jesus Christ, for I never was confirmed by any other! And He has so confirmed me in the Truth of God that no one can take it out of me. I say to these people, "Try religion yourself and you will see its power. You stop outside the house and you want me to prove what is inside the house—go in yourself—'taste and see that the Lord is good,' blessed are all they that trust in Him." This is the best way of confirming the Truth to ourselves.

The second thought was that it was our business not only to have the Truth confirmed in our own souls, but *so to live that we might be the means of confirming the Truth in others*. Do you know what Bible the worldly man reads? He does not read this Bible at all—he reads the Christian! "There," he says, "that man goes to church, or chapel, and he is a member. I will see how he lives, I will read him up and down." And he watches him and reads his conduct. If he is bad, he says, "Religion is a farce!" But if he is a man who lives up to it, he says, "There is something in religion, after all." Wicked men read professors—they watch them to see whether they live up to their profession. Christians have Argus, with a hundred eyes, staring at them! Worldlings look at every fault with a magnifying glass and they make the smallest molehill into a great mountain! And if there is a speck in our eye, they will make it a beam—and they will say the man is a hypocrite!

It is the duty of every child of God to so live that he may confirm the witness of Christ. We should labor to do it in all the common things of daily life. "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Some men think that religion lies only in great things. It does not, for it also lies in little things. Take any one day of our lives—we eat, drink, rise in the morning, go to bed at night—there is nothing very particular about the day. Our life is made up of little things and if we are not careful of little things, we shall not be careful of great ones. If we do not mind the little things, the great ones will go wrong. Oh, may you have Grace to live that the world may find no fault in you! And if in little things they see exactness and precision, (and too much precision will be better than the looseness of the morals of some professors), then they will say, "There is something in religion. That man's life has confirmed it in my mind because he lives up to it."

Then, again, *if you can bear the taunts of wicked men without returning them*, that will be a good way of confirming religion. When I have entered into controversy with some men and have been betrayed into heat of temper, I could have bitten my fingers off that I should have done so! If you can keep your temper when men laugh at you and if, when they re-

vile you, you do not return it, you will confirm the Truth of God. They will say, "There is something in that man's religion, otherwise he could not so keep his temper." You have read of James Haldane. Once, when unconverted, he threw a ship's tumbler at the head of a person who had insulted him. But when he was regenerated, on another occasion of insult, simply said, "I would resent it, but I have learned to forgive injuries and overlook insults." Men were obliged to say of him, "There is something in the religion which can bring such a lion as that down and make him such a lamb." Thus you will confirm the witness of Christ if you quietly endure persecution. If you can patiently bear the laugh and jeer of wicked men, you will confirm the Truth of God.

The last confirmation you and I, my Friends, will ever be able to give to the witness of Christ is coming very soon. There is an hour when we shall no longer be able to confirm the Truth by living for it, for we must die, *and that is the best confirmation of a man's principles—when he dies well.* One of the noblest confirmations of the Christian religion is the fact that a man dies a peaceable, a happy and even a triumphant death. Oh, if when you come to die, you are able to say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" And if you can grasp the tyrant Death in your hands and hurl him to the ground and triumph in Him who said, "O death, I will be your plagues! O grave, I will be your destruction!" If you can die without fear, or repining, or remorse—knowing that you are forgiven. If you can die with the song of victory on your lips and with the smile of joy upon your countenance, then you will confirm the witness of Christ!

In conclusion, let me urge you, as followers of Christ Jesus, as those whom He has loved with an everlasting love, as heirs of immortality, as those who have been rescued from the pit of destruction, as professors of religion, as members of a Christian Church—let me beseech you to make it your first and last objective to confirm the witness of Christ! Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, say within yourself, "I must so live and die that I may confirm the witness of Christ. I must so walk among my friends and neighbors that they will see that there is a truth and a power in religion." And let me warn you not to undertake this task in your own strength—you will need power from on high, from the Holy Spirit, a fresh supply of Grace from the Throne of the heavenly Grace. It is a good plan that some persons adopt—they walk home, after service, and when they get there, they have a few minutes in prayer with their God. It is a blessed way of clinching the nail and making a sermon count.

So, dear Friend, go home, and say, "I solemnly vow, yet not in my own strength, but I solemnly vow, by Your Grace, that from this moment, forward, it shall be my aim to live more as a confirmer of the Truth of God! I did not know my high calling before, but I now know that I am a confirmer of Your Truth. Lord, help me so to live that there may never be any flaw in my conduct, never any vile word proceed out of my lips—make me so to live that I may confirm Your Truth! Lord, help me to confirm the witness of Christ!" Go and register that vow, and that resolution, and

seek God's Grace that you may not let it be a vow not carried out, but may you be able to live to the Glory of God, and to the honor of His blessed name! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 84.

A Psalm for the sons of Korah. You remember how Korah, Dathan and Abiram were destroyed because of their rebellion against the Lord and their revolt against His chosen servants, Moses and Aaron. And you, no doubt, recollect how it is recorded that "the children of Korah died not." Why they were spared, we cannot tell, except that it was an act of Sovereign Grace and if so, I can understand why they were afterwards selected to be among the chief singers in the house of the Lord, for who can sing so sweetly to the God of Grace as the men who have been saved by His Sovereign, distinguishing Grace? This Psalm is "for (or, of) the sons of Korah."—

"Who can praise the blessed God,
Like a sinner saved by Grace?
Angels cannot sing so loud,
Though they see Him face to face—
Sinless angels can never know
What a debt saved sinners owe."

Verse 1. *How amiable are Your tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts!* The outer portions and the inner parts as well—how lovely they all are! To be among Your people, to have sweet fellowship with them, how delightful it is, "O Lord of Hosts! "You dwell in Your tabernacles, O Jehovah of Hosts, like a king in the center of his army, and Your people encamp round about You!

2. *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD.* Those children of God who have been for even a little while exiled from the court of the Lord, prize them all the more when they get back to them.

2. *My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.* There gets to be so deep a longing to appear once more in the house of the Lord that even this clay-cold flesh of ours, which with difficulty becomes warm towards good things, at last melts and joins in the common cry of the Believer's whole being—"My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

3. *Yes, the sparrow has found a house.* She is such a bold bird that she comes and picks up a crumb or two even in the courts of God's house! So, Lord, let me be one of Your sparrows today—"Yes, the sparrow has found a house,"—

3. *And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God.* God's house is dear to us for the benefit that it is to ourselves, but it is still dearer to us for our children's sake as a nest where we may lay our young. What a double mercy it is when young people love to come with their parents to the house of God!

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in Your house: they will still be praising You. Selah.* The Psalmist felt that those who were always in the house of the Lord must always be full of music. I am afraid that it is not so in all cases, yet it should be.

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways of them.* The man who throws his whole heart and soul into his worship of the Lord and his service for the Lord, is the man who gets the greatest blessing out of the holy exercises in which he takes part. Half-hearted worshippers are an insult to God, but blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord of Hosts and whose heart is in His ways.

6. *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools.* If they pass through valleys that are dreary and gloomy, they find them to be a benefit and a blessing, for they get refreshments on the road and also help to cheer other travelers.

7, 8. *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God. O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.* David cannot go up with the multitude that keeps holy day so, feeling like Jacob when he was all alone at the brook Jabbok—like Jacob, he wrestles with God for a blessing. You can hear him crying out in the wilderness—"O Jehovah God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob," and He who heard the prayer of lonely Jacob by the brook, hears the cry of David and the cries of all His children who cannot join the great assembly of worshippers of God.

9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.* Jesus is the "shield" of His people, and He is "anointed" for His people and there is, in Jesus, so much of all that is good that when the Father looks upon us in Him, He can see goodness even in us poor sinners, for the goodness of Christ overflows to us and is accounted ours!

10. *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.* Of course the Psalmist means that a day in God's courts is better than a thousand spent anywhere else. See how he contrasts nearly three years with a single day, and he might have gone even further and said, "Better is one day with God than a thousand years without Him." He gives us another contrast as he goes on to say—

10-12. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.* May all of us know that blessedness, for our Lord 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.

CHRIST'S CROWNING GLORY
NO. 2876

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1876.

"His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him."
Psalm 21:5.

I FEEL quite sure that David here sings first concerning himself and then concerning the far greater King, "great David's greater Son," the Lord Jesus Christ. But I shall apply the text entirely to our blessed Redeemer and, surely, the Psalmist's language is most appropriate to Him.

Some of us are going to meet, presently, around the Table of our Lord to commemorate His death for us and, of course, there must be some sorrowful processes connected with that ordinance. How can we remember His death without sorrowing over the sin which made that death necessary? How can we remember "that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and broke it," without feeling that there is a somberness of spirit which becomes us as we surround His Table? Yet we must not indulge the mournful strain too much, for we must never forget that it is a joyous feast, not a funeral repast, to which our Lord invites us! It is a feast which reminds us of His triumph as well as of His conflict and agony. "After supper," we are told, in the record of its institution, "they sang a hymn" and our Lord Jesus Christ would have us come to His Table in the spirit of hymn-singing, making melody in our hearts unto the Lord. No funeral dirge is appropriate, here, no muffled drums nor wailing pipes—but let the daughters of song sound the loud timbre, as Miriam and the women of Israel did at the Red Sea!

Let it not be forgotten, too, that the last time this supper will ever be celebrated on earth, it will not die out amid groans and lamentations, but it will cease to be observed any longer because He will have come, whose coming will have been welcomed by the acclamation of all His saints, both those that are alive and remain, and those who come with the King and all His holy angels! This ordinance is full of joy, for each time it closes with a hymn when it is properly celebrated and, at the last, like all external symbols, it shall pass away amidst the hallelujahs of eternity! Come, then, Beloved, let us not be in a dolorous mood as we come to the Table of our Lord, but let us take all our harps down from the willows and wake their glad strings to exultant music! He, whom we remember in this ordinance, is not here, for He is risen! He is not there, on yonder

crucifix. His wounds bleed no longer. No thorns surround His brow, no nails pierce His feet and hands, no spear tears open His side, for He has gone back into the Glory which was His before the worlds were made, and it is thus that we are now to think of Him—"His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him."

In meditating upon this text, we shall notice, first, that *it reminds us of a Divine Salvation.* Secondly, *it sets forth the glory of Jesus in that salvation.* And, thirdly, *it reveals to us the reward which Jesus has obtained for that salvation*—"Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him."

I. First, then, THE TEXT REMINDS US OF A DIVINE SALVATION. It speaks of "*Your salvation*," that is to say, the salvation of God, by which is intended, according to the Hebrew idiom, not merely the grandest of all salvations, the chief of all deliverances, but, actually, that the salvation of which we speak is God's! O Brothers and Sisters, though the Truth of God is very simple and the observations I shall make upon it may be very trite, yet is it a Truth never to be put in the background that "salvation is of the Lord"!

Remember that *the salvation of man is God's, in the conception of it.* He first conceived the idea of redeeming the rebellious sons of Adam. It must be so, for the sons of Adam were not born when the Lord first planned the way of their salvation. From old eternity, before yet the sun had opened its eye of fire, God, in far-reaching foresight had beheld the sons of Adam ruined by the Fall—and He resolved that, out of them He would choose a people who should be redeemed and who, to all eternity, should show forth His praise! From the august mind of the Infinite God, the first thought of salvation sprang and it was He who sketched and mapped it all out, electing unto eternal life as many as it pleased Him, settling the way by which they would be redeemed, the method by which they would be called, arranging the place, the day, the hour, the means by which they would be converted—fixing it all, according to His eternal purpose, in Infinite wisdom and prudence—for in every part it was to be of Him and through Him and to Him! Even as in the old tabernacle in the wilderness, every board, curtain, hook, silver socket, every badger skin and every vessel of the sanctuary was ordained by God—and man was only left to carry out God's plan—even so is it in the salvation of God! In its minutest details, as well as in its grand outline, the provisions of eternal love are of the Lord! And so it is in His salvation.

But you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, that it was not only His in the arranging but *it was also carried out by God.* Who is He that has redeemed us by His blood, but He who is over all God, blessed forever? Who trod the winepress side by side with Him? Did He not stand there alone and, singlehanded, win the victory? And from where comes every blessing of salvation? Who provided it? Has man any share in the provision of any of the mercies by which sinners are taken out of sin into righteousness and raised from the ruins of the Fall to all the glories of Heaven? No, from first to last, all the provisions of eternal love are of the Lord! And so it is in His salvation.

No, more than that, God has not only planned and provided everything relating to it, but *it is He who applies the salvation which He has thus provided*. No one believes that Jesus is the Christ but by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me," says Christ. Much is said by some people about free will, but free will has never done anything in this world yet—unless moved by Free Grace—except to ruin mankind! Leave men to themselves and they are sure to choose that which is evil. As naturally as the river runs downwards to the sea, so does the heart of man turn towards that which is unclean. If the heart ever ascends towards holiness, Christ and God, it is because it is drawn upward by Divine Grace—and the Lord is working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. From the first sigh of repentance to the last hymn of thanksgiving, everything in us that is good is His workmanship! And so, in that respect, our salvation is of the Lord.

And, Beloved, when it is all finished—when everyone who ever shall be called, has been called—when every one of the Lord's elect has been regenerated, justified, sanctified and glorified—when the whole of the blood-washed family of God shall surround His Throne above, all the glory shall be given unto the Lord alone! There will be no jarring note in Heaven, no whisper of human merit, no claim of a reward for good intentions—but every crown shall be cast at Jesus' feet and every voice shall join in the ascription, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory of the salvation which You have worked out for us from first to last."

Let me pause, just a minute, to put this question to each one here—Do you, dear Friend, know anything about this salvation which is all of God? I fear that there are many who have no more religion than they have made themselves. Their religion is the result of their own efforts to improve themselves. Ah, Sirs, our Savior's words are still true, "You must be born-again!" And, as it was in our first birth, so must it be in our second birth—not our own act. Depend upon it, if all the good you have, has been fetched out of yourself as the spider draws its web out of its own bowels, it will all have to be brushed away! All that Nature spins will have to be unraveled, and all that Nature builds will have to be pulled down. God must save you, or you will be lost forever! The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, must come upon you and quicken you into newness of life, and renew you in the spirit of your mind, or else you will fall short of that which is requisite for admission into the Kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The best flesh is only flesh and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Consequently, the Spirit of God must operate upon us, or else we shall remain unspiritual—not able to understand spiritual things—and not possessing that spiritual life without which we cannot enter, at the last, into the enjoyment of those spiritual pleasures which are at God's right hand forevermore. One thing I can say without any doubt. I, personally, know that it is God's salvation that has saved me. And I think I speak the mind of many here when I say that they feel that if the Holy Spirit does not work in them

from the first to the last, their salvation will never be accomplished. I do not know any Doctrine which my experience more fully confirms than that to which Jonah gave utterance when he was in the whale's belly—"Salvation is of the Lord." It is, as our text reminds us, a Divine Salvation!

II. Now, secondly, I come to the subject which I desire to impress most deeply upon your memory, that is, THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE SALVATION OF GOD—"His glory is great in Your salvation."

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the tongues of men and angels can never fully tell the glory of Christ in salvation! It is a subject to be thought over by the loftiest intellects! It is a theme for men who lie awake at nights to meditate upon! It is a topic worthy of the thoughts of those who linger on the verge of Heaven! Dr. John Owen's pen was somewhat heavy in its style, but it never glowed and burned as much as when he wrote upon the Glory of Christ. This is a theme which the glorified spirits before the Throne of God perpetually contemplate. And the more fit we are to be among them, the more delightful will this subject be to us. As to that Glory, oh, if I had the allotting and the measuring of it, what glory I would give to my dear Lord and Master! I read, the other day—I cannot exactly quote the words, though I give the sense—a sentence by Samuel Rutherford in which he said that he would like to pile up ten thousand million heavens upon the top of the third Heaven to which Paul was caught up—and put Christ in that high place—and then He would not be as high as He deserved to be put and, truly, no honors seem sufficient for Him who stripped Himself of all He had that He might become the Savior of sinners!

And, first, it is His glory that *He has redeemed His people from stupendous evils*. When a statesman or a warrior rescues a country from a cruel despotism and brings to it the blessings of liberty, he deserves great praise. But, my Brothers and Sisters, the tyranny of sin, from which Christ has delivered His people, was a thousand times worse than the rule of the worst human despot! Consider, for a moment, the position in which His people were in the sight of God. They had sinned and they had, therefore, become exposed to the wrath of God. Unless some power greater than their own should intervene, they must be cast into Hell forever. God Himself could not lay aside His justice, for God would cease to be if He ceased to be just—and an unjust God is a contradiction in terms, an impossible combination! How, then, were these, who had sinned against God, to be delivered from the peril which hung over them? Moreover, they were held in bondage by sin, so that, even if the punishment of their past sin could be removed, they were still members of an enslaved race. Satan had cast his iron chains about them and they were led captive by him at his will.

Ah, Sirs, it is from this bondage that Christ has set us free, for He has taken away our guilt, bearing it in His own body up to the tree and then hurling it away from the tree into His grave to be remembered against us no more forever! By bearing the punishment that was due to us, Christ has delivered us from the yoke of Satan and of sin and, by the wondrous

redemption which He has worked out, and brought in, He has made His people "free indeed." No curse now hangs above their heads. No sin now has dominion over them, for they are not under the Law, but under Grace. Therefore, sound aloud your Deliverer's praises, all you who have been thus delivered! Think of what stupendous evils these were from which Christ set us free. To overthrow an oppressive empire is a great achievement. To rout the vast hordes that are led into the battlefield by great tyrants is no slight victory. The conqueror's statue is set up on high and his name is emblazoned upon the scroll of earthly fame. Then what honor shall be given to Christ who has set us free from mightier foes than ever trampled upon a nation's liberties?

Recollect, too, that He has not only delivered us from stupendous evils, but, *in the process, He has crushed the mightiest powers*. It did seem, at one time, as if evil would got the mastery in God's universe. God had permitted the strange experiment, as it seemed, of making creatures gifted with free agency—with whose free agency He would not interfere. These creatures broke His Law. How was the evil to be prevented from spreading? They would multiply and increase as, indeed, they have done. And, multiplying and increasing, there would be many millions of spirits in the universe, all rebellious against God and, consequently, all suffering! There would be countless myriads, born into God's world, all bearing hearts of sin within their bosoms and all, therefore, subject to the wrath of God. How Satan exulted at the prospect of increasing evil!

But when Jesus came into this world, He put His foot upon the head of the old dragon and so effectually crushed him to the earth so that he has never been able to rise again. Satan saw Christ hanging upon the Cross and thought that was his opportunity for gaining a decisive victory, yet it proved to be the hour of his greatest defeat! Death drove his sting right through the heart of Christ, but it so fixed itself in His Cross that it could never be drawn out again and, now that sting of death, which is sin, is gone, as far as all Believers in Christ are concerned. He has vanquished all the powers of evil—sin, death and Hell—and shattered their forces forever! Listen to this great shout of victory! Oh, that I had a voice loud enough to make it ring round the globe—"You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Perhaps the main point of Christ's Glory in the salvation of His people is that *He has achieved this by means which reflect unbounded honor upon His holy name*. I have often read the story of Cromwell's Ironsides and, sympathizing deeply with them in the objective of their fight, I have greatly admired their stern courage and consecrated ardor. But, still, I cannot think of battles and of fighting for the best of objectives without something of a shudder, so I cannot approve of the means which they employed. Doubtless, our country owes her present liberties to those brave men, yet, for all that, I grieve over the awful price of blood at which those liberties were purchased. Our blessed Lord and Master conquered all our foes, but what were the weapons He used to secure so glorious a victory? Do you look up to Him and enquire, "Where is Your battle-axe, O

Lord Jesus? Where are Your spear, Your sword, Your quiver and Your arrows?" He bids you look at His hands, His feet, His side, His heart—these are the weapons with which He overcame all the powers of darkness! There was much suffering in that awful conflict, but the suffering was all His own. There was a terrible gory sweat, but it came from His own body. There were wounds and there was death, but the wounds were in His precious body, the death was all His own. This is how evil was conquered—by love which denied itself, even to the death, for the sake of others! This is how human stubbornness was vanquished—by an almighty patience that could suffer at the hands of rebellious sinners till it bled to death! This is your death, O Death—this is your Hell, O Hell—this is your destruction, O Destruction—that God Himself bore the consequences of His creatures' sin!

No, start not back at that expression, I pray you. Do not think of Christ as being separated from God. God did not find somebody else to be the Substitute for sinners, but He gave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who is the equal and in all respects One with the Father. It was God Himself, in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus who bore the penalty that was due to human sin. It was God, in the Person of His Son, suffering, agonizing, groaning, dying, to put our sin away forever! I cannot conceive, nor do I think that cherubim and seraphim could conceive of anything more noble and more glorious than this Self-sacrifice of the Son of God! He conquers, not by making others suffer, but by sufferings all His own!

A kindred thought to that is this. Christ's Glory is great in the Divine Salvation, because *it developed and revealed the most wonderful attributes*. Suppose England were to win a great victory at sea. We would probably ascribe it to her superior men-of-war. Generally, battles are decided, as Napoleon said, by the big battalions, or by the excellence of the weapons that are used by the soldiers. If one man has an old Brown Bess and another a modern rifle, we can pretty well guess on which side the victory will be. We call it, "glory," when one fellow, who is twice as big as another, knocks the little one down—at least, we call it, "glory," when the nation which has the better ships and the bigger army wins the victory. I saw a huge Newfoundland dog pick up a poodle and shake him—there was about as much "glory" in that as when great nations war against little ones and overpower them! It is the same kind of "glory" as being a bigger bully and having a harder fist and stronger muscles than anybody else. That may be the sort of glory for a bull, or a lion, or an ass—but it is not the glory that is suited to men—and especially to Christians. But when Christ came and redeemed us, there was, on His part, no display of physical or mere brute power. There was a display of power, but it was the power of goodness, the power to suffer, the power to be patient, the power to love. As if God said to men, "Sinners and rebels as you are, I love you more than you hate Me. And great as your badness is, My goodness shall overwhelm your badness, My pardoning mercy shall overpower your power to transgress."

As the result of His death upon the Cross, our Lord Jesus has saved a multitude whom no man can number. And a part of His Glory consists in *the fact that there are so many whom He has saved.* The salvation of God is not for just a little privileged company. I know that certain "sound" brethren imagine that the blessings of salvation are confined to just a few favored individuals in Little Zoar, or Rehoboth—they delight in the idea that there are only a few that will be saved. I trust that we have no sympathy with such narrow views—for my own part, I rejoice to know that, in Heaven, there will be "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who shall cry, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb." So our Lord Jesus Christ has great glory from the fact that He saves so many sinners.

There is this peculiarity about all whom He saves, that *they are attached to Him forever*. His Glory is great in their salvation because everyone of them is, from that day forth, Christ's man, Christ's woman forever and forevermore. In travelling through France, lately, I have been greatly amused at seeing in various public squares, pedestals that were evidently intended for equestrian statues, but there are no statues upon them. And there are shields upon town halls which look as if there should have been medallions upon them, but there are no portraits where the medallions should have been. On making enquiries, you will find that a statue of Napoleon the Third used to stand on that pedestal and a medallion of him used to be on that town hall. That must be a fine country for stonemasons, because they so frequently have fresh governments and need, also, to have fresh statues! I have heard of a man, living in Paris, who used to ask, every morning, whether he was under a republic, or a monarchy, or an empire. And when he was told which it was, he was not at all sure that it would last till the evening. No matter how good the ruler has been, nor how many times they have painted his likeness, or set up his image, the moment he has ill fortune, away go all the representations of him!

You would have thought that many rulers would have obtained a permanent place in the hearts of their people, yet we know from the history of various countries that very few have done so. Those who are idolized today are despised tomorrow. But our Lord Jesus has a Glory which is great in our salvation because His image is forever enshrined in our hearts! The great Napoleon hit the nail on the head when, at St. Helena, musing upon his own position, he said to one who walked with him, "Jesus Christ is the most wonderful of men. I founded an empire which has passed away, but His never will, and I see the reason for that. Mine was founded upon force, but Christ's is founded upon love." Ah, that is the reason for our devotion to Him! He has loved us so much that He has won us to Himself forever! These hands of mine are manacled with blessed, invisible, but unbreakable bands of love—never was I truly free until I felt those fetters binding me to my Lord! This heart of mine is fast riveted to Christ. It never was really my own till it became His, but now it is His forever and ever! "I bear in my body," said Paul, "the marks of the

Lord Jesus." He felt it to be an unspeakable honor to be the branded slave of Jesus Christ, with the Cross burnt into his very flesh by the suffering which he had endured for the sake of his dear Lord and Master!

Truly, Brothers and Sisters, to rule over other men is a great thing. To have moral power over men is no mean matter. But to get men to so love you that they would willingly die for you—to get them to so love you that they would sooner cease to live than cease to love you—this is to occupy a glorious high throne! And such is the throne upon which Christ sits in the hearts of all His people! Such is the dominion which He wields over all the hosts that He has purchased with His precious blood! Well says the Prophet in our text—for the Psalmist was a true Prophet—"His glory is great in Your salvation."

III. Now, thirdly, Our text REVEALS THE REWARD WHICH JESUS HAS OBTAINED FOR THIS GREAT SALVATION—"Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him." I do not intend to preach upon this last point, but only to give you a few sentences by way of an outline of the honor and majesty which God the Father has laid upon Christ.

First, *our Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted, as Man, to reign over the angels*. As God, He was always Ruler, Governor and Lord of all. But the Man Christ Jesus died, was buried and rose again—and then ascended into Glory—and now He is Head over all principalities and powers, and all the holy angels that have never fallen, delight to do His bidding. My Brother, in that very sweet prayer before the sermon, to which I assented with all my heart, pleaded that we might get a view of Jesus Christ within the veil in His Glory. That is how I want you to think of Him—that very Man who hung upon the tree. That very Man who was the butt of all the reproaches and scorn of His enemies, now sits upon the Throne of God and around Him all the cherubim and seraphim are gathered, all worshipping and adoring Him and praising and magnifying His holy name!

Then, my Brothers and Sisters, *God has given to the Lord Jesus to be the Head of His Church*. Over all the redeemed, on earth and in Heaven, Christ presides and rules. While He is the Lord of the angels, He is also the Lord of all elect men. His Father gave them to Him from eternity and made Him to be the Head and made them to be the members of His mystical body. Christ is the one and only Head and supreme Ruler of His Church. It is true that there are men who sat themselves up as governors of Christ's Church. And there is an antichrist, at Rome, who calls himself the head of the church, but that is only a wicked fiction, a manifest lie! There is but one Head of the Church and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only supreme Ruler and before Him all His loyal subjects bow. "Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him."

Being Head of His Church, *He is also Head over all things outside of His Church in which His Church is concerned.* Joseph ruled Egypt for the good of Israel and, in like manner does Christ rule the whole world for the good of His people. All the arrangements of Providence are under His control. Nothing is done in the entire universe without His command or His permission. Does that statement startle you? It is, nevertheless, true! He who was made Lord of the angels, has had all things put under His

feet and He is, at this moment, Lord of all! And, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see this demonstrated soon, for He is coming. As surely as He went up to Heaven, literally and Personally, so surely will He comes again, literally and Personally—and when He does come, it will be as Ruler and Lord over all, for He will come to judge the quick and the dead according to His Gospel. Then will all created intelligences behold the honor and majesty which God has put upon Him!

There will have to appear, before the Judgment Seat of the Nazarene, the spirits that fell ages upon ages ago. Satan shall come and receive his final sentence and be banished forever to Hell. Then shall come the unbelieving world, to hear from Christ's lips the terrible message, "Depart, you cursed!" The earth shall reel beneath His Presence—that earth which could scarcely lend Him a sepulcher. And Heaven and earth shall flee away from that Face which earth once seemed to scorn and Heaven to forget! Ah, it will be seen who the Christ is in that day! A trumpet blast more terrible than that which startled the echoes of Sinai shall ring over land and sea. A cloud shall come and on it shall stand the Great White Throne—and upon it shall be seated the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." But, oh, how changed!—

"With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,"

He shall come—with a face shining above the brightness of the sun and with eyes like flames of fire, He shall come in all the Glory of His Father, with all His holy angels to attend Him, and to swell the triumph of His appearing! O Brothers and Sisters, let us anticipate that glorious appearing and begin to clap our hands with exultation over our Lord's triumphal advent!

But are we all His people? Do not desire that day if you are not His, for the Day of the Lord will be darkness, not light, to all who are His enemies! The more glorious Christ is to His own people, the more dreadful will His appearance be to you if you live as unbelievers and if you die without trusting in Him! O Christians, I bid you be glad in your Lord, and I also bid you pray for the unsaved, that they may trust, and love, and serve Jesus, too—and rejoice with you in recollecting that He is coming again to receive unto Himself all to whom He is both Lord and Savior! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:18-50.

Verse 18. *And the disciples of John showed him of all these thing.* John was in prison and, possibly, troubled in spirit.

19. *And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus saying, are you He that should come? Or look we for another?* Did John doubt? Perhaps not. It may be that he saw that his disciples doubted and that he wished their fears to be removed. It is possible, however, that he did have doubts. It is no unusual thing for the bravest hearts to be subject to fits of doubt. Elijah, you remember, sat under a juniper tree in the wilderness, "and he requested for himself that he might die," though he

was the man who never was to die. And John—the Elijah of the Christian dispensation, though a man of iron, was but a man, so he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, "Are you He that should come, or look we for another?"

20-22. *When the men were come unto Him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us unto You, saying, Are You He that should come, or look we for another? And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard.* Our old proverb says that actions speak louder than words, so an answer in His actions would be more eloquent with these enquirers than even an answer in our Lord's own words. He bade them look at the evidences of His Messiahship which He gave them by His miraculous cures, and then He said to them, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard." It would be well if our lives were such that if any enquired what we were, we should only have to say that they might judge us by what they had seen and heard in our common everyday life and conversation!

22, 23. *How that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in Me.* According to our Lord's testimony, the preaching of the Gospel to the poor is as great a proof of His Messiahship as the raising of the dead! Then how highly it ought to be prized by them and how glad should they be who have the Gospel now preached freely in their hearing!

24. *And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?* The wind on the banks of the Jordan, where there are plenty of reeds growing—did you see a man who would bow before every breath of popular favor or popular wrath? Was John the Baptist such a man as that? No, certainly not.

25. *But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.* They do not preach repentance. As is their clothing, so is their doctrine. They try to show a royal road to Heaven—a smooth and easy path. But was John the Baptist a preacher of that kind? No, that he was not.

26-28. *But what did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and much more than a Prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, which shall prepare Your way before you. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* Passing into the dispensation of clearer Light of God, he who is least among the Believers of the Gospel of Jesus is, in some respects, greater than this man who could only preach repentance and point to a coming Savior!

29-32. *And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the Baptism of John. But the Pharisees and law-*

yers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. And the Lord said, To what, then, shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace. At play—the playing of children is often according to the manners and customs of grown up people.

32. *And calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and you have not danced.* "You would not play a merry game when we asked you to do so."

32. *We have mourned to you, and you have not wept.* "You would not play either at funerals or weddings."

33. *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and you say, he has a devil.* "He came among you as an ascetic, denying himself, not only the luxuries of life, but even the common comforts that others enjoyed. And you say, 'He has a devil.'"

34. *The Son of Man is come eating and drinking.* "He does not pretend to be an ascetic. He comes, on the contrary, to show that neither meat nor drink can save a man. What do you say, then, of this Son of Man?"

34, 35. *And you say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.* Though the world contemns all wisdom's children, whichever way they go, and is not pleased with their manners, whatever manners they possess, yet, in the long run, when the Wisdom of God shall be all unfolded, it will be seen that the roughness of John and the gentleness and loving kindness of Jesus were both right in their proper place. If fish are not caught in the Gospel fishery, it may sometimes be the fisherman's fault, but more often it is the fault of the fish. Here we have two very different kinds of fishermen, yet neither of them attracts all, though each of them draws some.

36, 37. *And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold.* For it is a wonder of Divine Grace—"Behold."

37. *A woman in the city, which was a sinner.* A sinner by profession, a public and notorious sinner.

37-44. *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman? I entered into your house, you gave Me no water for*

My feet. "Though it was only a common act of courtesy, such as should always be shown to a guest, you did neglect that."

44. *But she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.* "She has given My feet no common washing, for she has washed them with her tears. You would only have brought Me a linen napkin, but she has wiped them with the hairs of her head.'"

45. *You gave Me no kiss.* Which was usually given as a greeting to guests at that time. Simon had not given to Jesus the honor which was due to Him, which would have been to kiss His forehead.

45. *But this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet.* Every word is emphatic to show how far she had gone beyond Simon, who thought himself so much better than she was.

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint.* Another usual Eastern custom with guests whom the host intended to honor.

46. *But this woman has anointed My feet with ointment.* Anointed them, not with ordinary olive oil, but with precious costly ointment.

47. *Therefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.* "You know that her sins were many, and I tell you that they have been forgiven, and you can see, by her actions, that she loves much."

47, 48. *But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven.* What music that sentence, "Your sins are forgiven," must have been to her! "Ah," says one, "I also should like to hear that sentence. Beyond everything else in the whole world would I desire to hear Jesus say to me, 'Your sins are forgiven.'" Then put yourself in the place that this woman occupied. When Joab clung to the horns of the altar, he had to die there, but this woman had fled to the feet of Jesus—and she did not die there—nor shall you, but at those blessed feet, weeping for sin, and trusting the great Sin-Bearer, you shall receive assurance of pardon. "Your sins are forgiven."

49, 50. *And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgives sins also? And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* He did not want this young convert, this beginner in the Christian life to hear the bickering and controversies of these coarse spirits, so He said to her, "Go in peace."

And, dear Soul, if you have begun to find out that even in the Christian Church there are many opinions concerning many things, do not trouble yourself about those things. This is enough for you—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." There may be some who are galled to contend for this or that point of the faith but, as for you, poor Child, if, with your broken heart you have found the Savior and if you love Him with an inward, warm and hearty love, do not spoil that love by getting into a controversial spirit—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

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"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you, when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."
Isaiah 43:2, 3.

EVEN down to the present day, the Jewish nation has not been destroyed. It has been made to pass through fire and through water. The story of the persecution of the Jews, both in earlier and later times, would fill many volumes with the most harrowing details. Had they not been a people whom God specially ordained to remain as His witnesses until the Messiah comes again, they would have utterly perished from among the sons of men! They have been a people scattered and peeled, rent and torn, hunted and harried—yet they still exist. For many a century they were equally abhorred by the heathen and the so-called Christians, yet they have lived on and they will continue to live on until a new heart and a right spirit shall be given to them and the Lord shall, in His great mercy, take away the blindness which in part has happened to Israel, so that they shall look on Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. Then shall come the glory of the Gentiles, when more than the former glory of Israel shall be restored to her.

But, Brothers and Sisters, every promise in the Scriptures, of a spiritual nature, which is made to the literal people of Israel and to the seed after the flesh, is, according to the Inspired teaching of the Apostle Paul, yet more fully made to the seed of Abraham after the spirit—for all Believers are his spiritual seed. Was he not the father of all the faithful, not of the circumcision only, but of them, also, who are uncircumcised, if they trust in the living God? To us, then, as well as to the literal Israel, is this promise made. And to the Church of God, as a whole, will it be fulfilled, even as it has been fulfilled to her thus far. Her martyrologists have told us how often she has gone through fire and through water, but the floods have not drowned her, neither have the flames consumed her. At this time she stands in a wealthy place—her Lord has set her feet in a large room. Her banner still floats upon the breeze. No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper and every tongue that rises against her

in judgment, she shall condemn. For her there is a noble destiny. Her full glory is not yet revealed, but we know that when her heavenly Bridegroom shall appear in His Glory, His bride shall share in it with Him. Yes, Beloved, we who believe in Jesus are on the winning side—we are on the side which has God with it and Christ with it, and eternity with it—and the appointed day shall reveal that this is the conquering side!

But, further, this promise, while it applies to the whole Church of God, also applies to every individual in that Church, for it is a rule, with the promises of God, that you may break them up as small as you please, but they will still be after the same fashion as at the first. Like certain crystals, which, if you break them again and again, and again, retain the same crystalline form—which is their natural form—so a Divine promise that is true to the whole corporate body of the Church, is also true to every one of the members of that Church— and true to every one of those members in every trial into which that member may be cast! Take you, then, this promise to yourselves, Beloved! You who are in Christ Jesus and who worship God in the Spirit, claim this promise as made to you, just as much as if God had spoken it out of the excellent Glory right into your ear, or as much as if you saw Him writing, with His own eternal pen, these precious sentences as a personal epistle to you, for He does speak them and write them to you by His ever-blessed Spirit!

On looking at our text, we see that it very readily divides itself into three parts. The first is this—*trials must be expected by Believers*. You may have to go through fire and through water. But, secondly, *trials will not be able to destroy you*. You have, in the text, the most express declaration that you shall neither be overwhelmed nor consumed. And, thirdly, *of this blessed fact, we have the very highest assurances given to us*. They are found in the third verse of this chapter, where we have argument after argument to prove to us that God will be with His people, to deliver them when they are called to pass through rivers of trial or through fiery tribulations.

I. First, then, TRIALS ARE TO BE EXPECTED BY BELIEVERS.

I suppose that some young Christians imagine that the favorites of Heaven will never be tried, but it is not so. The first verse of this chapter bids us fear not, for God has redeemed us and called us by our names, and we are His. And we might, therefore, draw the conclusion that we could live at our ease, enjoy all manner of luxuries and, as the chosen people of God, be protected from every wintry blast! Beloved, it is not so—if you are heirs of the Kingdom of God, you are also, most assuredly, heirs of tribulation, for your Lord has declared, "In the world you shall have tribulation." If you are soldiers in the army of Christ, you are not intended to win the victory without a conflict! And if you are ordained to wear a crown above, you are certainly equally ordained to bear a cross below. Grace does not bring luxury in its train, nor does it lull us into a sweet slumber and carry us to the skies—

"On flowery beds of ease."

No, we must fight if we would reign! We must suffer for Christ if we would be glorified with Him. Our text speaks about all this as if it were a

matter of course—"When you pass through the waters…and through the rivers…when you walk through the fire," just as if we hardly needed to be told that it would be so!

Our text tells us that *these trials will be of various kinds.* We use the expression, "through fire and through water," to signify a variety of severe trials. If you are a true child of God, you will have to go through the waters. You will have to endure trial of a certain kind which will chill you to the very marrow—trial which will seem to sweep you off your feet, take away from you your foot-hold and carry you along, with its rapid current, where it pleases. You must expect to have trials of that sort. And after you have endured them long, you must not delude yourself with the promise of relief, for, when one trouble has gone, another will come and it will probably be of a different character from the last one you had and will require the exercise of another kind of Grace and another form of watchfulness! Instead of being in the water, you will be in the fire—you will not be chilled, now, but heated, like molten metal in a furnace—and the fierce flame will be all around you, alarming you and filling you with dismay and distress. It is a different trial altogether from any that you had experienced before. You know how, in one day, the wind often blows from quite opposite quarters of the compass and how, in a few hours, we have, first snow, then rain, then sunshine, then wind, then snow again, then sleet, and I scarcely know what beside—a sort of epitome, in one day, of human life—yet a strange day, as most human lives are—a day one never wishes to have repeated, but is glad when it is over? God's children would not wish to live their lives over again and they are glad when they come to the evening and can undress, and go to the place of rest. But, in the meantime, if they are wise, they will expect a variety of trials to come to them.

And our text seems to intimate that *some of these trials will be very terrible ones*—"When you pass through the rivers"—strong, rapid rivers that come rushing down from the hills, like Kishon, the mighty flood which swept away Jabin and his hosts—deep, impassable rivers, perhaps, through which, nevertheless, you will have to pass—rivers which are like the Jordan which overflows all its banks at the time of harvest. There will come to you trials like these and it will sometimes seem as if you never could get over them—as if, now, your Christian career must end, and end in failure, even as the pilgrim's course would end in drowning if, in attempting to ford a rapid river, he was swept away. And if the flood is so terrible, what shall I say of the fire? It is the nature of the flood to overwhelm, but it is the nature of the fire to consume. There are certain trials that could overwhelm our faith and speedily consume us if there were not a secret source of strength—Divine, Omnipotent—within our hearts and round about us. If it were not true that "the Lord sits upon the flood: yes, the Lord sits King forever," the rivers would long ago have overwhelmed us. And if it were not that He makes the flaming fire to be His messenger and the burning heat to be His servant, we would have been utterly consumed!

But we shall not be, although the trial, if it could work in its own way, would have this result. You may quite expect that between here and Heaven, if you have not met with it yet, you will have enough trouble to destroy you utterly unless the Lord is your Helper. I suppose that the most of us can already sing with the Psalmist, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say—if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul." But because the Lord has been with us, therefore our adversaries have not been able to prevail over us.

Our trials have not only been varied and terrible, but *they have been many times repeated*. I do not think it is merely the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry which requires the reduplication of the sentences here, or, if it is, yet even then we may suppose the poetry to be typical of the trials of the Believer's life. We have to pass through the waters and, after that, through the waters again, only, this second time, it is called through the rivers. We are encompassed, at one time, with fire and, by-and-by, the fire comes again—only this time it is called flame, as if the fire raged yet more furiously. No, my young Friend, you are not done with temptation yet, and not even with the temptation which you have overcome, for it may return in another form! No, my Brothers and Sisters, you have not seen the last of your corruption, not even of that corruption which you consider to be quite dead. You have not yet passed through all the trials which Satan will cause you, or which the world will cause you, or which the flesh will cause you. You will have to go through not merely one river, but many rivers, and through, not simply one fire, but through many fires before you come, at last, to God's right hand in Glory!

And this is sometimes the sharpest pinch of our tribulation, that it comes upon us again and again. We have all read, with great interest, the story of Job's many trials and we have felt that the force of them was increased by the declaration of messenger after messenger, "I, only, am escaped alone to tell you." First the oxen and asses were stolen by the Sabeans and the servants that were with them were killed. Then the sheep and their keepers were slain by lightning. Then, the Chaldeans captured the camels and slew the servants in charge of them. Last of all came the terrible tidings of the death of all his children! It was stroke upon stroke, sorrow upon sorrow, trouble upon trouble—and it is this repetition of trial that bows even a strong man down and that makes the firmest Believer begin to doubt and tremble! But, Beloved, you must *expect* wave upon wave, trial upon trial. You are not, as a soldier, after having fought one battle, to take off your regimentals and retire to your tent and say, "I have won the victory." That battle is but the beginning of a long campaign—and you will have to endure the smoke and dust of the battlefield and the garments rolled in blood, time after time—before the victor's wreath shall at last surround your brow! So, your trials will be repeated, as well as varied and terrible.

And, mark you, according to the text, *these trials are inevitable.* "When you pass through the waters." It is taken for granted that you have to go through them. There is no bridge and there is no boat by which you can pass over these waters—and no tunnel by which you can go underneath them—so you must go through them. Then it is added, "When you walk through the fire." There is nothing said about putting out the fire, or about waiting until the flame burns low, or the embers begin to cool. No, you have to go through the fire and through the water. You have not merely to dip your feet in the waves of trouble—you have to go through them. You have not merely to go and just singe yourself a little in the flame—it is through the fire that you have to go and that fire will be like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace when it was heated seven times hotter than usual. It is not a fire for you to warm your hands—you have to tread those glowing coals—possibly with bare feet. Are you prepared to endure that fiery ordeal? Can you so trust in the living God as to feel sure that when you get into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, there will be with you one like unto the Son of God, who will preserve you by His gracious Presence? God does not promise His people any immunity from trouble. In fact, He has foretold that they shall have trouble. As there is no royal road to learning, so there is no royal road to Heaven—

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Make up your mind that you have to go through these trials and ask the Lord to give you Grace and courage that you may be able to endure unto the end. These trials of the saints are appointed and ordained and they have their destined end, so, depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will have more or less of them. If you have more, then you shall have the more consolation. If you have less, you may be grateful for the Lord's tenderness towards you and not wish for more. But rest assured that all God's children will be baptized with fire! He has had one Son without sin, but He has never had one child without suffering—all the sons and daughters of God are brought under the rod of the Covenant and are made to feel the chastising strokes of their wise Father's hand.

II. Now, secondly, I have to remind you that TRIALS SHALL NOT DESTROY BELIEVERS.

First of all, *they shall not divide Believers from their God.* That would be destruction, indeed, but it can never be. Notice the first sentence of our text—"When you pass through the waters." But, my Lord, will those waters roll between You and me? No, for, "I will be with you." Then, Lord, let them roll, for I can say, with the Apostle Paul, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us?" asks the Apostle and the answer is, "None shall separate us," for God and His people are indivisible! If I said no more and sat down, there would be enough comfort, I think, in that thought, to make you ready to rush through floods and flames where Jesus leads the way. "When you pass

through the waters, I will be with you." You shall not have less of God because you are poor, or because you are sick, or because your mother is taken from you, or your children are, one by one, caught up into Heaven. Oh, no, in your losses, crosses and troubles, you shall realize the Presence of God even more conspicuously than you have ever done before!

Our text does not say, "When you shall tread the flowery mountain and rest upon the soft green bank, I will be with you." I never remember reading, in the Scriptures, a promise of that kind, or one like this—"When you walk upon close-shaven grass, which seems like a carpet beneath your feet, I will be with you." No, but God says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." He gives a special promise for a special time of trial and, to meet the doubt which has so troubled His child, He says, "Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

Then our text tells us that *neither the waters nor the seas shall stop the Believer's march*—"When you *pass through* the waters, I will be with you." It does not say, "When you get to the waters, you shall stop there." They cannot stop us—we are to go through them! Our way to Heaven lies through that flood—then, through that flood we will go! God has ordained that no troubles, however great, and no persecutions, however terrible, shall stop the onward march of a soul predestinated to eternal joy. Suppose it is a deep and rapid river, whose swollen torrent seems to sweep everything before it? We shall go through it! We shall neither be stopped by it, nor swept away by it, for the promise is, "When you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you."

But what about the fire? Can we got through *that*? Surely we are not fireproof—we wear no asbestos garment that shall preserve us from the devouring flames. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, you shall pass through the fire as well as through the water! Our text implies that your march through the flame shall be quiet, calm and safe, for the Lord says, "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned." There is no need to quicken your usual pace. If I had to go through literal fire, I would want to run and leap through it, but the Believer is, *spiritually*, to walk through the fire. That is a beautiful passage in the 23rd Psalm—"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Walking is the pace at which men go when nothing distresses or alarms them. "He that believes shall not make haste," but shall walk even through the fire! What a blessing it is that, as no trouble shall separate us from God, so no trouble shall hinder our progress towards Heaven, but, through Divine Grace, whether floods or flames are in the way, we shall go through them!

Our text further says that *some trials which threaten to overwhelm us, shall not be able to do so*—"The rivers… shall not overflow you." You may be carried off your feet and have to take to swimming—the blessed swimming of faith, which casts itself upon Divine strength and spreads out its hands as the bold swimmer does! The water will sometimes, perhaps, be near your head for a minute, the spray will dash into your eyes and the brine will be in your throat—but the waves shall not overflow

you, however furiously they may rage around you. There are some trials which seem as if they must crush the life out of those to whom they come. Possibly you are saying, "I do believe, but I am in such a turmoil, that my mind seems quite upset. I am exceedingly sorrowful, almost to the death of my faith." Ah, but it shall not be quite to the death of your faith—the floods shall not overflow you!

Other trials seem as if they would consume you, as if, with fierce and burning vehemence, they would destroy you as a martyr burns at the stake. But what does our text say? "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." You shall not lose faith, or hope, or love, or patience, or any Christian Grace! You shall come out of the fire as you went into it—no, you shall be improved by the flame, for our text says, if we read it in the Hebrew, "When you pass through the fire, you shall not be scorched, neither shall the flame burn you." We remember that when those three brave witnesses for God came out of the burning fiery furnace, not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them! I think I see the Babylonians crowding around them and asking, in amazement, "Are these men alive? We saw the guards, who cast them into the fire, consumed by the great heat of the furnace—and are these men alive who were actually in the midst of the flames?" They had to come close and touch them, to make sure that they were not ghosts or apparitions. When they had grasped the hand of one of the three, to see whether it was alive, they next would want to examine it. But had not the fire scorched their eyebrows, or their hair? No, "the fire had no power; nor was a hair of their head singed." They were just as they were when they went into the burning fiery furnace! It was very amazing and, in like manner, the child of God, sustained by Divine Grace, will be none the worse for all his troubles!

Look at Job after all his trials. The Lord gave him twice as much as he had before—and he was neither the weaker, nor the less honorable for all he had been called to endure. No, he was a gainer by it all! O Brothers and Sisters, the gold loses nothing in the fire but what it is glad to lose! The silver in the crucible loses none of its real preciousness—it only loses its alloy. So shall it be with you, Beloved!

III. The latter part of our text supplies us with THE ARGUMENTS AND ASSURANCES WHICH GO TO PROVE THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE WITH BELIEVERS.

And the first is, "*For I am Jehovah."* Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you and I are trusting to anything short of the one living and true God, the rivers will overwhelm us and the fires will consume us! But if our living faith rests on the living God, it is not possible for us to have reason to be ashamed or confounded, world without end! I ask without any fear as to the answer that may be given to me—Did any man ever trust in God and find himself forsaken? Has it ever come to pass, in all the history of the Church of God, that one single heir of Heaven has had cause to be ashamed of his hope and his belief in his God? If you rely on an arm of flesh, you will soon find it fail you. If you turn to idol gods, and earthly priests, they will all prove useless to you in your hour of trial—but it is

not so with any who trust in the Lord! Have we not seen the saints on their deathbeds—yes, seen them in excruciating pain and in deep depression of spirit! Yet they have never been ashamed of staying themselves upon their God. They have always found this to be an Infallible protection in the time of their deepest need—"I am Jehovah."

Now, child of God, are you afraid of the fire, or are you afraid of the flood when you have the self-existent, eternal, almighty, unchangeable God to trust to? O Man, be afraid to be afraid, and fear to fear, but trust in God at all times! And, with dauntless courage, go wherever He leads or points the way! It is the living God in whom you trust, therefore, when you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow you! When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned!

The next assurance lies in the words, "*your God."* "I am the Lord your God." Ah, the God in whom you trust is your own God! The God who, in an Everlasting Covenant, has taken you to be His servant and has given Himself to you, to be your Father, your Friend, your All-in-All—in a word, your GOD! Now, my dearest earthly friend may fail me. The choicest companion I have may forget me. But my God never will. There is an enduring relationship which can never end in disappointment. "'I am your God.' Yours, for I chose you. Yours, for I redeemed you. Yours, for I have taken you to be Mine and I have made Myself to be yours in the Covenant of everlasting love. Trust Me, then, for, 'I am your God,' so I cannot forsake you. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you.' 'I am Jehovah your God.' If I am nobody else's God, I am your God, so, 'when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame even scorch you.'"

Now turn to the next words, "*the Holy One of Israel."* When David wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name," why did he select the *holiness* of God's name as the objective of special blessing? If you sound the word a little differently, you will see that holiness is whole-ness—and that is one of its meanings. God is holy or whole. His holiness comprehends all His other attributes. If there were a failure in any one of the moral attributes of God, He would not be whole, or holy! But there is no such failure. So, now, the whole of God—the holy guarantees to the Believer that he shall be preserved in all perils and trials!

You are not trusting to a God that can lie, or that can break His promise, for He is "the Holy One of Israel." You are not relying upon One who will divorce His people whom He has espoused unto Himself, for the Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away. You are not trusting to One who, after all, will repent of what He has promised and not fulfill it, for, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should change His mind: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" The holiness of God is terrible to an unreconciled soul, but, to a heart that is reconciled to God, the holiness of God's Nature is a pledge that every one of His promises shall be kept and that not one jot or tittle of all that He has

guaranteed to His people shall fail to come to them. Look, then, Believer, at the guarantees of your safety which you have in the very Nature of your God! Whether the rivers flow about you, or the raging sea roars in your ears, or the furnace pours forth its vehement heat, or the prairie is on fire all around you, you are at all times safe!

Then there is a further word of assurance—"the Holy One of Israel, *your Savior*." Now, to be true to His name, He must save all who trust in Him. Why does He call Himself the Savior—and especially put in the words, "your Savior"—if He does not save, and save you? Come, Believer, surely it needs no words of mine to draw out the force of this argument. If He does not save, He is not a Savior! And if He does not save *you*, He is not *your* Savior. But if you believe on Him, He will redeem His word—every iota of it! As honorable businessmen meet their bills and notes of hand when they become due, so will the honorable God fulfill His Word and prove Himself to be the Savior of all who trust in Him. In six troubles, He will be with you. And in seven, there shall no evil befall you. He has promised to save you and He will save you. He will rest in His love. He will rejoice over you with singing. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all." That is His own Word and that Word will be kept to the very letter. He is "your Savior."

The last assurance is, in some respects, the strongest of all—*"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you*," by which the Lord means, "I will surely preserve you, because I have bought you at such a great price that I cannot afford to lose you. I have shown My valuation of you by the price I have paid for you, so you may rest assured that I will not suffer any harm to come to those whom I have so dearly purchased." You remember that the Israelites were redeemed by the Egyptians being made to suffer. You recollect how the plagues thickened about the heads of Egypt's sons and that Ethiopia and Seba were conquered by the Assyrian turning his forces against *them* instead of against the Israelites. And, since then, it has often happened that God has succored His saints by allowing other people to feel the force of the sword which was turned aside from the godly. When the poor persecuted Protestants of France or Piedmont were likely to be destroyed, it generally happened either that the kings of Germany and France fell out, or else that France went to war with Spain and then the soldiers were recalled—and the poor saints had a little liberty. God had given other nations as a ransom for them, and so He will do again when it is necessary. He will blot whole nations off the map of Europe, or the map of Asia, or any other part of the world, for the sake of His people! What cares He for them in comparison with His own chosen ones? In the olden days He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel—and He will do the same for the spiritual Israel. All the world is but peel or rind, but His Church is the sweet fruit! All the universe is only as the shell, but the kernel inside the shell is His own redeemed!

But, in a higher sense, God has paid a far greater price than this for the redemption of His people—something infinitely more precious than Egypt with all her treasures, or Ethiopia with all her gold, or Seba with

all her fragrance. Did He not give His Son to die for His people? And if Christ redeemed me with His blood, is not my safety guaranteed, not only against flood and flame, but against the very gates of Hell? Think you, Beloved, that the death of Christ can be in vain? Do you believe that He bought with His blood some who, after all, shall be cast into Hell? I know that there is a general aspect to redemption which brings some good things to all men—but there is also the special aspect in it which brings all good things to some men! "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." He has redeemed us from among men. The good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. Christ said, concerning His disciples, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me."

And did He really, specially and with an eye to *my* salvation, lay down His precious life as a ransom for *me*? And shall God, after having given me to His Son, let me fail to come into the possession of Him who redeemed me with His blood? I confess that I am unable to conceive of such a thing being possible! Once redeemed with the blood of the Son of God, who could again enslave the soul that has been thus set free? Go where you will, redeemed one, the blood-mark is upon you and "the Lord knows them that are His." According to the notion of some people, redemption does not guarantee salvation to anybody—but our text directly contradicts such a theory as that! It is *because* we are redeemed that we shall be saved—that is the reason why there are saints already in Heaven and why they will be there forever and ever. Redemption is the pledge of their eternal safety. If Christ should lose any one of His redeemed—if God should lose any one of those who were so dearly purchased—what a terrible result it would be! Then, from the depths of Hell, the blaspheming fiend would look up and cry, "Aha! Here is a soul that was redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a soul that believed in Jesus, yet He could not save it from destruction! When it came to the river, it was drowned, or it was consumed by the fire. Aha! You call Yourself the Redeemer? But You have not redeemed this one!"

Now I am going to conclude my discourse by asking one or two questions. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, have you not proved, in your experience, that what I have been saying is true? I see, before me, some who have been through fire and through water. The whiteness of their hair betokens that they have been pilgrims for a long while. You, my aged Friends, have the snows of many a winter upon your brows—and the furrows of many a care are also there. Well, what have you to say concerning your God? Has He ever failed you? You have had many sharp pinches, but has He ever left you in them? You have had heavy burdens to bear, but have they broken your back? You have had stern trials, but has your faith ever altogether failed? Brothers and Sisters, I think we who have had any experience in the ways of God might stand up and sing good Samuel Medley's verse—

"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 there is another question that I want to ask. If the Lord has dealt with you thus up till now, what ails you that you should have any fear about the future? "Ah," you say, "but I have not passed this way before." I know you have not, but then, all the way you have already trodden was new to you until you came to it—and the Lord helped you then. Why should He not help you now and for all the future, too? "Ah, but there will be changing circumstances!" I know there will, but there will not be changing promises. "Ah, but I find such frequent changes in myself!" Very likely you do, but do you find any change in the Lord? That is where your confidence is to be placed—in the Lord—not in yourselves. Brothers and Sisters, if you never doubt your Lord till you have just cause to do so, you will never doubt Him at all! And if you never have any mistrust of His goodness till He betrays your confidence in Him, you will never mistrust Him! Is it not a base thing, on our part to get down in the dumps so readily as we do and to fret and worry ourselves the moment a little cloud appears in the sky? Let it not be so with us! Let us who have believed enter into rest, as our Lord intended that we should. We shall just as assuredly wear the crown of final victory as we have fought and won our first battle, for the Grace that enables us to begin the conflict will never forsake us, but will help us to conclude the campaign, however long it may last! So let us raise our song of holy confidence and sing it all our journey through, for, perhaps, the sweetness of our notes of praise may be heard by others and may draw them, also, to go on pilgrimage with us, trusting in the Lord!

Last of all, what are some of you doing—you who never did trust in God? Well, you say you have got on so far, somehow. I cannot make out how you do it. If I had not a God to trust in, though I have many earthly comforts, I should be, of all men, most miserable, but I cannot understand how a suffering man with a large family, and small wages, manages to live without God! I cannot comprehend how a hard-working woman, with many children and, perhaps, a drunk for a husband, manages even to *exist* without trusting in God! Oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear! Why, your life is not worth five minutes' purchase! I would not like to give you even a bad farthing for it, you do seem to have such a wretched lot.

Then, some of you business people, with all your cares and worries and troubles—up early in the morning and working till late at night—what is it all for? Saving a little money. For whom are you saving it? Who will have it when you die? Somebody who will call you a fool for saving it, very likely! What are you other people living for? "Oh, we have our amusements!" Yes, yes, yes, I daresay, and wonderful stuff the amusements of the world are made of nowadays! Passing along the streets I sometimes hear one of the songs that are being sung and I cannot help feeling that the common songs that are sung in our streets would be a disgrace to apes if they were to sing them—they are meaningless and absurd, if not worse than that!

People sometimes ask me, "What sort of amusements would you have us go into?" I know they only do it for an excuse, so I answer, "You know

what you like." "Ah," says one, "but I am a Christian." Well, if you are a Christian, you will not care for the amusements of worldlings, you will count them as unclean and not fit for you. I always say, "Let the dogs have their biscuits and the cats their meat, and the hogs their slop—and let the worldling have his amusement—I don't want to rob him of it. It really is such poor, poor stuff that they must be poor, poor creatures who can make themselves happy on it." A bag of wind—that is all the world's amusement is!

When I hear how fashionable people spend an evening and go away saying how delighted they were, I think they must have been absent when brains were being distributed, or else they would say, "Dear me, this is a wretched way of wasting time! I cannot endure it." You have not anything, O you Worldlings, even you who dwell in palaces and ride in chariots! You who have great riches, you who have broad acres—you have not anything fit to feed a soul upon! It is all wind, chaff, husks such as the poor prodigal could not fill his belly with, yet you eat it. How is that? I do not understand you. I go back to what I said before. If I had all that my heart could wish for—I have that already, for I do not wish for anything more than I have in this world—but if I had all that my heart could wish for, supposing that it took to ambition and covetousness, yet should I be wretched without my God! I cannot live without Him! I would be like Noah's dove when it was flying over the wild waste of waters—I could not find a place where I could rest if I were to try to do so! I must go back to my Noah, to my Ark—there is no other place of rest for me.

Poor Soul, how is it that you think there is rest for you anywhere but in Christ? Come back, you with the weary wings, come back to God! Come back, you with the weary heart, come back to your Savior's bosom!

May God bless you all, 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.

GOOD CHEER FOR THE NEEDY
NO. 2878

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 16, 1876.

"For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."
Psalm 9:18.

These words will fall upon different ears with quite different effects. If any of you are, in the Scriptural sense, "poor and needy," God the Holy Spirit will enable you to see much in these gracious sentences, but if you fancy that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," you will care nothing whatever for such words as these. You know right well that the value of a text to any soul depends upon the condition of that soul. I know not how many stars may be visible at the present moment. I do not think that I even looked up at them before I came here and, perhaps, you have not. But to the mariner, who needs to know his position when far out upon the sea, even one lone star gleaming amid the clouds may be very precious. So, if you are among the poor and needy ones, the Light of God in this text will be most joyful to your heart! But if you are not among them, perhaps you will scarcely condescend to look up to see its light. When Richard I was shut up within the gloomy walls of a foreign prison, you remember that he heard a song sung by his faithful friend who was traversing all Europe, as a troubadour, to try to find him. There were many ears that heard that strain and, possibly, some of the listeners had noticed the sweetness of the music—yet there was nothing very special in it to them. But the imprisoned king, when he heard that song, could sing the refrain to it and, therefore, it had a peculiar value to him, for it re-opened his communion with the world outside and ultimately led to his release! So, it may be that my text has a refrain that you do not know, and if it is so, you will not care for it. But if your heart is very poor—if you are consciously very needy—if you are reduced to spiritual destitution, then these simple words, "The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever," will awake echoes in your soul which will be the means of bringing you great joy!

Here let me remark what a blessed thing it is to be poor in spirit and down among the lowly in heart. The best things come to those who are in such a condition! Up there, on the mountaintops, you are in a conspicuous but very cold position. If there are any storms about, they will be

sure to gather around the mountain's brow, but if there are brooks, they will be sure to flow down there in the quiet seclusion of the valley where the nourishing grass grows for the feeding of the sheep. He who dwells in the Valley of Humiliation lives in a place where he may delight himself with safety because he is certain, while he abides there, to give all the glory for his delight to his God. It is not a land that every man chooses—it lies too low for some men's tastes. There are those who love the high places of the earth where they can exalt themselves. But he who is wise will choose to be numbered among the hungry whom the Lord fills with good things and not among the rich whom He sends away empty. He will delight to be reckoned among those that are of low degree, whom God exalts, even the humble and the meek—and he will not wish to be gathered with the proud, against whom the Lord has registered His solemn declaration that He will stain the pride of their glory.

If you look at our text as it stands, it bears, first of all, the literal and natural meaning that God will take care of the poor and needy. As a general rule, they are forgotten. In the regulations of many kingdoms, no provision whatever has been made for the poor. Christianity has done much to cause modern governments to make some recognition of the rights of the poor and needy—and also to provide, to some extent, for them—yet this provision is often handed out to them with great coldness and sternness. Our poor laws are not, even with the best intentions, always administered justly. And there are lands where everything seems to be done to increase the riches of the rich and to make the poor still poorer. Well, it will not always be so! There are better days coming for you that are despised, poor and needy. You need not fight, strive and be envious and make discord—there is One in Heaven who is your Helper—and He is coming down to earth again! And when He comes, "He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The reign of Jesus Christ, though it may seem to be long in beginning, will assuredly come at the appointed time! And when it comes, then all tyranny and oppression and wrongdoing shall be speedily ended. "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." In His days shall no man be robbed of his rights—no man be down-trodden—no man be oppressed. Behold, the Lord has laid help upon One who is mighty! He has exalted One chosen out of the people! His coming is the world's hope! His appearing will be the signal for the world's deliverance from all that is opposed to Him and to His Gospel!

But I am going to take our text in a spiritual sense and refer it to those who are "poor and needy" in the Scriptural meaning of those words. This is a description that is very frequently applied to the people of God. They have been taught, by the Spirit of God, to realize their poverty. They know it and they confess it. They also feel that they have many needs—indeed, they seem to themselves to now have more needs than they ever had before! And were it not for the Infinite fullness which is treasured up in Christ, the very thought of their needs would crush them and drive

them to despair! "Poor and needy" is a fair and full description of all those who have been taught of the Lord to see themselves as they really are in His sight.

I want to give some good cheer to the poor and the needy, and my text seems to me to refer to three pairs of things which concern them. First, it speaks of *two bitter experiences which will come to an end.* Then, *two sad fears which are removed by the text.* And, thirdly, *two precious promises which are given to us in the text.*

I. First, there are TWO BITTER EXPERIENCES which many of God's people—no, *all* God's people have more or less had, especially if they happen to be poor and needy in temporal things as well as in spiritual.

The first bitter experience is that *they have been forgotten.* The text says, "The needy shall not always be forgotten," plainly implying that they *have* been forgotten—forgotten by those who used to know them, forgotten by those who fed at their table and who landed and flattered them in the days of their high estate. They do not know you now. You are the same, but your coat is different, your house is different, your purse is different and, therefore, though they loved you—oh, so fervently!—their love is now gone because the various adjuncts, which, after all, were the real ground of their love, have departed.

The leaves are withering, so the swallows, which gathered in the summer, are all gone before the winter comes. Many friends are of that sort—their friendship withers like the leaves of autumn and, like the swallows, they are gone to find other summers somewhere else! If you become prosperous, again, and get another summer, they will come back and seek to ingratiate themselves with you again. Like dogs, they will follow you as long as you have a bone to give them, but, unlike many dogs, they will not stay with you even when you have nothing to bestow upon them. If you are a poor man, who was once better off, you have passed through this bitter experience, I have no doubt, and have been forgotten because your circumstances have changed.

Possibly, you have been forgotten ever since you have been a Christian. While you were self-righteous, like other men, they knew and respected you. You helped to keep each other's self-righteousness up, just as tradesmen, with their accommodation bills, help to keep each other financially afloat. But you suddenly became poor in spirit—you began to see that you needed a better righteousness than your own. They called you melancholy and no wonder that they did, for you were, indeed, melancholy! You were very uncongenial company for them. You used to heave a deep sigh when they would rather have heard a noisy laugh and now that you have gone right over, as they say, to the Puritan Party, and left their merry-making, they have forgotten you—they do not know you—they look down upon you and despise you! They say, sometimes, "You are a canting hypocrite," and they have other equally pretty names that they apply to you. If they remember you, it is that they may scoff at you—but they say they have forgotten you and it is a great mercy if they have! And it will be another great mercy if you also forget them.

There is a message in the 45th Psalm which may be addressed to you—"Forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and worship you Him." You are to go outside the camp, bearing Christ's reproach, and to be forgotten by your former friends and acquaintances because of your religion. It will be a painful ordeal to you, but you may go through it without any very serious loss.

Possibly, too, dear Friends, you have often thought that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of God's people since you have come among them. You are so needy, perhaps in pocket, but certainly in spirit, that when arrangements have been made for the help and relief of others, you fancy that you have been overlooked. Do not be quite certain that it is so, for I have known some poor people who have been a little too sensitive on these points and have suspected unkindness when everything has been really planned for the best. Do not be ready to misjudge your fellow Christians if they are better off than you are. As it would be a sin, on their part, to be proud, it would be equally a sin, on your part, to be envious. It would be wrong for them to be unkind to you, but it would be just as wrong for you to be unkind to them by thinking that they are unkind when they are not. Still, I should not wonder if it does sometimes happen that you fancy yourself forgotten even in the arrangements that are made in connection with the House of God.

So, too, you may have had the experience of seeming to be forgotten in various regulations which are passed by your fellow Christians. For instance, someone has been declaring the proportion that every Christian should give to the cause of God out of his substance. It has been laid down by some, as a hard and fast rule, that nobody should give less than a tenth—a good rule, mark you, and a rule applicable to nearly everybody, but, sometimes there is a needy saint who says, "I could not spare a tenth from my poor pittance. I can scarcely spare a penny from the little that I have, so this rule presses hard upon me." Well, then, give what you feel to be right, and do not trouble yourself about the matter. When we speak to various classes, we cannot always mention the exceptions—you know that there are exceptions to all rules and we do not wish any rule to press hard upon anyone. The poor widow gave her two mites and so may you, but do not fret and worry, though I have no doubt it sometimes pains you when, in such utterances, you seem to be forgotten.

It is also very painful to a Christian who is poor and needy in spirit, when, in the preaching of the Gospel, there seems to be nothing for the poor lame sheep, for the halting, for those that are weak-kneed, for those who are ready to perish. I have heard sermons which have related to very glorious experiences in which I have taken some delight. But I have felt, all the while, "I wonder what the poor weaklings of the flock think of this, when they hear about this experience and are told that they can have it if they like, and that they *must* have it, or else they have no real saving faith at all?" At such a time, my mind always goes to those who can only touch the hem of the Savior's garment, or say to Him, "Lord, I believe;

help my unbelief." My witness is that some of the best children in the whole family of God never have the enjoyment of full assurance, but they are so careful, so watchful, so sensitive that their very sadness of heart drives them close to Christ. They seem to be so conscious of their own weakness and so afraid of sinning against God, that though in them there is not the perfect love that casts out fear—I wish it were—yet I would be the last to condemn them.

There is One who will not condemn them—even He who carries the lambs in His bosom and who is tender and full of pity to all the weak ones in His flock. We must mind, when we are preaching experience, that we do not so put the experience of the strong as to make it the standard for the weak. That is almost as wrong as to make the experience of the weak to be the standard of the strong, as some have done. The fact is, there is no experience that is a real standard of the Christian life except the experience of a change of heart and of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, dear Heart! I know what you mean when, after listening to a sermon, you have said, "Alas, I am forgotten! There seems nothing there for me. There are no crumbs for those who have lost their teeth and have only sore gums! There is no bread and milk for the children. It is all rounds of beef—strong meat for grown-up men, but, woe is me, there is nothing that I can eat." I should not wonder if that is what you have felt, but, if so, do not feel it any longer, "for the needy shall not always be forgotten."

And, perhaps, up till now, you have even experienced a forgetfulness on the part of Providence as you have understood the term. Others of your family have risen in the world, but you have not. Your friends have set up in business and have done well, but you have not. You have sought to obtain a competence, but you have not secured it yet. You wished, at any rate, to get out of financial trouble, but you are still in it and you are apt to fear that when the Lord distributes His favors, He forgets you—at least, as far as His Providential mercies are concerned. Well, now, let this fear be gone, I pray you! Let this bitter experience come to an end! Believe that you are not forgotten, after all, by Him who is in Heaven and who beholds all His people—and if you have experienced, in some measure, a sort of forgetfulness, real on the part of man, but never real on the part of God—believe that it will not last forever.

The second painful experience is that *you have been disappointed*, as well as fancied that you have been forgotten. Our text says, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever," which implies that it has sometimes perished.

Now, dear Friend, I know that if you are a Christian, you have had some of your expectations that have perished and a good many of them, too. Why, you expected, at one time, to find your own way to Heaven—you expected that your own righteousness would make you acceptable to God and that you could do everything that was necessary to gain His favor! That foolish expectation has perished forever, has it not? Your self-righteousness is such a mass of filthy rags that you never mean to try to

patch those old rags together and make them into a garment to wear in the sight of God.

Then, you thought that you might expect, when you believed in Jesus Christ, that you would have perfect peace directly. Yet, possibly, you did not have it. Believer as you were, you had to live by faith without much experience of inward joy. And you also expected that you would never be troubled any more with any sort of bitter experiences, certainly not with any sins. You had lost your burden at the foot of the Cross and you meant to go singing all the way to Heaven! In fact, you imagined that you were to ride there in a carriage—in a most luxurious and delightful style, having two heavens—one here—and another hereafter! That expectation has not been realized, has it? You have found that the way to Heaven is a rough road, that there are many hardships in the pilgrim's pathway and that there are giants to be fought and slain. Alas, also, there are sins within that have to be contended with from day to day.

Perhaps you had even entertained some very high expectations that you were going to be one of the brightest stars that ever shone among the spiritual constellations of God! Oh, what wonders you were going to do! You were going to be the leader among the people of God. There would be no diminution of zeal in you—no lack of life in you, no declension from Grace in you—no neglected prayer in you. You would be the very paragon of virtue! You would push the world before you and drag the Church behind you. I do not know how high your expectations soared, but I would not wonder if some of them have perished before now and you have come down to be, even in your own estimation, a very ordinary sort of person! In fact, you have continued to grow smaller and smaller ever since you have known Christ, till now you have come down to be nothing—and you are on the way to being less than nothing! And you will be wonderfully near the mark when you get down to that point.

How many human expectations turn out to be mere wind? As I studied my text, turning it over and over again, it occurred to me that the needy, the poor, are generally the people who have the greatest expectations. I have talked with many poor men and I have found, over and over again, that they have a great, great uncle somewhere or other, who may leave them a lot of money some day. Or else they think they are entitled to property somewhere, only the lawful owner keeps them out of it! They have proofs that there was someone in their family who left—well, I do not know whether it was some millions of money that now lie in the Bank of England and they are expecting to get it! Ah, he that butters his bread with such expectations will find it very dry. And he who waits till expectations of that kind are fulfilled will, I am afraid, find that he is waiting in vain. But poor people generally have plenty of expectations and, as a rule, those expectations come to an end. This is a part of the bitter experiences of life and always will be—so, let us bear it patiently, for our text assures us that our disappointment shall only be temporary.

II. Now, in the second place, there are TWO SAD FEARS WHICH THE TEXT REMOVES.

The first sad fear is that, perhaps, *we may be forever forgotten of God*. Oh, what, a sad day it would be for us if God should ever forget us! You remember what varied experiences David had. Once he wrote, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong: You did hide Your face, and I was troubled." At another time, he wrote, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Ah, that is how the greatest saints have to sometimes talk, but what a fall in the barometer that indicates! From being up there at, "set fair," it has gone down to, "much rain" and "storms." "Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." This fear will come to the child of God at certain times. It may take this shape, "What if God should forget me in my present trouble? None but He can get me out of it. I am so bowed down and distressed that without Divine Consolation I know that I shall surely sink in the deep waters! Yet the consolation does not come, the help I need does not arrive. I cannot see any way of escape and I am as much in perplexity, now, as I was six months ago. I have made it a matter of prayer and waiting on the Lord, but I sometimes fear that He has forgotten me. What shall I do if He never helps me? If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, I would long ago have sunk into despair—but what shall I do if He deserts me now? I can never escape out of this difficulty without Him."

Possibly the Believer is not so much in temporal trouble as burdened under a sense of sin. He used to feel joy and peace through believing in Christ, but he has wandered away from fellowship with his God and God is walking contrary to him because he is walking contrary to God. He is dwelling under his Father's frown—He is smarting under his Father's rod. Now he says within himself, "What will happen to me if He should never again give me the kiss of reconciliation?" He cries, "Deal mercifully with Your servant, O Lord, and restore unto me the joy of Your salvation!" Yet still he walks in darkness and sees no Light. He is under a cloud and his cry is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him whom my soul loves!" There comes to his heart the horrible fear that God has forsaken him. It is a horrible fear, but it is quite unfounded—there is no real reason for it. God cannot forget His chosen ones whom He has engraved upon the palms of His hands. And though a woman may forget her sucking child, God cannot forget any of His people, sorrowful or sinful though they may be.

Then, too, this thought will come—"I am sick. My health is failing. I have less strength every day and, soon I shall have to go through the cold river of death. And what if, then, I should be without my God? It will be hard to suffer and harder, still, to die—to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay and, as a disembodied spirit, to be launched into an unknown world. What if there should be no guardian angels around my dying bed and no Savior to receive my departing spirit? What if, after all, my hope should turn out to be a delusion, my faith a fiction and my experience a dream?" I do not wonder, when such thoughts as these cross

your minds, that you should feel distressed, as hundreds before you have been, "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But our text is a blessed cure for this sad fear—"For the needy shall not always be forgotten."

The other dreadful fear is, *lest, after all, your expectation should perish.* Your expectation, Beloved, is that since you have trusted in God, you shall never be confounded—and that because you have relied upon the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you shall be numbered with His saints in Glory everlasting. Yet, sometimes you sorrowfully say, "Shall I hold on to the end? Shall I be able to persevere? I am so weak, so unstable, so apt to slip and slide, that I fear what will happen to me. Will my hope endure to the end?" Then you look around and see the strong temptations that beset your path—you live, perhaps, where there are few Christians to help you and where everything seems to go against your progress in the Divine Life and you say, "I shall surely one day fall by the hand of the enemy. How can I hope to outlive these many perils and dangers?"

Possibly your constitutional temperament is a hindrance to you and you cry, "Woe is me, because I have such corruptions within—such a fierce temper—such a cold heart—such a stingy disposition. Can I ever, after all, be fashioned into the likeness of my Lord? Can such gritty granite as my soul is made of ever be melted down and run into the Divine Mold, or be turned like wax to the Divine Seal?" It does make you fear and tremble, especially when trials come, the likes of which you never saw before! And you say, "My expectation will perish. I thought that, by God's Grace, I should leap over a wall and break through a troop. I hoped that I should continue to trust in the Lord even though all creature aid should fail. But now I tremble and fear! I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me. What shall I do when I have to contend with horses and, above all, what shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?" Well, now, this is the sort of fear that arises in the hearts of God's children—yet that fear need not be entertained for a single moment! It is your duty and privilege to shut it out of your heart, for thus says the Lord, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."

III. Now I come to our third and last point—TWO PRECIOUS PROMISES ARE HERE GIVEN TO US.

The first is given to the needy and it declares that *they shall not always be forgotten.* Possibly some of you think that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of Providence. Listen, troubled one. If you can only wait with patience and stand still and see the salvation of God, you will find that the needy shall not always be forgotten. Have you ever noticed how a father carves for a large family. You do not expect him, at a single stroke, to carve enough to fill every plate, do you? There is a little child who is ill, so there must be a suitable portion sent away for that one. And, likely enough, that will be the first portion sent from the table. Then the father serves his other children according to a certain order which he has in his own mind and there must be some who come after the others. I have known carvers keep someone waiting till they have

reached the most juicy part of the meat—they only made him wait till they could give him something especially choice! So, if you are kept waiting for your portion, you will not lose anything by waiting a while. Patience is rewarded in due season. If ships are longer on their voyage, we expect them to bring home all the richer freight. If the trees are slower than usual, this year, in putting forth their buds—if the peach blossoms or the apricots are not visible as soon as in other seasons—let us hope that it will be all the better for the ultimate fruit-bearing of the trees. Be you content to come last rather than first, for sometimes last is best and, "there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Poor as you are, you shall not always be forgotten! There is a portion in reserve for you—even for you.

You shall not be forgotten at the Mercy Seat. You have been there many times without receiving an answer to your petitions. Perhaps, poor heavy Heart, you have prayed seven times and no reply has yet come. Possibly you have gone to your God as often as the poor widow went to the unjust judge and you have gone as importunately as she went. But so far there has been no sweet relief such as your soul longed for. Yet you shall not be always forgotten, so, continue in prayer! If the promise tarries, wait for it, for, in due season, the answer shall surely come.

You shall not always be forgotten in the Word. You have been reading it, yet no promise has seemed to comfort you. In fact, as you turn over the pages of your Bible, you find bitter things recorded there, as if they were written against you. But read on! Read on and one of these days you will come to a passage that will seem to leap up out of the Scriptures to meet you! It will woo you—the very sight of it will fascinate you and you will say, "The Lord has spoken this message to my soul—and I bless and praise His holy name!"

You shall not always be forgotten from the pulpit. Perhaps there is someone here who has long been listening to the Gospel and who sorrowfully says, "I find that others are comforted, but I am not. God seems to give a portion to all the rest of His people, but none to poor me. Alas, I come and I go, but it seems to be all in vain! I love to go where I see others getting a blessing, yet I find no comfort there for myself." Well, you shall not always be forgotten! God will bid His servant drop a handful on purpose for you. Perhaps this very text is a message to your heart just now!

You shall not always be forgotten at the Lord's Table. You have gone there hoping that He who often reveals Himself to His servants in the breaking of bread will be pleased to manifest Himself to you at His own Table. Yet you have not had a smile from Him. You have sat with others at the King's Table, but the King, Himself, did not seem to sit there with you. You ate the bread, but you did not spiritually feed upon His flesh. You drank the wine, but you did not spiritually drink His precious blood. Well, you shall not always be forgotten! If you are really trusting in Jesus, there are brighter days yet in store for you. The King shall yet bring

you into His banqueting house and His banner over you shall be Love and you shall see such changes that you shall sing—

"My mourning, He to dancing turns,
For sackcloth, joy He gives,
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,
But long Your favor lives."

And you shall not always be forgotten in the service that you are rendering unto God. You have not yet seen a soul converted through your instrumentality, but you shall not always be forgotten in that respect. And in the sufferings that you are called to bear for Christ's sake, you shall not always be forgotten. Patience will yet have her perfect work and the suffering will end when it has accomplished its purpose. You are persecuted and despised, perhaps, but you shall not always be forgotten. You shall yet learn the sweetness of being reproached for Christ's sake. You may seem to be forgotten for a little while, but you shall not really be so. God, the Holy Spirit, will not forget you—He will sustain, instruct, illuminate and console you. God the Son will not forget you. He paid too high a price for you to ever forget you. You are His bride! He loves you as He loves Himself. You are part and parcel of Himself, so He will never forget you. And God the Father will not forget you. You have been His from all eternity and He has "begotten you again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." You will die soon, but you will not be forgotten, for the holy angels will convoy you home to Heaven!

The rich man died and was buried with many waving plumes over his mourning coach. His will was read, his property was squabbled over and that was the end of him. Everybody soon forgot him. But the angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom! They had not forgotten Lazarus. The dogs had licked his sores, but the angels had loved him! The dunghill was his couch, but Abraham's bosom was his throne! If you are a Believer in Jesus, you are not forgotten up in Glory! Rowland Hill, when he was very old, used to like to go and see aged people when they were dying and he used to say to them, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to the three glorious Johns up there, and be sure to tell them that poor old Rowley hopes they have not forgotten him." There is no fear that they will forget any of you who are going there! There is a crown in Heaven which will fit nobody's head but yours and that crown must hang as a useless thing until you get there to wear it! There is a mansion in Glory that nobody but you can inhabit and you cannot suppose that it will be allowed to stand empty forever, can you? Oh, no! *You* must be there to occupy it and you may rest assured that He who is preparing the place for His people will bring His people to it, for He has not gone to Heaven to prepare a place for His people without resolving that His people shall not perish on the way there!

"The needy shall not always be forgotten." They will be especially remembered when Christ comes and He says to them, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." They will be remembered as they enter into the joy of their

Lord and then, throughout the eternal ages, they will never be forgotten of Him! They may well bear whatever comes upon them now in the anticipation of the Glory that is yet to be revealed!

The other promise in our text is that *"the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."* What is your expectation—you who have believed in Jesus, yet who feel very poor and needy? You have been expecting to get peace, have you not? You shall have it in due time. A friend said to me, quite recently, "Supposing a person has believed in Jesus, but does not feel immediate peace, what then? Is that person to believe that he is saved? What is his evidence that he is?" I replied, "God says that whoever believes in His Son is not condemned, so I need not ask to have peace within my soul in order to corroborate the declaration of God. I am bound to take the Truth of God as it stands and believe myself to be saved, whether I feel any peace or not. If I will do this, then I shall have the peace. But if I say that I will not believe myself saved till I feel peace, then I am not really believing God at all—I am asking Him to give me peace to corroborate His evidence, as if the evidence in the Word were not strong enough to satisfy me." Dear Friend, it may be that you have not yet enjoyed peace because your faith is not as simple and as clear as it should be. But if you are really poor and needy and cast yourself on the promises of God, you may depend upon it that the expectation that you have rightly founded upon the Gospel shall not be disappointed. You shall have peace! Yes, and you shall have perfect peace one day. "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

You are expecting, too, that you shall triumph over sin. God has promised that sin shall not have dominion over you. It may struggle very hard and, for a while, you may seem to be under its power. No, more—you may come under its power in a measure, but it never shall reign over you! Sin may, for a time, conquer a part of Mansoul, but it can never conquer the citadel of the heart! So rest assured of that. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," and you shall yet feel the power of holiness and the mighty work of the Eternal Spirit in your soul. "The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."

You have been expecting, too, to get out of trouble. Well, you shall get out of trouble. You have been expecting to see good come out of evil. Well, good will come out of evil. I cannot tell you when you shall be delivered, but delivered you shall be, for thus it is written, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." One of these days you will receive a warrant that will set you free from all trouble forever and ever! How soon it may come, I cannot tell, but, till it does, you may patiently wait and quietly hope for the salvation of God.

You have also been expecting to enjoy the full assurance of faith and your expectation, in that respect, shall not perish forever. The Lord will make your faith grow—every day's experience will help to establish it and even your difficulties and troubles will tend to strengthen it. If a boy is apprenticed to a blacksmith, I should not wonder if, for months, his arm

aches dreadfully through swinging the big hammer. But keep on, Boy, keep on! Your muscles will grow hard, your sinews will get braced and you will become strong just where you need to be strong. So, dear Friend, shall it be with your faith—you shall become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

You expected to have very special spiritual joys, did you not? You expected that your soul would be made like the chariots of Amminadib, did you not? You expected to be in such a condition that whether in the body or out of the body, you could not tell. Well, you shall realize all that in due season, for God will reveal it unto you when it seems good in His sight. As for myself—and I may also speak for all who love the Lord—I am expecting to be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory. I am expecting to be like He and to overcome and sit with Him upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with His Father upon His Throne.

And, Brothers and Sisters, if this is your expectation, it shall not perish forever, but it shall be blessedly realized. I have told you before some of the last words of my venerable grandfather, but I may venture to repeat them to you. One of my uncles said to him, "You know, Father, that hymn of Dr. Watts—

"'Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust.
If I am found in Jesus' hands,
My soul can never be lost'"?

"Ah, James!" he replied, "I do not like the metaphor that Dr. Watts uses there, 'Firm as the earth.' Why, the earth is sinking from under my feet! I need something much firmer than that. I like better what the Doctor says when he sings—

"'Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.'"

"That will do for me now, James," said the dying saint, "that is Divine Sovereignty. The Lord is King and, as surely as He is King and sits upon His Throne, so surely will He fulfill His promise to a poor feeble worm like I, so I shall behold His face with joy."

—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 WIDE-OPEN MOUTH FILLED
NO. 2879

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 1904.

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AT THE PASTOR'S COLLEGE CONFERENCE,
ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1876.

"I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt: open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."
Psalm 81:10.

You have, no doubt, met with various interpretations of this metaphor—"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." You will find that several expositors say that there is an allusion, here, to a custom which is said to have been observed by the late Shah of Persia, who, being greatly pleased with one of his courtiers, made him open his mouth and then began to fill it with diamonds, pearls, rubies and emeralds. I shall expect that, under such circumstances, the courtier would open his mouth very wide indeed!

Well, you may use that incident as an illustration, if you like and, certainly, the spiritual blessings which God gives to His children are far more precious than pearls, diamonds and rubies—and there is every inducement for you to open your mouth to receive such treasure as He is waiting and willing to give you! But I do not feel sure that the Holy Spirit intended the Psalmist to allude to any such custom as this. It is too expensive an operation to be very frequently performed and it strikes me that even such semi-maniacs as Shahs and Sultans usually are, would not be likely to often attempt such a feat as that. In default of a more suitable illustration, it might be used, but it does not appear to me to be in accordance with the chaste and natural tone of the Word of God.

Another illustration of the text may be found in a custom which is much more common in the East. At Oriental feasts, when the head of the household wishes to select the best part of the meat for an honored guest, he usually chooses the fattest portion he can find, as the Oriental mind conceives just what we would *not* conceive, namely, that a mass of fat, all dripping with grease, is the most delicious morsel that can possibly be given to a guest. So the host searches for the fattest piece of meat in the dish, takes it in his hand and puts it deliberately into the mouth of the principal guest, bidding him open his mouth wide that he may receive it. This seems a revolting practice to us, but it was evidently the custom then, as it still is in the East. Thus we have David saying, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall

praise you with joyful lips"—as if the lips sucked it with delight even while the fat was still upon them.

But I am inclined to look for quite another explanation of the text, though admitting that the second one is probably that upon which the Psalmist was thinking when he wrote these words. One springtime I discovered a bird's nest, in which there were a number of little birds. They were not fledged enough to fly and their judgments were not well developed and, therefore, they mistook me for their mother or father. I would not touch them, but I held my fingers over them and they opened their mouths wide—no, the little creatures seemed to me as if they were all mouth! I could not see any other part of their bodies—all seemed lost in one great vacuum. If you have ever seen the mother bird come to the nest with a worm in its mouth, you have noticed that, in an instant, all her little ones are up and eager to swallow that worm. She can only fill the mouth of one and she can scarcely do that, for, no sooner has it swallowed what she gives it than it begins to gape again!

So the parent birds have to keep flying very fast, all day long, collecting food for their family but, however many times they come, they never have to use the exhortation of our text! The little birds in their nests are far more sensible than we are. When God hovers over us with His widespread wings and covers us with His warm feathers, He has need to say to each one of us, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." But the little birds take good care, without any teaching, to open their mouths wide that their mothers may fill them. This illustration may occur again during the sermon, for, whether it is the one to which the Psalmist alludes, or not, it is a very useful one and is full of instruction. It also has the further advantage that it does not appertain to either the East or the West and, as this blessed Book is neither for East nor West, alone, but for both, I like to find an illustration which, in all times and in every clime, may open up the meaning of the Word. "Open your mouth," then, as a bird opens its mouth when the mother bird returns with its food, and He who, in the infinitude of His condescension, likens Himself to birds, says, "I will fill it."

Let us imitate the Inspired teachers in using things in Nature to illustrate the meaning of the messages they have to deliver. Look from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Preachers, through the long line of Prophets, to Evangelists and Apostles, and you will see that they did not utter the Truth of God with their eyes closed, but, with large sympathy, they looked abroad upon the whole range of creation, both animate and inanimate, and yoked every creature to the chariot of Truth, if, by any means, through the use of simile, metaphor and illustration, they might enable the Divine message to ride triumphantly into the hearts of the people!

If any of us are to succeed in teaching either few or many, we must imitate these masters of the art. God has given the preacher eyes as well as a tongue—yes, two eyes to one tongue—and he must take care to observe all that can be seen and to make abundant use of his observation.

Otherwise he will find his speech prove to be, as Shakespeare says, "stale, flat, and unprofitable." The true teacher should not seek to soar on the gaudy wings of brilliant oratory, pouring forth sonorous polished sentences in rhythmic harmony, but should endeavor to speak pointed Truths of God—things that will strike and stick—thoughts that will be remembered and recalled, again and again, when the hearer is far away from the place of worship where he listened to the preacher's words.

The text naturally divides itself into three parts. First, there is *the exhortation*—"Open your mouth wide." Secondly, there is *the promise*—"I will fill it." And thirdly, there is *the encouragement* contained in the name by which God speaks of Himself—"I am Jehovah your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."

I. First, then, Brothers, here is THE EXHORTATION—"Open your mouth wide."

What does that expression mean? Well, I should have to open my mouth very wide, indeed, if I were to explain all it means. You probably will know, by putting it in practice, better than by any explanation that I can give you, but, certainly, first of all, I should say that it *means that there should be a greater sense of your need.* The wide-open mouth means that you hunger. The little birds need no instruction in opening their mouths except the inward monitor. They feel a lack of food—they are growing, and growing fast, and feathers have to be made—and they need much food and those strong needs of theirs make them open their mouths by instinct, as we say. Brothers, if we had more sense of our need, prayer would be more of an instinct with us—we would pray because we could not help praying! We would pray, perhaps, less methodically, but we would pray, probably more truly, if we prayed because there were groans within us caused by intense pain and moaning that came out of inward agony and longings that came out of the consciousness of our dire necessities. Surely, this kind of opening of the mouth, by the sense of our need, ought to be easy to us, for our needs are very great. I must not say that they are infinite, for we are only finite beings, but they are so vast that only Infinity can ever supply them! What is there that you do *not* need, my Brother? Someone said in prayer, the other day, that we were "a bag of needs." That was a very accurate description. Are we all conscious of our many needs?

Dear Brother, are you growing conscious of your own power? If so, pray against it with all your might! A much better thing is to become conscious of your own *weakness.* You will not open your mouth wide if you do not realize how weak you are. If you feel that you are strong, you will cease to cry to God for strength. Are you getting proud of your experience of Divine things? Strive to hurl that pride down, for you will be no wiser than a wild ass's colt if you rely on your own experience. Do you feel that you have now attained to a very high degree of Grace? You have certainly not attained it if you think you have! If you are still conscious of your own shortcomings, you are probably far ahead of your own belief—

but if you are conscious of your attainments, you are far behind those attainments, rest assured of that.

I do solemnly believe, Brothers, that it is as good a test of a man's spiritual riches as can be found, namely, his own sense of his spiritual poverty. Oh, get less and less in your own esteem! Grow poorer and poorer, weaker and yet weaker—become, in yourselves, nothing and less than nothing! This is a grand way of opening the mouth because our needs, when they are truly felt, are really prayers, for prayers are merely the expression of the needs of our heart. And if, to the consciousness of our need, there is added the knowledge that God can supply that need, we have, at any rate, the basis of all true prayer. Oh, for a great sense of our spiritual poverty! Oh, for an awful vacuum within the soul, a consciousness most truly felt that there is room for God! Oh, for a deep chasm to yawn within one's nature, which only Christ, Himself, can fill!

The next way of opening the mouth will be *to increase the vehemence of desire*. How did the Psalmist do this? He said, "I opened my mouth and panted." This is what we need to do, to get such vehement desires after good things that we cannot take a negative answer to our petitions. We know that what we ask is for God's Glory and our own good and, therefore, we are not going to ask as men who may be put off, but our resolve is like that of Jacob at Jabbok—

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

We cry, with good John Newton—

"No—I must maintain my hold,
'Tis Your goodness makes me bold.
I can no denial take,
When I plead for Jesus' sake."

Those prayers speed best that are most full of holy vehemence. There is an evil kind of vehemence which we must get rid of. I am not sure that all the expressions we sometimes hear in prayer are right—there is no need for us to seem to fight with God at the Mercy Seat. I feel, sometimes, a sort of shivering when I hear Brothers make a great noise in prayer without any evidence of corresponding earnestness deep down in their soul. Yet I know that our Lord Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." If you want to have great things of God, you must want them terribly! You must get to want them more and more. Your sense of want must keep on growing. You know also that our Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst"—hunger is bad enough and thirst is awful, but hunger and thirst combined bring a man to the verge of death—yet Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for"—Christ's promise is parallel to the text before us—"they shall be filled." Get that blessed hunger and thirst, Brothers! When you cannot live without conversions, you shall have conversions! When you must have them, you shall have them! May the Lord drive that "must" into us all! May He urge us on with a passionate desire to resolve that we will know the reason why if souls are not converted to God!

Another way of opening the mouth is *to ask for greater capacity.* If you have ever fed a lot of little birds—no doubt my friend, Archibald Brown, has often done it—with pieces of egg. If you have some very small pieces, you drop them into the smaller mouths, but if you have a large piece of egg, where does it go? Into the biggest mouth you can find! You seem to feel, "That little bird cannot have a large piece because he has only a tiny mouth. But here is one whose mouth yawns like the crater of a small volcano!" So you drop into his mouth a larger piece and I have no doubt the mother birds exercise a good deal of discretion in feeding their young. They do not give the large worms to the little birds, but they drop the large ones into the large mouths and, in like manner, if we get large capacities, we shall receive large blessings.

What a wonderful difference there is in the capacity of different individuals! I have heard it said that a sinner sucks in happiness, such as it is, with the mouth of an insect, but that a Believer drinks in bliss with the mouth of an angel—and it is so. The stream of mercy seems to run right over some men because there is no place for it to run in. It runs into others in driblets because there is only a little hole into which it can drip. But when the mouth is opened wide to receive the blessing of the Lord, how capacious it is! I should like, spiritually, to have my mouth like that of Behemoth, of which the Lord said to Job, "he trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." Oh, for a mouth of such mighty capacity as to be capable of receiving a far greater blessing than we have ever yet received!

Dear Brothers, we are not straitened in God. If we are straitened at all, it is in ourselves. No wise man will try to put a gallon of any liquid into a quart pot. You cannot expect to put a bushel of anything into a peck measure. "Be you therefore enlarged," is still the message we need to hear—and one part of that enlargement must consist in the enlargement of the mouth in prayer and in holy vehemence! God grant to all of us far greater capacity! What little men we all are! We sometimes call one another great and perhaps fancy that we are. I wonder what our Heavenly Father thinks of us? We see our little children, one of them three years old and another only two, and another only a month or two—they think the baby is a very little thing and that they themselves are ever so big—and they talk of their big brother who is only four or five years old! It is very much like that with us! There is not much more difference between the greatest and the least of us than between those children. So, if we can, we must grow—grow at the mouth and grow all over. We need to have greater Grace given to us, but the Lord will not give us great blessings until we are able to bear them. You remember how He said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now"? And He might say to us, "I have yet many things to give to you, but you cannot bear them at present." If God were now to give to any man all the blessings that He means to bestow upon him in a few years' time, it would ruin him! When God has given us any success, it is a great addition to the mercy if He has first fitted us to bear it. Some of

us can recollect Brothers taken almost straight from the miners' pit and elevated suddenly into a position of great popularity with no training for the ministry—no persecution, no criticism from the public press and no unkind remarks from Christian men—and we remember with sorrow how they failed. So, if you, while you are young men, have to run the gauntlet of a good deal of trial, difficulty, opposition and failures, you ought to thank God for it! You are now being made ready to receive the blessing for which you were not fit before. The Lord is increasing your capacity and when the capacity is sufficient, He will fill it.

Next, dear Brothers, I feel that the text must mean *seek for greater blessings than any that you have yet received.* You have opened your mouth and you have received something. Possibly you think that you have received a great deal. But the Lord "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." I have heard people say in prayer, "You are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we *can* ask or think." Well, I suppose that is true, but that is not what Paul was Inspired to write. We can ask and can think a great deal, but Paul says that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we actually *do* ask or think! Well, then, as this is the case, will we not ask for greater things than we have ever asked for before? It is a singular fact that the certainty of obtaining is in proportion to the largeness of what you ask. Some men go to God and ask only for temporal favors and, possibly, they do not obtain them. He who would be content with this world will probably never get it—but he who craves spiritual good may ask with the absolute certainty of receiving it! Christ's promise is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If you ask only for temporal mercies and can be satisfied with them, you may get what you ask. There are gushing springs from which you might drink if you would, but the muddy waters of Sihor are evidently good enough for you.

But if you ask the Lord for *spiritual* blessings, He is sure to give them to you. It is more natural for God to give great things than little things—they are more in His line—more in His way. You know that certain men have certain ways. There are men whom you can get to do anything if it is in their way, but they will not act in another way. Well, now, the Lord's ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth! Yet David knew what God's ways were, for he said, "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways." One of the ways of God is to do great things for His people. Some of them sang, "The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad." So you are more sure of getting blessings from God if you ask Him for great things—therefore be sure to ask for very great things! When you do get to the Mercy Seat, do not begin asking for littles and go home with trifles, but ask for as big things as ever your soul can desire and as big things as the promises of God cover! There you have a task before you that will tax your greatest powers, but give your heart and soul to it and you will find it to be a very pleasant and profitable one!

Ask great things for yourselves, Brothers. Ask to know all the Truth of God. Ask to know the fullness of God. Ask to know the riches of His Grace. Ask to know "the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." And when you have asked for all that, ask for holiness—and do not ask for anything less than *perfect* holiness. Continue to open your mouth wide that every Grace may be given to you, adding "to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love." And do not rest satisfied until you have all these Christian virtues! You may also ask for joy and oh, what an ocean of bliss is before you in the joy of the Lord! In "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," what a wondrous depth of joy there is laid up in store for you! Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It may be the same with you—therefore ask for great things! Do not be satisfied with being little Christians—seek to come to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus! I will be thankful to get just inside the gate of Heaven, but if I can sing more sweetly and if I can have more fellowship with Christ nearer His Throne, why should I not get there? God grant that we may all have that high privilege!

Once more, I think that this exhortation, "Open your mouth wide," means *attempt great things for God* as well as ask great things from God. Brothers, go in for something great! Go in for saving one soul—that is something great. Go in for preaching the whole Truth of God—that is something great. Go in to be faithful to the teaching of the whole Word of God—that is something great. It is not sufficient if you have filled your own place—a good many of you have not done that yet—go in to preach the Gospel somewhere else as well. Open some other building for worship! Penetrate into some region where the Gospel is not yet known. I wish that our College would open its mouth so wide as to include the whole world in the sphere of its operations. Brother Wigstone tells us that if we open our mouth wide, we shall swallow up the whole of Spain and Portugal. Other Brothers want us to open our mouth wide enough to absorb France, Germany, Russia and all Europe! Some of our Brethren have gone to India—there is a mouthful for us! If we open our mouth wide, India may be evangelized—and China—and the new world of America and the far-distant world of Australia will feel the power of the Gospel that we take there in the name of the Lord! Let us pray, as David did long ago, that the whole earth may be filled with God's Glory! What is the whole earth, after all, compared with the greatness of God, and with the Infinite Sacrifice that Christ has offered? Well may the Lord say to each one of us, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

I like big prayers, Brothers. I have some regard for the memory of William Huntington, though I would be sorry to endorse all that he said and did. He was a man whose prayers God heard and answered, but what often were his prayers? I smile, sometimes, as I think of what he asked of God—"Lord, give me a new pair of leather breeches," or, "Give me a horse

and carriage"—and he got them. William Carey cried, "India for Christ," and his prayer has kept on ringing right down the ages! And the Church of God is still praying, "India for Christ," and that prayer will be heard and answered in God's good time. Little boats that carry small cargoes come quickly home, but the big ships that do business in great waters are much longer in reaching the home port. But they bring back much more precious loads! Huntington's prayer was the little boat that proved God's faithfulness, but Carey's prayer was the big ship which will come home as surely as the other one did!

So, "open your mouth wide," Brothers, and ask something that will be honoring to God to give. Did you ever think, dear Friends, how wonderful is the condescension of God in listening to the voice of a man? That He should hear our prayers at all shows that in His condescension He is as Infinite as He is in His Glory. Do you know, in your own soul, that God has ever heard your prayers? Then bless Him and love Him all your days. You know how the writer of the 116th Psalm put the matter—"I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." It is truly marvelous that though our prayer is so full of faults and has to do with such insignificant worms as we are, yet that the Lord hears us and grants our requests.

There are some who talk as if prayer was a meaningless form to us. "It is a beneficial thing, no doubt, for you to pray," they say. Surely, Sirs, you must be measuring our corn with your bushel if you imagine that we could do such an idiotic thing as pray to a god who cannot hear us! That is an employment only fit for imbeciles and if you tell us that no doubt it is a good thing for us to do, we reply that it would probably be a good thing for you to do it, for it could only be suitable to the imbecility which originated the charge brought against us! We assert and rejoice to assert that without working miracles, God still accomplishes His eternal purposes in answer to the supplications of His people. In earlier days He worked miracles for the deliverance of His servants. But today He does the same thing without the miraculous process and as manifestly grants the requests of His suppliants as if miracles were as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees in summer.

II. Now, secondly, we turn to THE PROMISE—"I will fill it."

Great asking seems to me to be on a scale proportionate to the great things that are according to the very Nature of God. I have never been able to believe in a little Hell because I cannot find, in the Bible, any trace of a little Heaven, or of a little Savior, or of a little sin, or of a little God. I believe in a theology that is drawn to scale. If it is on the scale of an inch all round, I can receive it, but if it is on the scale of a foot in one place, I think it should be on the same scale throughout. Look, Brothers, at the brightness of the Shekinah Glory shining above the Mercy Seat—and that Mercy Seat red with such blood as was never spilt but once! And the Eternal Spirit leading us up to that Mercy Seat—can we go there to ask for a mere trifle? That does not seem to me to be at all congruous.

Far more congruous does it seem that before the great God, with the great Mediator and the great Spirit helping our infirmities, we should open our mouth wide and expect God to fill it! O Brethren, we may be quite sure that in dealing with the Infinite Jehovah, if we can rise to His scale of things, He will fill our mouths when we open them!

It is hard work to fill a hungry mouth, for the food disappears down the throat in a moment. When once fed, it opens again and is as empty as it was before. But God has the way of filling mouths that makes them stay full. He gives us water to drink of so wondrous a kind that we do not thirst again! Jesus 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." And God says to each child of His, "'Open your mouth wide,' and though it seems to be like a horse-leech crying, 'Give, give,' 'I will fill it.' Though it seems as insatiable as the grave, 'I will fill it.'" The great God Himself says it and, therefore, it must be true. If He had not said it, I would not have believed it, but having said it, He can do what seems impossible to us—He can satisfy our most insatiable cravings and longings—and He bids us keep on longing and craving that He may keep on satisfying us again and again!

This promise is given by One who knows what we are going to ask. The Lord says, "Open your mouth wide," and He knows what we desire to receive from Him—and He has it all ready to give to us. Did you ever bring home a present for your children and ask them to wish for something, although they did not know that, all the while, it was in your pocket? You have brought them up to the point of asking for something that they need—then they go to bed and when they wake in the morning, they are surprised to see the very thing they longed for lying on their pillow! In a similar manner, our Heavenly Father gives additional sweetness to His mercies by tempting us to long for various things that He has all ready to give to us. He may well say, "Open your mouth wide," when He has so many good things ready to fill it!

What will He fill our mouths with? *Sometimes He will fill them with prayer.* Do you not find, at times, that you cannot pray? Never mind, Brother, if it is so with you—open your mouth wide, for He will fill it. He will fill your mouth with arguments. Kneel down and groan because you cannot pray, agonize because you cannot pray and the next day you will say, "I wish I felt as I did yesterday, for I never prayed with greater power than when I thought I was not praying at all." Open your mouth with a sense of need, a sense of desire. Open your mouth with the sensibility of insensibility. You can comprehend, by experience, the paradox that I cannot explain. God knows how to fill your mouth with prayer when you go to your pulpit. Perhaps before the time for the service came, you thought you could not pray or preach at all. You remember how the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Eat this roll and go speak unto the house of Israel," and the Prophet said, "So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll." You also may be able to do the same thing. Sitting in your study,

you may be anxious because you cannot get a subject to really lay hold of you. At any rate, Brother, open your mouth with desire, eagerness and longing as you sit there—and if the Lord sends a roll to you, and shows you how to eat it—when you go to talk to your people, you shall get that promise to Ezekiel fulfilled in your own experience, "I will open your mouth, and you shall say unto them, Thus says the Lord God." When you open your mouth in private and eat the roll that the Lord gives you, He will open your mouth in public and you shall tell the people the Truth of God upon which you have privately feasted.

Next, the lord *will fill our mouth with all manner of spiritual blessings*. David says that the Lord "satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Time fails me to attempt any list of proof texts upon this point. I can only say that when the Lord opens your mouth, you may be quite certain that anything He puts into it is wholesome and good even though, sometimes, it is not according to your own taste—though it will be if your spiritual palate is in a healthy condition. If your taste is out of order, even sweet things will seem bitter to you. If your heart is not right with God, you will ask for that which would injure you if He granted your request. When the Israelites craved for flesh in the wilderness, they made a terrible mistake. It will be far wiser for you, when you open your mouth in prayer, not so much to go into details as to say, "Lord, I am a mass of needs. I hardly know what they really are and what I think I need may be a mistake, but my mouth is open to receive whatever You see to be best for me." Then you may expect that He will fill it with all sorts of good things.

Further, *the Lord will fill your mouth with sacred joy*. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, His people said, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." It is a blessed mouthful when you get such an amazing mercy that you cannot understand it! Have you not, sometimes, received a mercy that has been like Isaac, the child of laughter? It has come to us as Isaac came to Abraham and we have heard the sound of the mercy and have laughed for very joy! God will also fill your mouth with His praise. That was a wise prayer of the Psalmist, "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day." What a blessed mouthful it would be to have your mouth so full of the praise of God that you could not help letting it run out!

III. Now I must close by noticing THE ENCOURAGEMENT. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Why? "Because I am Jehovah, your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."

Brother, *it is Jehovah who says to you, "Open your mouth wide*." It does not always do to open your mouth wide to man, but the Lord says to you, "I am Jehovah, your God; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." When you stand before men, ask little and expect less. But when you stand before God, ask much and expect more—and believe that He is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think! "I am Jehovah." That is a boundless name! We know that our asking can never exceed His benevolence or His might. We are asking of a King, yes,

of Him who is King of kings, so let us open our mouths wide as we approach Him. His very name prompts us to do so. Then He adds, "I am Jehovah, your God." So, will you not ask great things of the One who has given Himself to you? Is God, Himself, yours? Then, what is there that you may not ask of Him?

There is great force in Paul's argument, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" There is equal force in this other argument—As He spared not His own Deity, but freely gave Himself up to be the God of His chosen ones, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people," then He will not deny them anything that they ask of Him if it is really for their good. Indeed, all things are yours already! Since He is your God, you have only to ask Him to give you that which is your own by His own gracious Covenant. I should not feel afraid or ashamed to ask anyone to give me what really belonged to me, however big it was. And, in prayer, you have to ask from God what He has already given you in Christ Jesus, for "all things are yours," because "you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Then He adds, *"which brought you out of the land of Egypt."* Notice this argument, Brothers. Our own experience of deliverance from sin is a wonderful reason for asking great things of God. I speak with the utmost reverence, but it seems to me that God Himself cannot give me anything more than He has already given me in the unspeakable gift of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. His blessed Spirit has given unto us eternal life! All the embellishments and enrichments and sustenance of that life are not equal to the life itself. The life of God in the soul is the chief blessing—and that we have already received. Well, then, as God has given us life, surely He will give us all other great blessings that we need and will deny us nothing that is for His own Glory and our present and future good. Paul often uses this kind of argument. For instance, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The greater mercy having come, the lesser one will also surely come! So, ask God for large things, for you have already received larger things than you are ever likely to ask for! And so you may rest assured that you will receive, in the future, whatever God sees that you really need.

God said to His ancient people, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." Might they not well ask large things of that God who smote Pharaoh with all those terrible plagues? Might they not well ask great things of Him who darkened the sun at midday, who brought up the locusts till they covered the land, who made the very dust of Egypt to crawl with noxious life and who sent terrific hailstorms, with fire mingled with the hail? Who would not ask great things of such a great God as that? Then think of His slaying the firstborn of Egypt and dividing the sea, even the Red Sea, and leading all the hosts of Israel through the deep and through the wilderness. He that

could do all that, could, in His Infinite might, do all else that His people needed—so they might well ask great things at His hands!

Moses sang, on the borders of the Red Sea, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." The Israelites might well ask great things of Him who had overthrown all their adversaries! And you who have experienced such a marvelous deliverance by the blood of Jesus Christ, ought surely to be bold when you go to the Mercy Seat! The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was by blood. The paschal lamb was slain and its blood was sprinkled upon the houses of the Israelites. But you have not been redeemed with the blood of earthly lambs, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Can it be possible, after such a redemption, that anything that is needed to bring you into the promised land and to enrich you with all temporal and spiritual blessings should ever be withheld from you?

Let us, each one, go to the Mercy Seat with our mouths wide open and then let us go to our pulpits and preach with our mouths wide open, even as Paul wrote, "O you Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." Your mouths may well be open to your hearers because they have first been opened unto God!

I am thankful that throughout this Conference, I have seen no traces of doubt and no signs of despondency. Every Brother has seemed to have confidence in God and to have hope, like a bright light, guiding him on his way. I have no doubt that some of you will see "greater things than these" even here on earth, while others will see them from the heights of Heaven. As surely as we have the Gospel with us and the Holy Spirit with us—as surely as God has led us thus far through the wilderness, as surely as He keeps us knit together in love and unity—so surely will He lead us from strength to strength—and the Lord will be magnified in our mortal bodies whether by life or by death! And we shall, by His Grace, all appear before Him in Zion. God bless you, Brothers! 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.

NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE
NO. 2880

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1904.

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ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes,
I have loved you with an everlasting love:
therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."
Jeremiah 31:3.

IT is said that when the stars cannot be seen during the day from the ordinary level of the earth, if one should go down into a deep well, they would be visible at once and, certainly, it is a fact that many of the brightest of God's promises are usually seen by His children when they are passing through some of their darkest experiences. As surely as God puts them into the furnace of affliction and trial, He will *be with them* in the furnace. I do not read that Jacob ever saw the Angel of the Lord until that night when, by the brook Jabbok, "there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day," but then, the wrestling Jacob met the wrestling Angel foot to foot. I do not know that Joshua ever saw the "Captain of the Lord's host" until, outside the walls of Jericho, his Divine Leader appeared to him. I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord until, as a stranger in the plains of Mamre, He manifested Himself to His servant in the form of a traveler and His friends needing hospitality and refreshment.

It is in our most desperate straits that we often have our most joyous Revelations. John must go to "the isle that is called Patmos" before he could have the wondrous Revelation that was there given to him. It was only on that barren, storm-girt rock, shut out from the world's light, that he could find the fitting darkness in which to view the Glory of Heaven undistracted by the shadows of earth! The message of our text was given to Jeremiah in a time of deep distress—it was meant to be helpful to the Lord's people in their greatest desolations. That being the case, we may use it in a threefold manner and view it, first, as *an answer to many complaints.* Secondly, *as teaching some exceedingly valuable doctrines* and, thirdly, *as a stimulant to self-examination as to our state before God.*

I. First, then, our text may be viewed as AN ANSWER TO MANY COMPLAINTS.

If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the word, "saying," is in italics, showing that it is not in the original, but has been supplied by the translators. Sometimes they have inserted words which have really brought out the meaning more clearly—but, in this case, if I understand

the passage, they have rather obscured the sense. The fact is, the first sentence is a complaint on the part of Israel. In the previous verse, God had said, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest." "Ah," said Israel, "but that was centuries ago—'the Lord has appeared *of old* unto me.'" There was a note of complaint even in the expression of gratitude, as much as to say, "Times are changed, for the Lord does not appear unto me now." The complaint was that His choice Revelations and wondrous deliverances were all in the ages long ago. But the Lord's answer was, in effect, "It is true that these Revelations and deliverances were in the past, but they are designed to yield you present comfort, for they prove that I have loved you with an ancient love and, since I am Immutable, you may omit the word, *ancient*, and insert, *everlasting*—'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.'"

Then, to complete the answer, the Lord avers that even in Israel's present time of mourning He had manifested His loving kindness. He seems to say, "Is not that as much as I ever did? Talk of all the wonders that I worked in the days gone by, when I cut Rahab in pieces and wounded the dragon—*this* is a greater wonder, that I have drawn you with loving kindness! Say not that the former times were better than these. Say not that the wonder-working power of God is exhausted. I loved you of old, but I also love you today and I have proved it by drawing you with the bands of My love. This is as great a miracle, as high a privilege and as sure a sign of My love to you as anything I did in the olden days."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, is not this sometimes our complaint—that we read in the Bible of what God did of old, but we see nothing like that nowadays? Indeed, some people think that although there were wonders in those ancient times, the oracle has long ceased to speak. I daresay you have heard of the poor ignorant woman who, on being told by her minister about the crucifixion of Christ, said, "Well, well, Sir, if it was so, it happened a long while ago and a great way off—but let us hope the story is not true." I address some people, not quite so ignorant as that woman, who, nevertheless, when I preach about the wonders God has worked, say, "Well, Sir, those things happened long ago and a great way off—but it is not at all probable that God would do anything like that *now*." What? Do you think that His arm is waxed short, or that His hands have become powerless, so that He is not now able to help His people as He did in the ages gone by? This is the complaint of many! Perhaps they do not put it into words, but this is what they often say in their heart.

What is God's answer to this complaint? Let each Believer hear Him say, "I have done for you as great wonders as I ever did for Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. I have worked miracles for you as matchless as when I brought Israel up out of Egypt, or led the chosen nation through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. Did I bring them up out of Egypt? Have I not brought you up out of the dominion of sin? Did I break the power of Pharaoh? Have I not crushed the might of Satan? Did I divide the Red Sea for Israel to pass over? Have I not made a pathway for you, through

many a tumultuous sea, so that you have gone over dry shod? Did I feed the people with manna in the wilderness and have I not fed you—not with bread, alone, but also with the Words which have come forth out of My mouth? Did I cause Moses to lift up the bronze serpent, that they might be healed when they were bitten by the serpents? And have I not lifted up the Son of Man, that whoever looks unto Him may be cured of the serpent-bite of sin? Did I bring them into Canaan and give them rest? And have I not said to you, 'There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God'? Did I drive out the Canaanite before them and give them possession of the land? And have I not driven out your sins and will I not, by My Spirit, purify and cleanse your whole life? Did I give them Prophets after my own heart—and have I not given you shepherds who have fed you with knowledge and with understanding? Did I give to them, at last, King David to sit upon his throne—and have I not given to you great David's greater Son and Lord to be the King of your heart and to rule over your entire being? Did I give them Solomon, a temple and riches and glory? And have I not promised to you Heaven and greater riches, glories and splendors than anything I ever gave to him when he ruled over Israel?"

I feel sure that if you will carefully look into it, your own experience will prove to be far more wonderful than anything which God did of old, so that you will have no reason to say, "The Lord appeared of old unto our fathers, but He is not now with their children." We are apt, sometimes, to think that natural miracles are greater than spiritual ones—for instance, that the dividing of the Red Sea, as recorded in the Book of Exodus, is a greater miracle than the forgiving of sins, as recorded in the Gospels. But if you will weigh these two things in the balances of the sanctuary, you will at once see that the spiritual miracle is infinitely greater than the natural one. It is an easy thing to shut the mouths of ordinary lions, but it is a great deal more difficult to shut the mouth of the roaring lion of Hell who goes about seeking whom he may devour. It is a very simple matter for the Omnipotent God to make a world—He speaks and it is done! But to remake an innumerable company of His creatures who have become debased and spiritually dead—this is, indeed, a work only comparable to that which He accomplished when He "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant."

God made the world without any suffering, but He could not redeem even one soul without unknown agonies. At the close of the six days work of Creation, God could say of everything that He had made, that it was very good. But, on the Cross, the Savior could not say, "It is finished," until His very heart had been broken with anguish and reproach. God could rejoice over the works of His hands—and His delights could be with the sons of men, but, after man had fallen, God could not lift him up again without sighs, groans and bloody sweat—yes, death itself, the death of deaths—"the death of the Cross."

Therefore, let none of us, in these days, say that the former times were better than the present ones, or that God has ceased to perform His

mighty works. He has done as much for us as He ever did for our fathers—so let us praise and bless His holy name, and laud and magnify His deeds of Grace! We, as a church, perhaps, are apt to think that we must not expect great things from God in these times. Why not—I pray—why not? Did not God give tongues of fire and send His Apostles forth to preach the Word to the people of every clime under Heaven? And is it not a fact that, within a hundred years of Christ's death, His Gospel had been proclaimed through all the then known world? And is it not possible that from this time forth the Church of Christ may take great strides like a giant, instead of creeping like a snail? Why may not the army of the Cross march onward—

"From victory unto victory"—

instead of being so frequently repulsed? Is the Church of Christ always to be like a little stream in which you may see the pebbles lie? No! Let her be like Kishon, the mighty torrent that swept away the hosts of Sisera and Jabin, and let her carry off the legions of darkness into the depths of despair! Let God but arise in His might and wondrous works such as He did in the days of Huss, and Luther, and Calvin shall be done again! The thunder-claps of Whitefield and Wesley shall reverberate again! God can make all His ministers to be flames of fire if He so pleases. He can once more awaken His Church, scatter all her foes before her and enrich her with the spoils of the holy war!

We have not fallen upon evil days, Beloved. *We* may be feeble, but our God is not! The light may be dim just now, but the sun is not dim. What if the winds do not always blow with hurricane force? They are but slumbering for a while and will awake with all their known vigor and drive the chariots of the sky at resistless speed! What if the ocean should seem, just now, to be sleeping in its briny bed? Before long it will respond to the Psalmist's invitation, "Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof." If the stars should be, for a little while, hidden from your gaze, they will soon pierce through the darkness and, once again, shall you behold those eyes of Heaven peering down in mercy upon you! God can speedily renew to you all the manifestations of His Presence! Ebbs shall be followed by floods, winters by summers, and our present indications of a state of death shall give place to signs and tokens of a glorious life! Say not, complainingly, O Church of God, "The Lord has appeared of old unto me," but rather rejoice and revel in His comforting assurance, "Yes, I did appear of old unto you, for I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.'"

I have thus explained how I believe our text was intended to be used.

II. Now we will look at it as TEACHING SOME EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE DOCTRINES.

And, first, I believe that it teaches us *the Doctrine of Effectual Calling*—"With loving kindness have I drawn you." No one ever comes to the Lord unless the Lord, Himself, draws him. He cannot come and he will not come. Christ said to the murmuring Jews, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him." And to those who sought to kill Him because of His miracles on the Sabbath, He said, "You will not come to Me, that you might have life." That is the sternest blow against

free-will of which I know! What a free-willer can make out of that text, I cannot tell. He says that any man can come to Christ, yet Christ said to some, "You will not come to Me." And both observation and experience prove that this is still true. Never yet did a soul come to Christ till first Christ came to it. There are some who think that the Doctrine of Effectual Calling means that God forces men to repent and believe against their wills—a more absurd and unscriptural notion than that could hardly be mentioned! God does not drag men to Heaven by the hair of their heads! There is a wide difference between physical force and spiritual force. God does not save an unwilling man—He makes him willing in the day of His power.

We may not be able to explain all about this great mystery, yet we may firmly believe—in full accordance with the laws which regulate human minds and, without at all violating the free agency of His creatures—that God knows how to persuade men! Yes, and how sweetly to "compel them to come in," that His house may be filled! There is a sort of compulsion, you know, which one exercises by argument. The force of logic, or the spell of eloquence, we all acknowledge. In this way the understanding is overwhelmed. The mind, at first, resists, and says, "I will not do such-and-such," but you bring argument after argument to bear upon it until, at last, it yields and says, "I am compelled to do it." Yet it acts willingly, freely and not without pleasure. The understanding has been enlightened that acts upon the rest of the powers of the mind—and thus the man is influenced. We may even say compelled without any violation of the fact that he is free!

And so the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding by bringing the Truth of God to the mind and, through that Truth, leads the soul to see certain consequences that follow from it. Then the understanding, being enlightened, the soul, with full consent, comes to Christ. The Holy Spirit does what you and I cannot do, for He acts directly upon the will. We cannot do that except by physical force and, even then, the will is not really changed, for, if a man resolves that he will not do a certain thing but you afterwards compel him to do it, I question if his will is actually conquered. But the Holy Spirit knows how to apprehend "My Lord Will-Be-Will"—as Bunyan calls him—put him in irons and lead him away captive. There is still the will, but I can hardly say that it is put into fetters, for it was in fetters before! But it is as changed and assimilated to the will of God that it is really free in its love of holiness. It seemed to be free before, but it was a slave to evil passions. Free-will is a slave, by nature, but when Christ comes and, (as some would say), fetters it with the golden chains of love—then the will becomes free, indeed!

Thus I have shown you how the Holy Spirit acts upon the will. He can also act upon the heart which is, perhaps, an even more important part of the man. When a man truly loves any objective, he is always willing to do anything in furtherance of that objective. And so, when the Holy Spirit shows to the mind's eye the beauties of Christ, His sufficiency and adaptation to the needs of the soul, the heart begins to love Christ. Where the heart goes, the will must follow—especially if it is led by "My Lord Under-

standing, the Lord Mayor of Mansoul," according to Bunyan's *Holy War*. So, though no soul ever comes to Christ without being drawn to Him, yet let it always be understood that such drawing is in perfect accordance with the laws which govern human minds and that the Spirit of God thus acts without, in the least degree, violating the freedom which God has given to men!

The text says that God draws His people "with loving kindness." Yet it is quite certain that the Holy Spirit makes use of the Law of the Lord in drawing men to Christ and salvation. The thunders of the Law, the terrors of judgment, the stings of conscience and the pangs of death are all employed for this purpose—but they are all tempered and softened by the loving kindness of the Lord! In every instance you will find that it is His loving kindness that gives the finishing stroke—even with those who are driven to Christ by that stern teacher, the Law. The prodigal set out for his father's house from a sense of need, "but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." So that the last steps he took towards his father's house were taken with those kisses still warm upon his cheek and His father's welcome still music in his ears! Rightly do we sing—

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

And when that sense of blood-bought pardon comes to the heart, the Law's thunders are all hushed and the heart is won for God!

The Master came one night to the door of a man's heart and knocked on it with the mailed gloves of the Law upon His hands. The door creaked and shook, but it did not open, and the man put up against it all the furniture he could find, to keep it from opening, crying, all the while, "I will never be forced to yield." So the Master turned away for a time, but, by-and-by, He came back and, with His own soft hand, using mostly that part where the nail had penetrated, He knocked again, oh, so softly and tenderly! This time the door did not shake, but, strange to say, it opened and there, upon his knees, the once-unwilling host was found, waiting to welcome his Divine Guest! He said to Him, "Come in, come in! You have knocked in such a way that I can no longer resist You. I could not think of Your pierced hand leaving its bloody mark upon my door and then of Your going away homeless—Your head filled with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night. Come in, come in! You have won my heart and I yield to You, You blessed Lord and Savior!" It is so, I believe, in every case—loving kindness wins the day! What Moses could not do with his hammer, Christ does with His Cross. What Moses, with the two tablets of stone, could never do, Christ does with one touch of the finger of His mercy!

This is the Doctrine of Effectual Calling as I see it in the text. Do you all understand it experimentally? Can each one of you say with Dr. Doddridge—

"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine"?

If so, may He continue to draw you until, at last, He shall draw you from earth to Heaven and you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to go no more out forever!

I also see in the text *the Doctrine of Eternal Love*. Why has the Lord drawn His people to Himself? Because He loved them "with an everlasting love." To some good people, the word, "election," sounds almost like blasphemy. If "predestination" is mentioned, they think it is something dreadful! Yet that Doctrine is in the text and you cannot get the idea of "predestination" away from the word, "everlasting." The reason—and the *only* reason why any man is ever drawn out from the world and brought to Christ, is to be found in the eternal love of God! There is nothing more, naturally, in that man than in any other man. Indeed, in many cases he is worse than others. If salvation had been the reward of merit, he would have been left out. There is, by nature, nothing in man to win the heart of Christ. What form, what comeliness is there in human nature in His sight? Shall blackness win the heart of Him who is without blemish and without spot? Shall loathsome leprosy be attractive to the Divine Being? Shall deformity so charm the eyes of Jehovah that He shall love it? It cannot be! The *only* reason for God's love to us is that He *will* love us. From that fountain of His own dateless love springs our effectual calling and everything else that comes to us!

Let us pause awhile and meditate upon this everlasting love. Let every Believer in Jesus think upon it to his own comfort. There are many old things in the world—we like to see old castles, old abbeys and old ruins—but, long before those castles and abbeys were built, Christ Jesus had proved His love to us by redeeming us from our sins by shedding His precious blood for us on Calvary's Cross! We delight to travel in foreign countries and to see the remains of old Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt, or other wonders of the world. But long before any of those stupendous structures were piled, God had declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the old serpent's head! It is delightful to go back, in thought, to the time when the hills were born—when the hoary Alps were yet infants and when the aged ocean was but a baby, sporting in its newborn existence and clapping its hands in its early glee. But if you go back as far as that, you have not begun to get anywhere near the time when God, in covenant with Christ, gave to Him a people and promised that they should be His forever and ever!

Scientists love to go back to the most remote geological periods—to those ages before man was created—when those various deposits of shells, bones and other materials were made which are gradually being discovered. But you must go further back than that! Yes, you must go back beyond the very first creative act of God—and even then you will not have reached that period of which the Psalmist says, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." Fly back in imagination, if you can, to the time when the unnavigated ether had never been disturbed by the wing of cherub and when the song of the seraphim had never startled the silence of the infinite! Go back to the time when God dwelt alone and you have only *then* begun to approach

that mysterious eternity when God loved His people "with an everlasting love." This wondrous love, too, was from eternity fixed upon such a worm as I am—and such worms as you are, Beloved. What a marvel it is that the Eternal should ever have deigned to think upon me, or upon you, my Brother, my Sister! Try to grasp it, if you can—though it is one of those things which only "expressive silence" can set forth. "HE loved me—from *everlasting*!" Feed on this glorious Truth of God, O Christian, and remember that your being drawn to Christ is the effect of this eternal love and is, at the same time, the proof of it—the proof that you were upon God's heart long before He—

"Spread the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies!"

Read the text another way and it will teach us a third Doctrine. *The word, "everlasting," looks not only backward, but forward.* "I have loved you with an everlasting love." That is to say, "I have drawn you because I intend to save you to everlasting. I would not have called you by My Grace if I had meant to ever leave you to perish. I would not have begun the good work in your soul, by drawing you with loving kindness, if I had not intended to bring you to My Glory at the last." O beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, love without beginning is indeed sweet, but there is a still more luscious sweetness in love without end! It will do us good to dilate a little upon this wondrous Truth of God, nor shall we need to draw much upon our imagination in doing so. I can readily picture the time when this dark hair of mine shall be silvered over with gray and the sunlight of Heaven shall begin to whiten my brow. Yes, but God's promise is, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you." It needs no great stretch of the imagination to look forward to the time when the old man will have to lean upon his staff and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened and the grasshopper shall be a burden. Perhaps it will be the lot of some of us young people to grow old together—if so, may we grow ripe as we grow old! But if we are the Lord's people, we shall be able, each one, to say as infirmities increase upon us, "My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Then we look forward to that silent chamber where friends will stand by our bed and whisper, "He cannot last long now." Whether we shall hear them say it, or not, we cannot tell, but, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now the last moment comes. The death sweat is on our brow, the death rattle is in our throat, yet David's words are fulfilled in our experience—"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Now my soul has stretched her wings! She has left mortality behind, to—

"Soar through tracks unknown"—

but still she sings—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

In due time will come the great Day of Judgment, but—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Now the drama of Time is finished. Eternity has come and we shall be "forever with the Lord!" The sun has spent its fire, the moon has paled its feeble light, the elements have been burned up with fervent heat, the stars have shut their eyes in eternal blindness and the universe dissolves as the billow's foam sinks into the wave that bears it. But still, our Lord's words describe the joy of His people—"the righteous into life eternal." Oh, that precious everlasting love of God, always ours, because with loving kindness He has drawn us!

There is a thief over there who wants to steal away this Doctrine from me. He has been borrowing the old-fashioned burglarious instruments of dead men—the pick-locks of Arminius and the center-bits of Mr. Wesley—a good man, but one who was on a bad errand when he tried to take this choice and comfortable Doctrine from the children of God. Yet I do not care what any of them may say or do, "for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If we are in Christ, there is one thing which should make us feel very safe—if anything could ever divide us from the love of Christ, we would have been divided long ago. Suppose that our troubles could do it—then it would have been done long since, for we have had a sea full of them already! Yet, in six troubles the Lord has been with us and, in seven, He has not forsaken us!

Suppose that sin could do it—then, Brothers and Sisters, it would have been done in the first hour after our conversion. I must certainly make my sorrowful confession—

"If ever it could come to pass
That God's own child should fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day!"

If the Lord had ever meant us to fall into Hell, we would have gone there years ago.

"But," say some, "perhaps we may meet with strong temptations." Yes, probably we shall, but we shall never meet with a temptation stronger than the arm of God can enable us to overcome! Others say, "But perhaps we may backslide." Yes, I know we may. But if we do, the Lord will say to us, even then, "Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you." Yet others say, "But perhaps we may make the Lord angry with us." Yes, I know we may, but I also remember how He pleaded with those who did so in the olden day—"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. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man."

This is a question about which we need not dispute here, for I do not suppose that there is one member of this church who ever entertains a doubt about the truth of this Doctrine. We sing over and over again—

"Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is forever mine!"

And we delight to repeat that confident assurance of Toplady, whose own end was so joyous because of his enjoyment of this precious Truth of God—

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the Earnest is given!
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven."

III. I was to have concluded my discourse by considering our text as A STIMULANT TO SELF-EXAMINATION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD, but our time has gone, so I can only ask this all-important question—Brothers and Sisters, have you any part and lot in these things of which I have been speaking? Are you the objects of eternal love?

"That is just what I would like to know," says one, "can you tell me?" Well, I cannot climb to Heaven to read the roll of the redeemed, nor can I tell you of a way to go up Jacob's ladder to read it for yourself. But there is a way of knowing whether God loved you before He made the world—and whether He will love you after the world has ceased to be. It is this—has He drawn you with His loving kindness? Examine your hearts and see. Have you felt your need of Jesus? Has that need constrained you to pray to Him? Has that prayer been answered by your being enabled to put your trust in Him? Have you been drawn away from the confidence in which you once boasted? Have you been drawn away from the love of your old sin? Have you—to sum up all—been made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Then, never doubt your election and never doubt your glorification! "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

What are you doing, Mr. Unbelief? You are trying to separate glorification from calling, but you can never do it, for God has joined them together so securely that neither death nor Hell can break the bond that unites them! Remember—"whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." May we all be there, among the heavenly birds of paradise—

"And vie with Gabriel while He sings,
In notes almost Divine"

of love without beginning and of favor without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 60

The subject of this chapter is "The glory of the Church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction."

Verse 1. *Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.* The Church is like the moon which shines with borrowed light. When God shines upon the Church, then the Church shines by reflecting His light. The Glory of Jehovah is her glory. If that is withdrawn, she is dark, indeed, but when that shines into her and through her, then her brightness is great, indeed.

2, 3. *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise upon you and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.* There is nothing that breaks the darkness except the light from God's face. And when that falls upon the Church, then the Church straightway begins to shine in the midst of the darkness—and multitudes come to the light. Even the great ones of the earth, the kings, come to the brightness of her rising.

4. *Lift up your eyes round about, and see: they all gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.* There is no sign here of the Church of God being deserted. On the contrary, she shall become, through the Grace of God, the center of attraction! Men shall come from distant lands to her—however far removed they were, they shall still come—"your sons shall come from far." She shall also be increased by the accession of those near at hand—"and your daughters shall be nursed at your side."

5. *Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.* Oh that we might live to see this happy day when we shall feel a holy awe because of God's Glory as revealed in His Church! This fear is not a servile dread but a holy awe of God. And then the heart shall be enlarged—we shall deal with great things, wish for great things, attempt great things, do great things and see great things. "Your heart shall fear and be enlarged," for the sailor far away upon the sea and the whole strength of the Gentiles shall come to you.

6, 7. *The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory.* These people had mostly been followers of false prophets, but they, too, shall forsake their fanaticism and their bigotry and come to unite with the Church of God. Those least likely and furthest off from hope shall be brought in by the Sovereign Grace of God.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?* The Church is astonished! She asks, "Who can they be?"

9, 10. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto them for in My wrath I smote you, but in My*

favor have I had mercy on you. The Church of God is one continuously. At first it was a Jewish Church and it has never ceased to comprise within its bounds some members of the chosen race. But now, in these latter days, she has broken the narrow bonds of race and from Tarshish and the distant isles of the sea, multitudes are already coming to the Church of God—and they shall come much more numerously in the years that have not yet arrived.

11-14. *Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto you the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish, yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you.* Or, if they do not themselves come, their children shall; each generation shall include a remnant according to the election of Grace and, in due time, shall come the great ingathering.

14-22. *And as they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet, and they shall call you, The City of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breasts of kings: and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood, brass, and for stones iron: I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders, but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an Everlasting Light, and your God your Glory. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be your Everlasting Light and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.* "Amen! Amen!" So say we with all our 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.

FEEBLE FAITH APPEALING TO A STRONG SAVIOR
NO. 2881

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1876.

"And immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."
Mark 9:24.

THIS is the case of a man who knew well enough what he wanted and who was full of anxiety to obtain it. Indeed, he was so anxious to obtain it that he prayed most earnestly and most importunately for it. He prayed to the right Person, too, for, after having failed with the disciples, he resorted to their Master, Himself. Yet, not withstanding all this, at the time recorded in our text, he had not obtained the blessing that he sought.

We probably know of many persons who have not yet been awakened to a sense of their need—and much labor has to be expended by the faithful minister in order to show them their danger and to make them realize their true condition in the sight of God. They have many spiritual needs, but they do not know what those needs really are. This man had gone further than that, for he did know what was the great need of himself and his son. Then there are others who have head knowledge as to their spiritual needs, but they do not seem to be anxious to have those needs supplied. They are stolid, careless, immovable. That was not the case with this man. He knew that he needed his son to be healed. He was intensely eager that he should be healed, and healed then and there. His heart was moved with compassion for his child and he was most anxious that the evil spirit should be cast out of him at once. There are some of our hearers who seem to have desire of a certain kind, but they do not use that desire in the right way. They go about seeking salvation where it is not to be found. They are, to an extent, earnest in their own fashion, but to them the Lord might say, as of old, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?"

This man had gone a stage beyond that. He was directing all his entreaties to Jesus—he was appealing to the great Lord, Himself, from whom alone deliverance could come. It is a great mercy, my dear Friends, if you are brought as far as this poor man was—to know what you really need, to be anxious to obtain it—and to be making your appeal to Jesus to grant your requests. Yet, with all that, this man had not obtained the gift he was seeking. There are many like he who have not secured the blessing they are seeking. You are aware of your sin and you lament it,

yet you cannot get a sense of pardon. You know your spiritual needs and you bemoan them, but you cannot grasp that which supply them. You have made an appeal to God in Christ Jesus and you are resolved that you will never leave off so appealing—yet, for all that, you have not, thus far, received the blessing. There is something or other in the way—something that hinders you. And I should not wonder—no, I feel quite certain—that the thing which hinders some of you from getting what you seek from Christ is your own unbelief. That is the point at which I am going to aim in my discourse, as God shall help me. And I pray that as I do, from many a heart may be breathed this confession and cry, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

I. There are three things in our text. The first is THE SUSPECTED DIFFICULTY AND THE REAL DIFFICULTY.

Reading the story carefully, I gather that this man saw difficulties as to his child's cure, but that he never thought of the real one. *He fancied that the difficulty lay in the case of his child.* His words to Christ, "If You can do anything," seem to imply that he felt, "This is a case that is quite out of the ordinary run—something special and singular—and, therefore, beyond Your power." If I can interpret his thoughts, it is my opinion that he said to himself, "This is too mysterious a case to be cured. An evil spirit has struck my boy dumb, yet that same spirit makes him foam at the mouth and gnash with his teeth. Those very organs which refuse to utter articulate speech, are, nevertheless, strangely in motion. He seems to be taken, too, by this evil spirit at intervals, and hurried this way and that—he cannot tell how—and, at one time, he is hurled into the fire and, at another time, into the water. It is a most mysterious malady and, possibly, because it is so mysterious, it is not in the Messiah's line of things."

I have known some who have thought their case, spiritually, to be very mysterious. They have imagined that there was something about their constitution, or, still worse, that some extraordinary guilt had brought upon them a condition of heart that was peculiarly vicious. They have even fancied that this state of heart had put them beneath the ban of the unpardonable sin and that others had better beware of coming near them, for their condition was so strange, so singular, so wild, that they could not tell what to think or say of themselves. Sometimes they are hot and in the fire. But at other times, cold, and in the water—with no voice for praying or praising, yet able to curse and to blaspheme. "Ah," says such an one, "my case is so mysterious that even the Lord Jesus Christ will never be able to save me."

Very likely, too, the father thought that his child's disease was too violent to be cured. He was dashed about, here and there, and torn as though his poor body must be dissolved into the atoms of which it was made. He could not be held in or restrained—no government or control could be exercised over him, for the demon carried him, with an irresistible influence, wherever it pleased. The poor father could truly have said, "Look at him. I brought him into the Presence of Christ, Himself, and here he lays wallowing upon the ground, being torn in pieces by the demon! And now that the spasm is past, he lies there as if he were dead—and some say that he really is dead."

I should not wonder if I am addressing a man who thinks that the difficulty as to his salvation lies in the fact that his passions are so violent and so fierce. Possibly, he says, "I kept sober for months, but, all of a sudden, it seemed as if the drink demon overpowered me and I had an awful bout of drinking till delirium tremens was well-near upon me." "Ah," says another, "I struggled against a vicious habit which I had formed and I thought I had overcome it, but, alas, the next time the temptation came in my way, I did not seem to have any more power to resist it than a snowflake has to resist the wind that drives it along—and I was carried right away by the evil impulses. Some men have a peculiar bent towards evil because of their intense vehemence of character—it was so with Samson, though he had the saving Grace of faith. Such men are, perhaps, strongly developed in the sinews and muscles of their body, but, certainly, they are in the passions and impulses of their soul. You may bind them with fetters and chains, but the strongest bonds are only like the green ropes were to Samson. The devil that is in them seems to be absolutely supreme over them when he puts forth his power. I do not wonder, therefore, if they think that the difficulty, in their case, lies in the violence and suddenness of their sin. But it is not so.

Perhaps this poor father thought that in his child's case, the difficulty lay in the fact that he had been such a long time a sufferer, even from his childhood. In answer to Christ's question, "How long has this been happening to him?" he said, "From childhood." So a man sometimes says, "Sin is bred in my bones and it will come out in my flesh. My very nature is corrupt. While I was but a child, I loved sin, and since then, throughout my youth and manhood, I have gone after it greedily—and it has become a habit that is firmly fixed upon me. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' Then may he that is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." Such sinners feel as if they had been steeped and soaked in the crimson lye until there was no hope of ever getting the stain out of them. They have been wanderers from God even from their youth—how can they be brought near to Him?

Yet we know that the difficulty did not lie in the child's case at all, for Jesus Christ was able to cast the devil out and He did cast it out. And if that child had been possessed by a whole legion of devils, instead of only by one, Jesus Christ could, with a single word, have cast them all out! No matter how long the demon had been in possession of the child, nor how vehement and impetuous he might be, Christ could drive him out whenever He pleased. And at this moment, dear Friend, your past life, your sins, your natural corruptions, your inherited vices, your evil habits which have grown so strong upon you, are not the real difficulty. The Lord Jesus Christ "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." He, Himself, said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

So I care not how bad your case may be—it may even be worse than I should dare to guess—there may be a secret criminality about it that sets it altogether by itself as an unusual and even unique offense against God! But that is not the difficulty in the way of your salvation. Christ can easily write *"settled"* at the bottom of the long account of your sins—it is

no more trouble for Him to write that word at the foot of a long bill than a short one! God can as readily make you a new creature in Christ Jesus—whatever your sins may have been—as if you had been living a strictly moral life. You are spiritually dead in any case—and it is He alone who can give you life. You are lost in any case and the Good Shepherd can just as readily find the lost sheep that has gone far astray as another which is only just outside the fold, for He is Almighty and, therefore, able to do all things! So the difficulty does not lie there.

Perhaps, however—no, we know that it was so—*the father thought that the difficulty lay with Jesus Christ Himself*. He seemed to say, "I have done all I can for my child. I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him. And now I have brought him to You. *If You can*"—but he had hardly got those words out of his mouth before the Lord Jesus addressed him, in a peculiar Greek idiom, which cannot be fully translated into English, but which might run something like this—"The *if you can*"—that is exactly the Greek word—"the *if you can* believe, all things are possible to him that believes," as much as to say, "The *if you can* does not lie with Me. Oh, no! The *if you can* lies with you." He takes the man's words and hurls them back at him! I daresay the man may have thought, "If His disciples *cannot* cure my child, at all events their Master *does not*. He has seen how afflicted he is. If He could have done it, surely He would at once have said to my child, 'Be healed.' Yet there He is, standing still and talking to me, as if this were not a pressing case of urgent need! It must be lack of power on His part that keeps Him from curing my child." But Jesus Christ will not let such a thing as that be said without showing that it is not true! And, Brothers and Sisters, if you harbor in your heart any idea that there is a lack of power in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, you are believing a most atrocious lie and defaming the Almighty Savior! The difficulty, in your case, is not either in the sin or in the Savior. He is able to forgive the greatest conceivable transgressions of all who believe in Him and He is able to break and to renew the hardest heart, even though it should be hard as steel or like the nether millstone!

II. We have now to consider, in the second place, THE TEARFUL DISCOVERY—"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

What was his discovery? Why his discovery was *that he did not believe*—and that is where the real difficulty lay. When did the man make this discovery? When he began to believe! Is it not a very singular thing that as soon as ever he had a little faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he discovered the great abyss of his unbelief? "Lord," he said, "I believe, but, oh, I do also disbelieve so much that my unbelief seems to swallow up my belief!" Until a man receives faith, he may think that he has it—but when he has *real faith* in Jesus Christ, then he shudders as he thinks how long he has lived in unbelief—and realizes how much of unbelief is still mixed with his belief! There are many of you who have never believed to the saving of your souls, yet you say, "Oh, yes, we believe the Bible! We believe in God. We believe in Jesus Christ." You stand up in church and say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth," and so on, but you do not do anything of the sort! If you did, you

would be saved, since true belief in Jesus Christ brings salvation to everyone who so believes. While men have no faith—I repeat what I said just now—while men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief, but as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief! When the blind man gets a little light into his eyes, he perceives something of the blackness of the darkness in which he has been living—and so you must be able to say from your heart, "Lord, I believe," or else you will never be able to pray, as this man did, "help my unbelief." Even a small measure of faith is necessary to discover the great measure of the unbelief.

This man, *as soon as he discovered his unbelief, was distressed and alarmed at it*. He could not look straight at Christ and say, "Lord, I do disbelieve You, but I cannot help it." No, he was distressed about it. He felt how dreadful a thing it was to be unbelieving and he appealed to Christ, confessing his unbelief, saying, "Lord, help me out of it, I beseech You." Notice how he turned his whole attention to that one matter of *his own unbelief*—he did not even mention his poor child! His child was, no doubt, still in his thoughts, yet his prayer was not concerning his child, but concerning his own unbelief, for he saw *that was the difficulty* needing to be removed! And when God, in infinite mercy, visits a poor troubled heart and gives it even a little faith in Jesus Christ, its great distress is concerning its remaining unbelief, for it perceives that this is the greatest of all sins—the most terrible of all stumbling blocks—and it is, indeed, the chief hindrance to men's entrance into rest of heart and eternal life!

Now look, all of you who are seeking Christ, but who say that you cannot get peace. The difficulty lies here—if you can believe, all things are possible to you! But it is because you do *not* believe that you remain as you are.

Let me show you what it is that you do not believe. You say that Christ cannot save you. Then you believe that Omnipotence—you dare not say it is *not* Omnipotence—has for once met its match! Look that statement in the face—that the Eternal Son of God has a task set before Him which He cannot perform! In other words, you do not believe in the Omnipotence of God, for, if He is Omnipotent, He must be able to save you.

Next, Sinner, when you say, "Jesus cannot save me," you cast a slur upon His precious blood. You stand, in imagination, at the foot of His Cross, and you see Him bleeding away His very life—yet you say, "The merit of that blood is limited. I know it is, for it cannot atone for *my* sin." You are trampling upon the blood of the Son of God and counting it an unholy thing by declaring that your sin is more mighty than His Infinite Sacrifice!

Again, after shedding His blood for sinners, Christ went back into Heaven—and a great part of His occupation there is to make intercession for the transgressors. Yet you say that His intercession cannot be powerful enough to avail for you, although I have already reminded you that God has said, "Therefore He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." To say of yourself, "Christ cannot save me," or to say of any other

man, "He cannot save that man," is to insult His blood and to caste a slight upon His ever-living pleas! What greater crime can there be than thus to limit the Holy One of Israel—yes, to limit Him both when bleeding on the Cross and sitting on His throne? I charge you, Sirs, to feel the utmost horror at the very thought that you should have been guilty of such a crime against the Lord Jesus Christ! God has declared that "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." The Apostle John, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." If, then, you say, "But it cannot cleanse *me* from *my* sin," you call a lie the most solemn Revelations and pledges of the Divine Mercy! Do you mean to do that? Oh, how often shall we have to remind you that whether you mean to do so, or not, that is what you are doing? Remember how the loving John writes, "He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son."

In addition to insulting the Son as to the efficacy of His blood and insulting the Father concerning His veracity—bear with me, Sinner, in bringing these grave charges against you—and as God bears with you, you may well bear with me as I remind you of your sin! You also insult the Spirit of God by your unbelief, for you as good as say, "The Spirit of God cannot renew *my* heart. He cannot bring *me* to repentance, He cannot bring faith to *me*." Yet the Spirit, the Father and the Son, is, Himself God—Infinite and Almighty. It is a great sin for anyone to say, "The Spirit cannot regenerate me. There is no hope for me."

Is it possible that you, poor despairing Sinner, think that your despair proves that you are humble? It is not so. Despair is one of the proudest things in the world, for it even dares to tell the Almighty Spirit of God that He cannot—*He cannot*—save! I beseech you, do not say it! But if you have faith enough to believe that Jesus is Omnipotent and that there is unlimited value in His blood and His plea—that the Father is true and that His promises must be fulfilled and that the Spirit of God is able to work such a change in your heart that old things shall pass away and all things shall become new—then be alarmed to think that there should be any unbelief remaining in you, and cry out with tears, as this man did, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

III. Now comes our third point—THE INTELLIGENT APPEAL.

The man has seen where the difficulty lies. He has made a discovery as to his own unbelief and now he turns round to Jesus and he cries, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Kindly notice the wording of the man's prayer as recorded in the 22nd verse—"If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." See that word, "*help*." And, now, when he is convinced of his unbelief, look at his prayer: "Help my unbelief"—the same word that he had used before. In his first petition, looking at his poor child wallowing on the ground, he cried, "Help us!" But now he has been taught better and he says, in effect, "Lord, I see that it is easy work for You to cast a devil out, but the difficulty is that I am unbelieving, and that hinders You, Lord. Help me believe, for that is what is needed." I recommend some of you, instead of praying, "Lord, give me a sense of

pardoned sin. Give me a new heart. Give me to feel that You love me"—pray those prayers, by-and-by, but for the present, pray like this, "Lord, help me to believe. Lord, give me faith. Lord, drive away my unbelief." Direct your prayers to that *one point*—for that is the matter in which you are lacking. Unbelief is the great stone lying at the door of your heart and preventing that door from being opened!

Notice that *this man's prayer was intelligently addressed to One, who, he believed, could help him.* He seemed to say to himself, "If Christ can help my child to get well, then He can help me to believe." Believe that, Sinner, and ask Him to help you to believe! His prayer was addressed to One in whom he did believe, in a measure, for he would not have prayed to Christ to help his unbelief if he had not felt that Christ could do so. And he did say, "Lord, I believe." His was a strange mixture of belief and unbelief—and so are yours, my dear Friends—and I charge you, with the little faith you have, if you believe that Jesus can save other people, go to Him and beseech Him to cast out of you the unbelief which is still lurking within you! The chief reason why you have not peace with God—why you have not found the conscious enjoyment of eternal life—is that you lack faith! You need your unbelief to be cast out.

I am going to close my discourse by showing you that *there is nobody but the Lord Jesus Christ who can help us to get rid of unbelief* and by advising you to take your unbelief, and all your other sins, and confess them to Christ as *sins* and then ask Him to enable you to get rid of them. It ought to enable you to see how Jesus Christ does help you to get rid of unbelief if you consider His Nature. If you rightly understand that, it will be a deathblow to unbelief. Who and what is Jesus. You believe—I know you do—that He is "very God of very God"—that Jesus of Nazareth is "over all God, blessed forever." If you will only think of those two great facts, it will help you to believe in Him. Cannot you trust your soul in the hands of God? Is He not able to deliver you? Is He not able to pardon you? "The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" because He is God! If I had an angel sent to be my Savior, I dare not trust him. When any man says that he can forgive my sins, I will not trust him, for I know that he is a liar and a thief, trying to rob God of His prerogative. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, says that He can save me, I cannot find any reason why I should not believe Him—and I do not believe you can suggest any reason! Unbelief is a most unreasonable thing, but faith is most reasonable and right. As Christ is Divine, my natural inference is, "Then I will trust Him."

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ is Man as well as God—and such a Man as the world has never seen before or since. You have read the story of His life. Did you ever read of any other man so gentle, so tender, so true, so kind, so full of affection, so willing to live and die for others? What? Not trust *Him*? Oh, it seems to me as if I could not help trusting Him! Certainly, ever since I have known my blessed Lord and Savior, I have felt that I could say to Him, as David did, "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." Son of God and Son of Man, Your very Nature helps to banish our unbelief and, as soon as we rightly understand it, we feel that unbelief is an unnatural, illogical and wicked thing!

Think also, for a minute or two, of His great offices. Our Lord Jesus Christ has a thousand offices, but there is one upon which I especially love to dwell. He is a Savior—He "came into the world to save sinners." Many people imagine that they cannot be saved because they are sinners, *but that is the very reason why they can be saved.* You remember how Martin Luther put it? He said, "The devil came to me and he said, 'Martin Luther, you are a big sinner. You are so great a sinner that you cannot be saved.'" Luther replied, "I will tell you what I will do, Satan—I will cut off your head with your own sword, for I *am* a sinner—and I know that it is so. And since Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, I believe He came to save me—and I have trusted my soul to Him for time and eternity." A doctor does not come to heal those that are healthy—he naturally looks after the sick—and a Savior does not come to save those who need no saving! He comes to save sinners, so that your sinnership, instead of being a disqualification, is, to speak broadly, a qualification! Just as filth is a qualification for being washed—just as poverty is a qualification for receiving alms—just as sickness is a qualification for medicine, so your very sin and vileness are qualifications for Christ's work of Grace in you! I am using expressions that some will think strange, yet I am speaking, nevertheless, what is the absolute Truth of God. Does it not help to remove your unbelief to hear that Jesus is "mighty to save"?

Think, next, of the anguish which Christ endured when He offered Himself up as the great atoning Sacrifice for His people's sin. I have never been able, for a single instant, to believe in any limit to the value of the Atonement offered by Christ on Calvary. It does seem to me to verge upon blasphemy to suppose that if God, Himself, becomes Incarnate, and suffers, and bleeds, and dies, there can be anything less than infinite value in the Atonement that He offers. So then, Sinner, as it is infinite, it can cover your case! As it is without boundaries, there cannot be a boundary set to it as far as you are concerned! Look at Christ on the Cross and you will not dare to say, "He cannot save me." Know what He is and who He is—see how He suffers, how the Father smites Him and yet how the Father loves Him all the while—and you must say, "Christ's blood must have sufficient power in it to take away all the guilt of all who trust Him." It is so! Believe it and that will help to drive away your unbelief.

Remember, too, dear Friends, that when Christ died upon the Cross, He was not working out a trifling scheme of salvation. It was a sublime enterprise that took Him from His Throne in Heaven and brought Him down to the manger in Bethlehem. It was a God-like undertaking which made Him lay aside the scepter and bear to have great nails thrust through His hands. It was a great scheme and, therefore, it included great sin, great pardon and great salvation! So, if you are a great sinner, you match the general scale of the whole scheme—which is of such huge proportions that it can encompass even you!

Christ's design in dying, too, ought to help to kill your unbelief. Why did He die? Was it not that the Free Grace of God might have full swing and abundant scope? And will it not have full swing if you are saved and

is there not great scope for pardoning mercy in you? Remember, dear Friends, our Lord Jesus Christ never thought it was worth His while to come from Heaven to give glory to a man—He came from Heaven to bring glory to God by vindicating His justice and manifesting His mercy! Now, if such a sinner as you are—you who think yourself too bad to be saved—if you get saved, what a display of Divine Grace there will be in your case! A man said to me, some time ago, "If ever I get to Heaven, Sir, I believe they will carry me about the streets and exhibit me as a marvel of God's mercy." "Well, then," I replied, "they will have to carry me around as well." I suspect that every saved soul in Heaven is a great wonder and that Heaven is a vast museum of wonders of Grace and mercy—a palace of miracles in which everything will surprise everyone who gets there! It has been well said that there will be three surprises in Heaven—first, we shall not find some we thought we would meet there. Then, we shall find some we never thought would be there. But the greatest surprise of all will be to find ourselves there! I think it will be so—not that we shall be astonished at the fact when we remember God's promise and what He has done for us—but we shall be amazed when we remember what we used to be and what the Grace of God had to do for us to make us fit to be there. Well, if you are one of those who will be carried all around Heaven as a marvel of mercy, I believe you are the very person who is likely to get there—because God wants the angels and all the redeemed to see the wonders of His Grace displayed to us-ward who believe!

I close with this one thought. If, poor Soul, it is your lack of faith that stands in the way of the blessing coming to you, and if that lack of faith is infamous on your part since you call God a liar, I charge you to repent of it and to believe God here and now! If you still say, "I know not how to believe and I cannot trust," I dare not try to excuse you for saying so. Unbelief is the greatest of all crimes—I know of none to match it. But if you really want help in fighting against your unbelief, cannot you go to Christ for it? Even while you are thinking about Him, you will believe in Him! If you need to trust His blood, *think* of His blood. If you need to trust Him as a living, loving Savior, *think* of Him as a living, loving Savior. "Faith comes by hearing." When you are hearing about it, thinking about it, reading about it, the Holy Spirit will breed faith in your soul! Oh, do get faith, whatever else you do *not* get! May God enable you to exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ before you rise from your seat, lest, in this very building, you should stumble into death and into Hell!

Do I need to ask you, Sirs, a thousand times, to believe the Truth of God? Must I, over and over again, say to you as Jesus said to the Jews, "Because I tell you the truth, you believe me not"? If Christ is not worthy of being believed, then He is a liar. If Christ cannot be trusted, then He is wrongly named. Oh, do not drive us to the inference that you think thus of Him! Commit your soul into His hands this very moment and have done with it, once and for all, for His dear name's sake. Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:2-29

Verses 2-6. *And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter, and James, and John, and led them up into an high mountain apart by themselves and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceedingly white as snow, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were afraid.* Brothers and Sisters, like these disciples of our Lord, we are not yet fit to be favored with a sight of His Glory. As we now are, we could not bear it. As our poet says—

"At the too-transporting light,
Darkness rushes over my sight."

These three Apostles of Christ were too bewildered to know what to say. They were quite lost and, I suppose that if we could go to Heaven as we are, our bewilderment would even exceed our bliss! But we may rest assured that God will prepare us for that which He has prepared *for* us.

7, 8. *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man anymore, save Jesus only with themselves.* And although this was not so ravishing or so astonishing a sight, yet it was more encouraging to them—something which they could more easily bear with joy and peace—"they saw no man anymore, save Jesus only with themselves." May God grant to us, as long as we are here below, that if no Moses or Elijah shall ever come to visit us, at any rate Jesus may never be absent from us! May our fellowship with Him be unbroken!

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* These were Peter, and James, and John—the three most privileged disciples of Christ—probably the best scholars in that class which had the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, for its Teacher. Yet His plain language was without meaning to them—"questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." I wonder whether, when our Lord comes the second time, we shall discover that the prophecies concerning His advent were wonderfully clear, but that we could not understand them till He came. Plain as His teaching concerning His Resurrection was, His disciples could not understand it till that great event had really occurred!

11-13. *And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah verily comes first, and restores all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many thing, and be set at nothing. But I say unto you, that Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.* John the Baptist had come, in the spirit and power of Elijah, and had reconstituted matters and prepared the people for the advent of the Savior, whose herald he was.

14, 15. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* Some relics of the glory on the mountain still remained upon His face, and the people were astounded. So, though deeply interested in the battle which was proceeding between the scribes and the disciples, they left them and turned to look upon that mysterious radiance which hovered about His brow.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* The circumstances of the disciples resembled a battlefield on which the enemy was winning the day and the loyal troops were about to die defeated—when suddenly, the great Commander, Himself, appears for their relief. His Presence is worth more than a thousand battalions of men—and He charges at once upon the adversary and puts them to rout! "He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?"

17. *And one of the multitude answered.* One who had a peculiar reason for answering, just as, I trust there will be one in this multitude before me who will have a peculiar reason for listening to my message and a peculiar reason for remembering it after it is delivered—"One of the multitude answered." [Remember the Exposition was always *before* the sermon.]

17-19. *And said, Master, I have brought unto You my son who has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he convulses him: and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away. And I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me.* I suppose our Lord's rebuke was meant specially for His disciples. It was something like the speech of a schoolmaster who, having taught his pupils the same lesson a great many times, and labored hard with them, from year to year, yet finds them failing in the very elements of knowledge. Christ does not speak as if He were tired of *His* life and wished to get away from His disciples—but this is His way of saying how disappointed He is that these learners have learned so little.

"How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me." Those words struck my heart very forcibly as I read them—"How long shall I bear with you?" Does not the Lord Jesus Christ have to put up with a great deal from every one of us? I applied His words to myself and I thought I heard Him saying to me, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" Often, He must derive more pain than pleasure from communion with many of His people. How grieved He must often be to see their slowness to learn, their readiness to forget and the difficulty with which they can be brought to live the lessons which He so carefully imparts to them! Then note what His action is concerning the poor child—"Bring him unto Me."

20. *And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit convulsed him.* As soon as ever Christ looked at him, "the spirit convulsed him." One look from Christ awakes the devil! Sometimes sinners are worse, for a time, when Christ looks upon them.

The devil always has great wrath when he knows that his time is short. And he rages and convulses most violently when he is about to be ejected. The Jews have a proverb, "When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses appears," and we may make it into a Scriptural proverb, "When the devil's torment of the heart is doubled, then Jesus appears to cast him out."

20. *And he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.* And Jesus, instead of curing him at once, gave his first attention to the other patient before him, namely, the father of the child. He was suffering from an equally bad disease, though the symptoms were different—and Jesus meant to cure him as well as his boy!

21, 22. *And he asked his father, how long has this been happening to 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.* He put himself on a level with his child and that is the best way to pray for your children—"Have compassion on *us*, and help *us*." It will be compassion on *you* as well as upon your son, if the Lord saves him!

23. *Jesus said unto him.* Catching at his words, "If You can do anything"—

23-29. *If you can believe, all thing are possible to him that believes. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You deaf and dumb spirit, I charge you come out of him and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and convulsed him sorely and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. 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.* There are some things which we are not fit to do until we have drawn very near to God and have been deeply humbled and, with sincere repentance and the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, have been cleaned so as to receive so great a gift. Faith alone will not accomplish everything. Faith must be accompanied by prayer, and prayer must be, at least sometimes, in special cases, attended with fasting. The Lord makes reserves of His mercies which He does not give immediately. Even to the request of faith, He demands importunity on our part and heart-searching, and heart-cleansing before the blessing will be bestowed.

—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.

FORGIVENESS AND FEAR
NO. 2882

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 1876.

"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."
Psalm 130:4.

THIS is good news, indeed—the best of news—and they will prize it most who are like the Psalmist was when he wrote these words. And who are they?

First, they are those who are in soul-trouble—"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Some of you may, perhaps, think this subject is a very commonplace one, but the soul that is in deep spiritual trouble will not think so. Bread is a very commonplace thing, but it is very precious to starving men. Liberty is an everyday enjoyment to us, but it would be a great gift to those who are in slavery. O you who are in the depths of soul-trouble, like shipwrecked mariners who seem to be sinking in the trough of the sea, or being dragged down by a whirlpool—this text will bring sweet music to your ears! "There is forgiveness." There is forgiveness with God.

This good news will also have a peculiar sweetness to those who have begun to pray. Read the second verse—"Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Prayer makes men value spiritual blessings. They are asking for them. They are sincerely seeking them. They are knocking loudly at Mercy's gate in order to obtain them. And they who are in earnest in their prayers prove that they value the blessing they are seeking and they are delighted to hear that they are likely to secure it. Oh, that it might be said, for the first time, of someone here, "Behold, he prays." I am sure that such an one will be right glad to listen to even the simplest language that tells out these glad tidings—"There is forgiveness with God."

And if, to soul-trouble and earnest prayer, there should be added a very deep sense of sin amounting, even, to utter self-condemnation, then I am quite certain that there is no carol that will have sweeter music in it than my text has! Read the third verse and see if you can truly repeat it—"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Do you feel that your iniquities condemn you? Are you compelled to plead guilty before God? Well, then, though you cannot claim acquittal on the

ground that you have no sins, yet here is the blessed information that there is forgiveness for sinners! Stand in the dock where the guilty ought to stand and let the Judge condemn you. No, spare Him the trouble—condemn yourself and, when you have done so, and have also trusted the great Atonement made by His dear Son, He will say to you, "There is forgiveness. Be of good cheer—your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." I do not expect to say anything to delight deaf ears, but I do believe that the simple tidings I have to tell will have great weight with those who are in soul-trouble, with those who have begun to pray—and those who are self-condemned on account of sin.

I am going to take the text thus. First, here is *a most cheering announcement*—"There is forgiveness with You." Secondly, here is *a most admirable design*—"That You may be feared."

I. First, here is A MOST CHEERING ANNOUNCEMENT—"There is forgiveness with You."

This announcement has great force and value because *it is most certainly true*. When a man hears some news which pleases him, he loses that pleasure if he has reason to suspect that it is not true. The first questions you ask, when someone tells you of some good fortune that concerns you, are of this sort, "Are you quite sure it is so? Can you give me good authority for your assertion?"

Well, this news is certainly true, for *it is consistent with God's very Nature.* He is a gracious God. "He delights in mercy." Mercy was the last of His attributes that He was able to reveal. He could be great and good when the world was made, but He could not be merciful until sin had marred His perfect handiwork. There must be an offense committed before there can be mercy displayed towards the offender. Mercy, then, I may say, is God's Benjamin—His last-born, His favored one, the son of His right hand. I never read that He delights in power, or that He delights in justice, but I do read, "He delights in mercy." It is the attribute that is sweetest to Himself to exercise. When He goes forth to punish, as He must, His feet are, as it were, shod with iron—but when He comes to manifest His mercy, He rides, as David says, "upon the wings of the wind." He delights to be gracious and, therefore, I feel sure that there is forgiveness with Him.

We are even more sure that it is so when we remember that *God has given us the best pledge of forgiveness by giving us His dear Son.* He could not be merciful at the expense of His justice, for His Throne is established in righteousness and that righteousness requires that He should by no means spare the guilty. How, then, could He display His Grace and mercy and yet be the just God? He did it thus. The offended One took the nature and the place of the offenders and here, on this earth, Jesus of Nazareth, who was "very God of very God," suffered all that we had brought upon ourselves, that the Law of God might be honored by executing its full penalty and yet that the Free Grace and mighty mercy of God might be equally manifest. If any of you doubt whether

there is forgiveness with God, I pray you to stand on Calvary, in imagination, and to look into the wounds of Jesus. Gaze upon His nail-pierced hands and feet, His thorn-crowned brow, and look right into His heart where the soldier's spear was thrust—and blood and water flowed out for the double cleansing of all who trust Him. O Christ of God, it could not be that You should die and yet that sinners cannot be forgiven! It would be a monstrous thing that You should have bled to death and yet that no sinner should be saved by that death! It cannot be—there must be forgiveness—there is forgiveness since Jesus died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Moreover, *we have God's promise of forgiveness*, as well as the gift of His Son. His Word says, "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." It is declared by the Apostle John, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Many other passages in the Bible teach the same glorious Truth—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you." Time would fail me to mention all the Lord's promises of forgiveness, they are so many. And remember that it is the God who cannot lie who has given the promises, so you may be sure that they are all true and that there is forgiveness with Him!

We are certain, also, that there is forgiveness, *because there is a Gospel, and the very essence of the Gospel lies in the proclamation of the pardon of sin*. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." But no one can be saved without sin being pardoned—therefore, there is pardon for the sin of everyone who believes and is baptized according to the Gospel command. Christ's ministers may all go home, for their office is useless, if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may shut up all our houses of prayer, for it is a mockery to God and man to keep them open if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may abolish the Mercy Seat, itself, and burn this blessed Bible if there is no forgiveness of sins! What value can there be in the means of Grace—what can be the use or signification of any Gospel at all—if sin is not pardonable? But it can be pardoned! There is forgiveness. If you want evidence in confirmation of that declaration, there are hundreds of us who are prepared to prove that we have been forgiven—and there are hundreds of thousands, now alive, who know that their sins have been pardoned and that they have been absolved from all their guilt for Christ's sake! And there are millions of millions, beyond all count, before yon burning

Throne of God who continually praise Him who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood!

I bear my own personal testimony that I know there is forgiveness, for I have been forgiven. If it were the proper time to do so, I would ask all here who know that their sins have been forgiven, to stand up. If I did so, some of you would be astonished to see how great an army of men and women in this Tabernacle would declare that they, also, have been saved by Grace, and that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Unless we are all deceived—and we are not, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God within us that we are not—and unless all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, there is forgiveness with God! This fact should make us very joyous because it is so certain. There is no need to dispute it—I hope none of you will do so. If any of you doubt it, I beg you to come and test it and try it for yourselves and, with the blessing of God, you will say with the Psalmist, "There is forgiveness."

This fact gathers additional sweetness from another source, namely, that *the declaration is in the present tense.* "There is forgiveness." When? Now—at this moment there is forgiveness. Possibly you are 80 years of age, but there is forgiveness. Or you may be very young—a little boy or girl, but there is forgiveness for the young as well as for the old! You tell me that you have already rejected many invitations? Yes, but there is forgiveness. It is to be had now, blessed be God, for, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Believe right now in Jesus Christ, God's Son, and you have forgiveness *now*—in a moment! It takes no appreciable period of time for God to forgive sin. Swifter than the lightning flash is the glance from the eye of God that conveys peace and pardon to the soul that trusts in Jesus! You would need time to get a pardon signed and sealed by an earthly monarch, but time is out of the question with the God of Everlasting Love. A sigh, a groan, a genuine confession of sin, a believing glance of the eye to Christ on Calvary—and all is done—your sin has passed away, there is forgiveness and you have received it! Therefore, go and rejoice in it!

You must not forget to notice, however, that *this is a fact which refers to God Himself*—"There is forgiveness *with You*"—and with nobody else. I charge you to spurn, with the utmost indignation, the so-called "absolution" by a so-called "priest," whether of the Church of England or the Church of Rome! Such absolution as that is not worth the foul breath that utters it! I marvel, sometimes, how any man can ever, apparently, delude himself and try to deceive his sinful fellow creature by daring to say, "I forgive you your sins." I suppose it is use and habit that makes men do strange things at which an unsophisticated conscience shudders, but, to me, the blasphemer's coarse oath that makes my blood curdle as I go down the street has not half the iniquity in it of the man who deliberately puts on certain specified vestments, claims to be a priest of the Most High God, and then says to a sinner like himself, "I absolve

you." I think the time has come when all Christians ought, in every way they can, to shake themselves from these abominable priestcraft and lies altogether! The very dress we wear, the very position we occupy in the congregation, should be a protest against this wickedness in the sight of God—for wickedness it is, of the most extreme kind—though I believe the perpetrators of it do not always know what they do, so we may pray, "Father, forgive them and open their blind eyes."

Go, Sinner, straight to God for pardon, through Jesus Christ! But never, never, go to man! As to confessing your sins to a man—pouring the dirty sewage of your filthy nature into another man's ear and making that ear the common cesspool of the parish—oh, that is intolerable even to ordinary decency—and much more to the purity which the Grace of God suggests! Go to Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men! Go and kiss His pierced hands and feet, and confess your sin to Him who made the propitiation for it! But go nowhere else, I charge you, at your soul's peril—lest, like Judas, who first went and confessed to a priest and afterwards went out and hanged himself, you should be driven to despair and a similar awful suicide! O God, as "there is forgiveness with You," deliver Your poor fallen creatures from the further dreadful degradation of bowing themselves down before sinners like themselves, confessing their sins and seeking pardon where it cannot be found! There is forgiveness, but that forgiveness is only to be obtained from God, through Jesus Christ, His Son.

Notice, next, in the text, *the unlimited character of this forgiveness*—"There is forgiveness with You." You see, there is no word to limit it—it does not say that there is forgiveness only for a certain number—there is no such restriction as that. Nor does it say that there is forgiveness only for a certain sort of sin—there is no such limit as that. Nor is it said, "There is forgiveness up to a certain point, or forgiveness up to a certain date." No, but the declaration, "there is forgiveness with You," stands out in all its glorious fullness and simplicity, with no abridging or qualifying words whatever. Do not, poor Sinner, put a limit where God puts none, but build your hope of pardon and salvation on this declaration and go to God, through Jesus Christ, and you shall find that there is forgiveness for you—even for you, at this very hour! I pray that you may prove it to be so.

Let me also add that *the forgiveness which God gives to a sinner is complete*. He blots out all sin. It is also *sincere.* He really does forgive when He says that He does. It is lasting, too. God does not forgive us today and accuse us again tomorrow. No, let me give you a better word than lasting—God's forgiveness is *everlasting*. He who is once forgiven is forgiven to all eternity! Forgiveness is one of the gifts of God that are without change—He never gives it and then regrets that He has done so. If you get forgiveness from God, you have the first link in an endless chain of mercies. You shall become God's child—His beloved. He will teach you, care for you, keep you, sanctify you, bless you, perfect you

and, in due time, bring you to Heaven! Oh, the heap of blessedness which lie in this one gracious gift of God—the forgiveness of sins! I wish that, by any power of *mine*, I could induce all of you to seek this forgiveness. No, I retract that expression—I do not wish that any power of mine should do it, lest I should have the honor of it—but I do pray that *God's* power may do it for all of you—that you may be made conscious of sin, believe in Jesus Christ and so find that perfect pardon which God is waiting and willing to give to all who trust His Son!

II. Now I pass on to the second part of our subject which is A MOST ADMIRABLE DESIGN—There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." How does forgiveness cause men to fear God?

First, *it is clear that God's design in proclaiming forgiveness is the opposite of what some men have said and thought*. We have known many who have said, "There is forgiveness, so let us keep on sinning." Others, not quite so base, have said, "There is forgiveness, so we can have it whenever we please." Holding this idea, they have trifled with sin and they have delayed to seek forgiveness, drawing—oh, I am ashamed to say it of my fellow men!—drawing the infamous inference that, as God is merciful, they may live in sin as long as they like and then find mercy at the last! I would like any man who has adopted that strangely cruel and wicked way of dealing with God's mercy to look straight at it for a minute. I think that if I had a friend whom I had grieved and I knew that he was ready to forgive me, I would not, therefore, put off the reconciliation and so grieve him still more! I would be very base, indeed, if I acted like that! Or if I were a child and I had vexed my father, but he was very gentle and forgiving, I think that if I were to say, "It does not matter much—father will forgive me whenever I ask him, so I shall not ask him for months, or perhaps years." If I did talk so, it would be very base on my part. I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, not to talk so and not to act so. It is not fair and just treatment of our gracious God! It is not even worthy of man. Why, if even a beast is treated kindly, it will scarcely return a kick for kindness. Some perverse animals will do that, but most will generally, at length, yield to kindness. And the long-suffering of God ought much more to lead you to repentance and not induce you to continue in your sins.

This design of God is quite contrary to what some other men have said would naturally arise out of the Doctrine of Free and Full Forgiveness. So-called "priests" have said, "If men can have pardon by simply believing in Jesus, they will cast off all restraint, so, let us keep them under our thumb—tell them that there are certain 'sacraments' that they must attend and that they must look up to us and then we will get them into Purgatory. And then, when sufficient money is paid to us, we will get them out." But pardon—free pardon, perfect pardon, pardon given on the spot to simple faith—they tell us that this would tend to demoralize people! Well, that is a subject on which they can speak, for nobody has demoralized people more than so-called "priests" have done! But it is evi-

dent that God does not agree with them. It is written here, by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "There is forgiveness with You, *that You may be feared,"* so that, instead of destroying any man's fear, or reverence, or religion, the gift of a free pardon is to be the very means of producing such a condition of heart and life! Let us look at this point for a minute or two.

In the first place, *if there were no pardon, it is quite certain that nobody would fear God at all.* There is no forgiveness for the devil and all his legions—and there is not a devil that has any reverence or love or adoration for God. No, they abide in sullen despair. They know that there is no hope for them and, being shut up to despair because their sin is unpardonable, they rage and rave against the God of Heaven! You never read of a devil on his knees in prayer. Whoever heard of a devil saying, "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications"? And why do the devils not pray like that? Why, because, among other reasons, there is no forgiveness for devils and, therefore, none of the right kind of fear of God! They tremble, I grant you. They have a certain sort of dread and, without pardon, there may be a dread and horror of God. But that is not what our text means, for the fear of God, in Scripture, does not signify *dread*—it signifies true religion, holy reverence and awe—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." And, unless there is pardon of sin, it is clear that its absence drives the sinners to despair and prevents them from worshipping God.

Again, *if there were no pardon, there would be nobody to fear God,* for, Brothers and Sisters, if God had not had mercy upon us, He would long ago have swept us away! It is mercy—even if it is not *pardoning* mercy, it is mercy—which permits us to live! If God had no pardon for any of the whole human race, there would be no necessity for reprieving men at all—the tree of humanity would long since have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground.

Now turn to the positive side of this subject. When the Gospel is faithfully preached and attentively heard, the very hearing of it, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, *breeds faith in the soul,* for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But, Brothers, suppose we had no pardon to preach—would there be any faith? Could there be any faith then? Have you ever heard of a man who believed in an unpardoning god? Did anybody ever yet hear of a sinner believing in a god who manifests no mercy and bestows no forgiveness? Only the heathen trust to such gods, which are no gods! The very fact that pardon is proclaimed and carried to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces faith in the soul—and faith is the root and foundation of all true fear of God.

After faith comes *repentance,* or, rather, repentance is faith's twin brother and is born at the same time. Nobody ever repented until he heard of pardon. Let a man be certain that he cannot be pardoned and you may be quite sure that he will not repent. He may feel remorse. He may regret and lament his sin because of the penalty which follows it,

but that gentle softening of the soul which makes us hate sin because it is committed against such a good and gracious God is not possible until, first of all, the heart has believed that there is forgiveness with God. Evangelical repentance is one of the fruits of the Gospel of forgiveness and no other tree can produce it. So, you see, Beloved, that because there is forgiveness, men exercise faith and they also experience repentance—and these two Divine Graces are a very large part of what is meant by the Scriptural term, "the fear of the Lord."

It is also the good news of pardon that inclines the heart to *prayer*. You would never have heard of a man praying for mercy if there had been no mercy to be obtained! If Jesus had never died and the Gospel had never been sent into the world—if there had been no proclamation of pardon, it would never have been said of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prays." No, prayer arises in the soul as a result of the telling of the glad tidings that pardon is to be had. And prayer, like faith and repentance, is a large part of "the fear of the Lord." The man who truly prays is certainly one who fears God.

When a man really receives the pardon of all his sins, he is the man who fears the Lord. This is clearly the case, for pardon breeds *love* in the soul and the more a man is forgiven, the more he loves. Where great sin has been blotted out, there comes to be great love. Well, is not love the very core of the true fear of God? If a man really loves God, has he not discovered the very essence of true religion? But how could he love God if there was no pardon to be had?

Pardon also breeds *obedience*. A man says, "Have I been forgiven? Then I will seek to avoid all sin in the future. Out of love to God I will labor to do that which He bids me do." And, surely, obedience is a very large part of the fear of God.

And, oftentimes, this forgiving love of God breeds in the soul *deep devotion and intense consecration to Him*. There have lived and there are living now, men and women who have given their whole selves to Jesus, many of whom are laboring for Him even beyond their strength—yes, and many such men and women have died, for His sake, the most cruel deaths, without shrinking back or seeking to escape that terrible cross. Where came such a fear of God as that? Why, it could never have come into their hearts if they had not received the forgiveness of their sins for Christ's sake, but, having been forgiven, they came to love and fear—not with a servile fear, but with a holy awe—the Blessed One through whose precious blood they have been cleansed! Thus forgiveness of sin is essential to true fear of God—and wherever it is enjoyed, it is the main motive which moves them to fear God and brings them into that blessed condition. Is not that clear to all of you?

I finish my discourse by asking and trying to answer this question—*As there is forgiveness to be had, why should YOU not have it?* I may not be able to point "*you*" out, though, often, God does direct my finger, or eye, or word, to the very person for whom there is forgiveness. So I ask

again—As there is forgiveness to be had, why should *you* not have it? Young man under the gallery, why should you not have it? Young woman down in that area, why should *you* not have it? Suppose you should never get it? Suppose you should die without being forgiven? Oh, that would greatly aggravate all the ordinary pains of death! If you die unpardoned, your doom will be the more terrible because there is forgiveness with God, yet it is of no use to you!

One of my predecessors, Dr. Rippon, had considerable influence with the government of his day. Those were what some foolish people call, "the good old days," when they used to hang people on a Monday morning, as a regular thing, and take little notice of it. It so happened that one who was related to a former member of this church was condemned to die. It was believed that he was innocent, so there was much intercession offered on his behalf to the government—and a pardon was granted and signed by King George III. Very Providentially, it happened that one of the members of the church, going to the prison, said to the governor, "I hear that you have eight prisoners to hang tomorrow." He answered, "I have nine for tomorrow." "No," said the other, "there were nine, but one of them has been pardoned." "I know nothing about that," said the governor, "I have received no pardon and, unless I do receive one, I shall hang him tomorrow morning."

The news came to Dr. Rippon, and he took the post chaise [a closed, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage, formerly used to transport mail and passengers]—in those times, that was the only way of travelling—and rode down to Windsor. He went to the castle and, by dint of that modesty which is always becoming in a minister of the Gospel, if it is not carried too far, he pushed himself in and demanded to see the king! He managed, at last, to get to the ante-room, next to the one where His Majesty was sleeping. Hearing a noise, the king asked, "What is that?" His attendant answered, "Here is a Dr. Rippon who says he must see Your Majesty." "Show him in, then," he said, and Dr. Rippon saw the king in bed and said to him, "Your Majesty gave a pardon to such-and-such a man." "Yes, I know I did." "But they have not got it at the prison and the man is going to be hanged in the morning if I do not get back to London in time." So the king posted the good doctor back with another pardon—and the man was saved!

Suppose he had been hanged? What would his parents have said? Well, they might have said, "There was forgiveness, yet he was hanged." I think that would have been the bitterest ingredient in their grief—that they had obtained forgiveness for him and yet, after all, that he was hanged. Happily, it was not so, but, Sirs, as there is pardon to be had—if you will not ask for it—as there is pardon to be had by confessing your sin and believing in Jesus, yet you will not seek it—why, then, when you are lost, you will say to yourself, "Oh, what a fool I was! There was forgiveness, but I neglected to seek it! There was forgiveness, but I did not realize that I needed it, so I have perished by my own folly." I charge you,

men and women, to remember that if you are lost, your doom will be far more terrible than that of those who have never heard the Gospel because you have had the way of salvation plainly set before you and I have again exhorted you, as best I can, to walk in it! Oh, how I wish I could exhort you with more earnestness, and in more persuasive words, but, perhaps even then there would be an equal failure! I implore you, do not put eternal life away from you! Do not refuse the pardon that the Lord Jesus Christ presents to all who trust Him! Trust Him, I pray you, trust Him now! And the pardon shall be yours.

"But," says someone, "I am afraid of what I may do in the future. If I were forgiven now, I am afraid I should again act just as I have done before." Well, then, take the text as a whole—"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." If you receive the forgiveness of God, you will have the fear of God put into your heart at the same time, for this is a part of the ancient Covenant—"I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Poor Sinner, here is a wonder of Grace for you—the past forgiven and the future guaranteed by a wondrous miracle of mercy worked within your heart—making you a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Blessed Spirit, apply this message to the Lord's own chosen ones and save many precious souls through it, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 32; 130.

Psalm 32:1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* No man knows the blessedness of pardoned sin but the man who has felt the weight of guilt upon his conscience. If you have ever been burdened and crushed under a load of sin, it will be a joy worth more than ten thousand worlds for you to get the burden lifted from your shoulders! "Blessed"—blessed beyond description—"is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He has no need to dissemble, for his sin is forgiven. David had tried to tamper with his conscience after his great sin. He invented all sorts of excuses and schemes to try to hide his guilt, but when, at last, he was fully convinced of the awful sinfulness of his sin, and when God had put it away forever—then—when the guilt was gone, the guile went, too.

3, 4. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* As if he was parched and scorched with inward grief. The agony of his soul kept him from sleeping, prevented him from taking his necessary food and made him seem like a prematurely old man.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* O blessed termination of a terrible condition of heart! Confession pulled up the floodgates of his soul and God caused the black stream to flow away and disappear! Friend, are you trying to conceal any sin or to excuse yourself in any wrong course? Then your soul will fret and worry more and more. But make a clean breast of it before God—in the humblest and most honest language you can use—and then you shall receive the Lord's full and free forgiveness!

6. *For this shall everyone who is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* A man who can pray shall see even the ocean driven back, as Moses did! If you get near to God and stay near to Him, the floods of great waters shall never get near to you.

7. *You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* The world is full of music to the man to whom God has said, "I forgive you." Do not rest, dear Friend, till you really know that you are forgiven, for if you do, you will rest short of all true happiness. But if you have sought God's mercy and had your sin forgiven, you are already at the gates of Heaven!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide you with My eye.* When God forgives, He also sanctifies. When He has brought back the sheep that wandered off into the wrong road, He afterwards leads it in the right track. Notice how the Lord says, "I will guide you with My eye." A look from the Lord ought to be enough to guide us—we should not need a blow, nor even a word, but be ready to be directed by the very gentlest monition of God's gracious Spirit.

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.* Do not be difficult to manage. Be not hard-mouthed. Be ready to be guided by the eye of God. Be not like stubborn beasts that must be held in with bit and bridle—and that often need the whip, too.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* Wicked man, that is the portion that is to come to you—and it will surely come to you if you continue in your present evil course. This is the title deed of your future inheritance—do you like the prospect of such a possession as that? "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."

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, all you that are upright in heart.* Let your joy be demonstrative! Do not be ashamed to let others see how happy you are. The Lord has done great things for you—therefore, "be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." Be so jubilant that others shall be compelled to glorify God with you and to ask, "May not we also share this great blessing with you?"

Psalm 130:1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* "Sinking, sinking, sinking—drowning, dying—hope all but gone, almost everything gone—yet I have cried unto You with much fear and little hope. 'Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.'"

2, 3. *Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Judged by ourselves, on the ground of absolute justice, none of us can hope to stand before His Judgment Seat without being condemned. I trust that we all know and feel that this is true.

4, 5. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.* Never yet has any poor soul perished that could use such language as this! It may be a long while before you get the full comfort of all the Lord's promises, but you are sure to have it, sooner or later, if you can but hope "in His Word." Well did good John Newton sing—

"Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause His own!
The hope that's built upon His Word
Can never be overthrown!"

6-8. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities.* Children of God, plead that precious promise—"He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities." And never rest till you are fully freed from the bondage of sin, for God will work a perfect work in you and then He will take you Home to be with Him forevermore!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 556, 559.

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

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

PRISONERS DELIVERED
NO. 2883

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON, LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1876.

"As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you."
Zechariah 9:11, 12.

THIS text primarily relates to Israel—to the Jews—and there can be no doubt whatever that there are great blessings in store for God's ancient people. *Although blindness in part has happened unto Israel, yet, in due time, we know from the Word of God that the seed of Abraham will recognize our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah. When that happy day comes, the Lord will give to the whole world times of amazing blessing.* The fullness of the Gentiles also will then be experienced. Then, too, shall come the latter-day glory of Jerusalem and all nations shall rejoice with her.

You notice that the text begins with the words, "As for you also," which might be translated so as to run parallel with that pathetic exclamation of our Savior when He wept over Jerusalem and said, "If you had known, *even you*, at least in this, your day, the things which belong unto your peace: but now they are hid from your eyes." The Hebrew of our text might be rendered, "As for you, *even you*," and the meaning of the expression is, "There is some very special blessing for you, O Jerusalem! It is not for the heathen, but, as for you, O Zion—you seed of Abraham according to the flesh—there is something special in store for you." I think we ought to pray for the Jews more often than we do, and to look more hopefully upon the Jews than we usually do—and not to speak of them as an unbelieving race. The fact is, they have been, in some respects, too believing, for they have blindly clung to the old faith of their fathers instead of going on to know the Lord Jesus Christ. When they do accept Him, that firm adherence which they have shown to the traditions of their sires will make them grandly strong in faith in the only true Messiah. I suppose, however, that we have no Jews with us here, so it is no use, just now, for me to address them. But I may use the text as a message to ourselves. While I do so, may the Holy Spirit bless it to us all! When we read in the Scriptures concerning Israel, we may fairly translate it to mean, spiritually, the Church of God, for, as all who believe are the children of believing Abraham, so all who have been born-again, by the

power of the Holy Spirit, belong to the chosen Seed and may be rightly called, "Israel." In this spiritual sense, how sweetly has our text been fulfilled in the experience of many of us who are the true Israel of God, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Sarah acknowledge us not!

What a wonderful history "the Church of the living God" has had! She has been, so Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." I have sometimes seen, in Scotland, what they call vitrified forts which have, evidently, passed through the fire to such an extent that the whole of the wall has become vitrified into one firmly united mass—and the Church of God seems to me to have been like those vitrified forts, for the fire has been concentrated upon her seven times hotter than anywhere else. Yet to this day the Church of Christ still firmly stands! The Truth of God is still to the front and the name of Jesus is still—

"High over all,
In Hell, or earth, or sky
Angels and men before it fall—
And devils fear and fly."

So shall it be even to the end!

The 48th Psalm reminds us of the glory of the ancient "city of the great King," and of the terror that fell upon her adversaries—"For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled and hastened away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." So shall it be with the present race of skeptics and rejecters of Christ! Hundreds of generations of skeptics have come and gone like the sere leaves of autumn. They were fresh and green for a little while and then they professed to be a shade to the Church with their philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world—but not after Christ. And before long they withered, fell and rotted into the soil from which they sprang. Yet still the Truth of God abides and "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," still stands fast, awaiting the grand consummation when the topstone shall be placed upon the glorious temple amid shouts of "Grace, Grace unto it."

Looking into this passage, we notice, first, that *there are some prisoners mentioned and they are said to be in a terrible plight*. Then, in the second place, *there is an emancipation spoken of and the cause of that emancipation is mentioned*.

I. First, THERE ARE SOME PRISONERS MENTIONED AND THEY ARE SAID TO BE IN A TERRIBLE PLIGHT. We need not look long to find those prisoners, for some of them are here in our midst—and there are others here who were once imprisoned thus—but they have been set free.

These prisoners are said to be *in a pit*. It was a common custom and still is, in the East, not to go to the expense of building prisons, but to make use of dry wells—and the authorities were not always very particular in seeing that they were dry. They just let the prisoner down by a rope, which they pulled up, leaving him in what was, usually, a very secure prison, indeed. No trouble was taken to fit up a proper cell. No

money was expended upon ventilation, or anything of the kind. The pit was usually deep and dark—and a great stone was rolled over the mouth of it—and there the prisoner was left, in solitary confinement, often to die of hunger and thirst. If anyone thought or cared to bring him bread and water, it was well for him, but, in many cases, the prisoners were forgotten and nobody ever heard of them anymore. In fact, they were buried alive—and that was, spiritually, our condition when we were in the pit where there is no water.

I look back, 20 years or so, ago, and see myself, as I then was, in that horrible pit—consciously in that pit. We were all there by nature, but we did not know it. But, at the time I am recalling, I *did* know it. The Lord had opened my eyes and led me to see that I was in a deep, waterless pit by reason of the original sin in the fall of Adam. I saw that I was cast down into a deep pit from which I could not get out by my own exertions—with a nature averse to everything that was good—with a will that was strong for evil, but impotent for good—with a judgment that was out of gear—a taste that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—a heart that had turned aside unto idols—with everything about me as wrong as wrong could be! I distinctly remember that I did not trouble so much about the original sin through the Fall as I did about my own actual sins and transgressions. Oh, those dreadful walls of guilt that rose up all around me! Dense was the darkness in which I was enveloped and the few gleams of light that ever pierced that darkness only made me see more clearly the huge black walls of my old sins—my youthful sins, not forgotten to this day, but remembered with deep regret—sins of thought, sins of imagination, sins of word, such sins as I was capable of committing at that period of my life. Well do I remember that pit of actual sin. Perhaps some of you are in it at this moment. It is a horrible pit for anyone to be in and it is peculiarly so to some men. If a man has lived for many years in sin, but only in his later life—perhaps when verging on old age—has begun to get enough of the Light of God to show him what he really is in God's sight, it is an awful thing for him to wake up and find himself in the pit of condemnation as the result of both original and actual sin!

There was a man, once, who lay asleep and, as he slept, he dreamt that he was in a gorgeous palace with marble halls and gold and gems in the utmost profusion. But, as a matter of fact, he was all the while asleep in a loathsome hole where everything was polluted and foul. When he awoke, the gilded walls had all gone and the marble halls had all vanished—and, realizing where he was, the fleeting pleasure of his dream was changed to the abiding misery of the actual facts of his sorrowful experience! Possibly I am addressing some who have just awakened out of their life's dream and have discovered where they are—where they are by nature and where they are by practice, too—down, down, down in a deep pit where there is no water! For, be it known to you that whenever a man finds himself lost by nature, and by practice, too, he very soon finds that he is also lost by the just condemnation of God—for the thrice-holy Jeho-

vah cannot look upon a polluted heart without abhorrence! It is not possible for Him to see sin without being angry. Some people, in these degenerate days, have invented for themselves a god who equally loves all men whatever their characters may be—who looks upon loathsome imaginations and filthy thoughts with an altogether indifferent eye—and still goes on to bless, let men do what they may. But such a god as that is not the God revealed to us in this old-fashioned Book! Nor is he my father's God, nor mine, nor yours! Indeed, he is like the idols that are no gods at all! No, where there is sin, justice demands that there should be condemnation—and it also requires that there should be punishment as well. So this is the dreadful thing about our condition by nature—that when we were held in the bonds of sin, we were also condemned and lay in the condemned cell, only awaiting the hour of execution. That was our condition, *spiritually*—like prisoners in a pit.

We are also told, in our text, *there was no water*. Now, generally, in a pit, you do find some water—it drops from the clouds, if it comes from nowhere else. When Jeremiah was let down, with cords, into the dungeon of Malchiah, we read that, "in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sank in the mire." It is only natural that in deep holes sunk in the earth, the water should stand in a pool at the bottom. But this pit, of which our text speaks, has all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of an ordinary pit. It is called, as though with an emphasis, "*the* pit where there is no water"—and there are some ungodly men who are in just such a pit as that. There are others who are up to their armpits in water—very muddy stuff it is—I should not like to drink it, yet they seem able to quench their thirst with it. They are the men who take pleasure in sin and enjoy iniquity!

But Brothers and Sisters, when God means to save a man, He makes him realize that he is in a pit in which there is no water. When a man has reached that point, all "the pleasures of sin" have vanished. He finds that he cannot any longer be pleased with that which once used to afford him great delight. Some of you know what this strange experience means—that the very things you used to crave have become most loathsome to you. Your soul lusted after them and you said, in your youth, "If I could only have these things, I would be the happiest mortal on the earth." Well, you have had your fill of them and you do not want any more! You are sick of them, as one may eat honey till he loathes the very sight of it. I have heard of a poor flower girl in the streets of London who used to sell violets all day long, taking home at night those she had left. Having them always about her, she said that she hated the smell of violets—and God can make men hate the smell of their sweetest sins and flee from them with disgust! He can turn their sweet wine into the most sour vinegar so that they will be as glad to get away from it as they once were fond of running to it!

When a soul is in this condition, in the pit where there is no water, it often happens that even the lawful comforts of earth lose their usual comforting force. Well do I recollect the time when I was in this waterless

pit. It mattered very little to me what I ate or drank. It made but a slight difference to me whether it was day or night, for, by day I dreaded the wrath of God. And if I fell asleep at night, I dreamt of it and wondered, when I awoke, that I was not already in Hell. Even those youthful games and those lawful amusements into which, as a lad, I entered, lost all charm for me. If you have read John Bunyan's "*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*," you know that at the time when he was under conviction of sin, nothing comforted him at all. There seemed to him to be no brightness in the sky, no flowers on the earth, and no melody in the sweetest songs of the birds. Well, if it is so with any of you, dear Friends—if you are in a pit where there is no water—none whatever—I hope my text applies to you and that you belong to the special class of prisoners to whom the Lord thus speaks—"As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit."

The Lord is speaking of those who secretly belong to the Covenant race of Israel, His own chosen and redeemed ones. Though you know it not as yet, your name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. Though His love has not, as yet, been fully made known to you, He has ordained you unto everlasting life and, therefore, though you are at present in the pit, you cannot die there and you cannot always lie there. Though you are at present without water, you shall never perish of thirst. You may be brought to dire distress, but you shall then prove that man's extremity is God's opportunity. As the Lord lives, who chose you by His Grace long before He made the heavens and the earth, He will bring you, as His prisoners, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, set your feet upon a rock and establish your goings!

That is the first thing mentioned in the text—prisoners in a very terrible plight.

II. Secondly, THE TEXT SPEAKS ABOUT EMANCIPATION. AND THE CAUSE OF THAT EMANCIPATION IS MENTIONED—"By the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit."

Delivered from that horrible pit! How did they get out? The text tells us that *God sent them out of it*. Oh, that awful pit of natural depravity—that dreadful pit of actual sin—that fearful pit of just damnation! Nobody ever yet came out of that pit except by Divine Power—nor need anybody ever wish to escape by his own power, for if he did so escape, he might be dragged back again into the dungeon. If a prisoner is released by the king himself, who will dare to re-arrest him? If the Lord, Himself, delivers us, where is the power that can put us back into the pit? It is Jehovah who says, "I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit where there is no water." Some of us recollect the time when the Lord did thus send us forth. None but He could have done it, but He did it—and did it thoroughly! He snapped every fetter that was upon us, lifted us right up out of the abyss and fully and forever emancipated us—all glory to His ever-blessed name!

Then our text tells us *how God did it*—"By the blood of your covenant." Oh, what a grand way of deliverance this is! Do you know what

this expression, "by the blood of your covenant," means? There was a Covenant between God and His chosen people, made of old, before the day star had first cast his bright beams into the darkness. To make that Covenant sure, God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son had agreed with His Father that He would ratify it with His own blood. And, in due time, He came to this earth and fulfilled that Covenant by offering up Himself as the God-appointed Victim in the place of guilty men. Now, Brothers and Sisters, it is by that blood of the Everlasting Covenant, offered in our place, that we were set free from the bondage of sin! I heard, the other day, that some wise man had said that if a preacher wanted to be popular—by which I suppose he meant to draw many to hear the Gospel—He must preach blood, and fire, and smoke! I do not know what the smoke has to do with it but I do know that there is nothing that has such power as the precious blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin, and that, next to the blood of Jesus, there is nothing that has such power as the blessed fire which comes down from Heaven, touches the preacher's lips and makes him speak with fervor and enthusiasm of that precious blood!

There is no man, either living or dead, who was ever sent forth out of the pit of soul-despair except by the blood of the covenant. I can assure you of one thing—the man who can do without the atoning Sacrifice of Christ has never known what true conviction of sin is. Men and women who received their "religion" by natural descent, or who jumped into it in the excitement of a revival meeting, may, perhaps, be content to do without the blood, but, if the Lord has put you into the pit where there is no water and brought you up out of it, you know that there was no deliverance for you until God, in human flesh, made Atonement for your sin by His blood. And, to this hour, if ever you are disturbed and doubtful concerning your true position in God's sight, you always come back to the blood of the Everlasting Covenant offered upon Calvary's Cross! And you sing—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more."

If, Sirs, you take away the atoning Sacrifice, you make that blessed Book to be a mere husk from which the kernel has been withdrawn. If you take away expiation by the precious blood of Jesus, you tear away the sinner's only ground of hope! Indeed, his only hope—and you leave us, of all men, most miserable. I know that when I understood that Jesus Christ bore, in my place, all that I deserved to bear of the wrath of God—and that His death had made the Law of God honorable, so that the Lord Jehovah could pardon me without doing an injustice to the rest of mankind and without suffering the honor and glory of His righteous rule to be tarnished—I grasped it at once. It seemed to me to be far better than the balm of Gilead to my wounds when the great Physician laid His pierced hand upon me and the blood of His Covenant cleansed me from all guilt. And I pray that many others here may have the same expe-

rience. Of one thing I am sure—if you really grasp this Truth of God, you will never let it go—you never can let it go! This precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, will be to you, your hope, your rest, your joy, the seal of your Covenant with God and the cause of your walking at liberty forever, for if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!

I should like to have said more upon this blessed theme, but time fails me, so I must only say, in passing—"Let every Christian remember that if once he knows the power of the blood of Jesus, there is a Covenant existing between him and his God, and he can say with David, "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Believer, between your soul and the Maker of Heaven and earth there is a compact which can never be broken! Though earth's huge pillars bow and break, this Covenant stands forever sure. You being in Christ and Christ being in you, you shall be saved, world without end, for God has declared it and His truth stands fast forever!

III. Thirdly, our text contains A RECOMMENDATION TO THOSE WHO ONCE WERE PRISONERS—"Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." I thought, dear Friends, that you were pulled up out of the pit—*have you been made prisoners again*? If it is so, it is very sad, but you can never be imprisoned as you were before. Perhaps you have not been living as carefully as you ought. Or, for some other reason your faith has become weak and so you have fallen into the pit again. But you are not now in prison as you were before, for now you believe you will get out again. No, better than that, you are *sure* that you will. Albeit that sometimes Giant Despair tells you that you will die in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, you know that you have a key called, "Promise," in your bosom—and though you have not used it as you should have done, you have the firm conviction that it will open any lock that old tyrant has made—and you hope, some day, to employ it to such good purpose that you will again be free! But, Sirs, you had no business to get into that pit again. When the Lord once set you free, you should have taken good care not to go back again into bondage.

It is a great mercy that you can never go back to such bondage as you once experienced. You are prisoners, it is true, but *you are "prisoners of hope*." Therefore, take the good advice of the text—"Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." That same Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His precious blood, once set you free, is still a refuge from every storm and every enemy. And if you are wise, you will cry to Him to deliver you this very hour! I address myself to every Brother and every Sister in Christ who has, in any sense, and to any degree, become a prisoner again. My dear Friend, the Lord delivered you, years ago, did He not? Do you not recollect, with intense gratitude, what He did for you then? Well, He can deliver you again at this very moment! You remember how joyfully you sang—

"He took my feet from the miry clay,
And set me upon the King's Highway"?

Well, He can do the same thing, again, and do it now. Go to Him at once! You do not need a better Deliverer than the Lord who is "mighty to save," do you? And as He was able to deliver you when you were so far gone as you used to be, He can surely deliver you now. You say that you are so foolish and so insensible that you cannot make yourself enjoy the means of Grace as you once did. It seems to you that as you get older you get more insensible. Well, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are not spiritually dead, are you? And yet, when you were really dead in trespasses and sins, Christ quickened you! Then, surely He can bring you out of this state of torpor and restore you from this strange swoon into which your soul has fallen. Return to Jesus now, just as you came to Him at the first! If you cannot come to Him as a saint, come as a sinner!

Oh, the many hundreds of times that I have done that! And I expect to do it many more times before I get to Heaven. "What?" someone asks, "do *you* have to do that Mr. Spurgeon?" Oh, yes, that I do! The devil says to me, sometimes, "you are no child of God." It is no use to begin arguing with him about that matter! The best way to answer him is to say, "Well, Satan, if I am not a child of God, I soon will be, for I will receive Christ as my Savior and that will make me God's child." "Then," says the devil, "you talk about your faith, but you have no faith to talk about." "Very well," I reply, "if I have not any, I soon will have some, for I will begin to believe in Jesus now." Then he says, "Your Christian experience, as you call it, is all a delusion." Well, I never argue with him about that, but I say, "Suppose it is a delusion, it is still true that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' and He has promised to save all who trust in Him. So, here and now, I do trust Him and I am saved." Satan is a very old lawyer. He has been in the profession for many centuries and he knows how to raise all manner of quibbles and difficulties—and he can argue and reason in a very crafty fashion. So your best plan is not to answer him at all, except to say, "I have put my case into the hands of my great Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have anything to say, you must say it to Him."

That is my earnest advice and it is the advice of the text, too, to all Christians who have, in any sense, come into bondage again—"Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." If you do that, you shall soon come once more into light and liberty and joy and peace!

IV. The last thing in our text is A DOUBLE BLESSING PROMISED—"Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." If you turn to Christ, you shall get a double blessing! What does this part of the text mean?

Well, it means that *God has such abundant Grace to give that He will not only give you what you really need, but He will give you twice as much as that!* All the flowers in God's spiritual garden bloom double. There never was any mercy of His which had not many other mercies wrapped up in it. Every one of them contains far more blessing than we thought it did. Now, dear Brother, dear Sister—can you open your mouth wide and ask from God some great thing? If you do so, you shall receive from God

twice as much as you asked for! Do you feel a great need within your soul—a need that is truly dreadful? It craves so much that it seems to be like the two daughters of the horseleech, crying, "Give, give!" Well, God will give you so much that you shall have enough to satisfy that craving twice over! Have you had some very great trouble? Then believe in the Lord and you shall have double as much joy! Have you had deep depression of spirit? You shall have double as much of holy exultation and delight! Has the Lord laid His rod very heavily upon you and made you sorely smart? Then He will give you two kisses to every blow! Has He made you drink out of the bitter cup? Then He will bring you a double draught of the spiced wine of the juice of His pomegranate, two cups of that heavenly nectar for every cup of quassia that you have had! He will make you consolations to abound and super-abound far above all your tribulations!

"Well," you say, "I am expecting something very great from the Lord." I am glad of it, but you will receive twice as much! The Queen of Sheba expected a great deal when she went to see Solomon, yet she had to say, "The half was not told me." So shall you find it with God. I read in the Scriptures that God is Love, but His love to me has been a thousand times better than I ever expected it would be! I thought that when I came to trust under the shadow of His wings, that I should have mercy and Grace and peace—but I never dreamt how much mercy, Grace and peace I would have! And, Brothers and Sisters, I believe it is better than before and that there is something brighter and sweeter than anything I have ever known yet to come! And it shall be the same with you. The Lord will go on to double your blessings and give you yet more and more, according to that blessed text, "Of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace"—Grace upon Grace.

I especially beg you to notice that *this is a present promise*—"Even *today* do I declare that I will render double unto you." Then why should you not get some of this double joy this very moment? I know that you said, as you were coming to this service, "I do not think I ought to stay for the Communion—I do not feel fit to go to the Table of the Lord. I seem to be as lifeless as a log. If I go and sit there, it will merely be to eat the bread and to drink the wine, but not to enjoy real fellowship with the Lord." Ah, my Brother, my Sister, if that is true concerning you, it is to you that the text says, "Return to the stronghold." Turn to Christ as you did at the first and then it may be that your fellowship with Him will be sweeter than even that which you enjoyed when first you came to His Table! It is the Lord who says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Plead the promise in silent prayer right now—if you do so in faith, I shall be surprised if you do not get a double blessing from the Lord very speedily.

Finally, note *how true the promise is*. When God says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you," who among us dares to doubt His declaration? I have sometimes heard people say, when they have needed to be believed, "I declare to you that it is so." And you know that

the law of the land now allows those of us who object to the taking of an oath, to make an affirmation and to say, "I do solemnly declare that such-and-such is the fact." And, in that fashion, God says, "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Well, then, take Him at His word and "turn you to the stronghold." While you are sitting here, trust the Lord to give you the double blessing that He has promised! If you do that, you may, each one, say, as you go home, "'Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.' I had no idea, when I went into the House of Prayer, that I could be so changed. I was singing, no, I mean, howling or growling—as I went up the steps—

"'Dear Lord, and shall I always lie
At this poor dying rate?
My love so faint, so cold to You
And Yours to me so great?'

yet, when I came out, I was able to sing, and almost to shout—

"'If ever I loved You, my Jesus, it is now.'"

God grant that this may be the happy experience of many of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 9.

Verse 1. *The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach.* Or Syria.

1, 2. *And Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. And Hamath also shall border thereby. Tyrus.* That is, Tyre.

2-4. *And Zidon, though it is very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver and the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out and He will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.* This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Tyre was attacked by Alexander the Great and after withstanding a long siege, was destroyed by him. The strength of the city lay in the fact that it was built right out into the sea and that it was protected by a vast, massive hole. Also, as a great trading center, it possessed enormous wealth and so was able to hire mercenary soldiers. But all its power and its wealth could not preserve it from destruction! And although we read of Tyre in the New Testament, it is now only a place for the drying of the nets of a few poor fishermen, even as Ezekiel foretold that it would be (26:14). When God foretells destruction, it always comes. But, blessed be His holy name, when He promises blessing, that comes just as surely!

5. *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.* When Alexander invaded the country, the Philistines expected that he would be hindered by the Tyrians, but, when Tyre fell, the Philistines were easily conquered. That shows you the meaning of the prophecy and how literally it was fulfilled.

6. *And a bastard.* Or, stranger.

6, 7. *Shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth.* That is, the prey that he had caught—"I will snatch it out of his mouth."

7. *And his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.* There is no doubt that after the days of Alexander, many Philistines became proselytes to the faith of the Jews and were absorbed into the Jewish nation, so that an Ekronite became like an Israelite—and this is a symbol of what God is doing all over the world! He takes men who are strangers and foreigners to the citizenship of Zion and puts them among His people, and treats the Ekronite as a Jerusalemite. Blessed be His name for this great act of Sovereign Grace.

8. *And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by, and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes.* And so it was. Alexander went to Jerusalem, after destroying Tyre, but he did not attack the city. There was a strange restraint resting upon him which prevented him from touching the house of the living God. I need not repeat the well-known story of how he was met by the high priest whom he recognized as the man whom he had seen in a dream, and so, though he smote Tyre and Philistia, he allowed the people of God to go free. But, after that time, something better happened. That great event is marked off by a new paragraph in our Bible—and well it may be.

9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you.* Not Alexander the Great, but, "your King." "Your King comes unto you."

9. *He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* What a beautiful and faithful description of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wonder that Israel cannot see the Messiah here. Had this verse been written *after* the coming of Christ, it could not more accurately have described the blessed Person and Character of our Lord Jesus. His very riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, with her colt trotting by her side, is most plainly foretold here.

10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and 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.* This is our glorious King—the King whose conquests are not achieved by horses, chariots and battle-bows, but by the more powerful panoply of the Truth of God and love! Blessed are all who dwell beneath the rule of such a King as He is!

11, 12. *As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.* Christ has come to set the prisoners free and to be the stronghold of His people. Therefore turn to Him and all manner of precious blessings shall be yours.

13. *For I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man.* This is a truly wonderful passage, setting forth how God is going to use His people as the weapons by which He will conquer the world. He will bend Judah and make her into a bow, and take Ephraim, and make her into an arrow—and then he will shoot His strangely-fashioned shaft against His adversaries and ours! What does this mean but that He is going to use those of us who are His own saved ones, that He may conquer the world by us? And what a blessed battle this is! "Your sons O Zion against your sons, O Greece"—the simple Believer against the cultured man of reason without faith—the humble truster in the Lord Jesus Christ against the man who proudly boasts of his own learning and eloquence! How will this battle end? We know which side will win, for "the Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge."

14. *And the Lord shall be seen over them.* As He has in the midst of His people of old.

14. *And His arrows shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.* Here you have a foresight of Pentecost and the grand era which succeeded the outpouring of the Spirit. Oh, that we might once again prove what God's Almighty Spirit can do!

15. *The LORD of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.* You remember that the mockers said, on the day of Pentecost, "These men are full of new wine." They were not, as Peter plainly declared, "these are not drunken, as you suppose." Neither does this prophesy mean that they would be so, but that the Spirit of God should fall so copiously upon them as to fill them, like bowls brimming over with precious liquid, or like the corners of the altar drenched for Elijah's sacrifice. It is a grand thing when Believers in Christ are thus filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God and Divine energy—they are the men who will win the battle for the cause of God and His Truth.

16, 17. *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

—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.

"WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?"
NO. 2884

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 19, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C H SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 9, 1876.

"Then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, Whoever is on the LORD'S side—come to me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him." Exodus 32:26.

THOSE idolatrous people seem to have been awestruck by the appearance of Moses in their midst. You can picture them gathered around Aaron, worshipping the golden calf and performing their unclean rites—but, as soon as ever Moses marches into the camp, they recognize his commanding presence and his kingly authority. "Drag down that abomination," he cries! "And break it in pieces." And though, just now, they were adoring it, they implicitly obey him. The calf is hurled from its pedestal, burnt in the fire, ground to powder and mingled with the water that the idolaters drank. Then rings out the grand challenge of our text. The brave man who seems to stand like a solid rock amid the raging billows, feels it necessary to strike a decisive blow for Jehovah—and once and for all put an end to that shameful idolatry. So, taking his stand, as though to lift up the banner of Jehovah, he cries, "'Whoever is on the Lord's side—come to me!' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him"—the men who afterwards became the priests of the Most High God. Then came that just but terrible command to execute the idolaters—and three thousand of the people perished as a warning to the rest—and that cursed image-worship was stamped out of the camp, at least, for a time.

Now, dear Friends, very much as Moses did on that occasion, needs to be done very frequently in every age. It is necessary that a banner should be displayed because of the Truth of God and that men should be called out to rally around it. And those who do so, those who are the most fearless and the most faithful, shall receive a great reward, even as we read in the Book of Deuteronomy that Moses bestowed a special blessing upon the tribe of Levi because its sons were faithful in that trying and testing time—"And of Levi he said, Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, whom You did prove at Massah, and with whom You did strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Your word and kept Your covenant." Blessed are they, also, who in these days bow not down

before the modern idols that so many worship! Blessed are the brave men who never question whether a certain course will "pay" or not, but who do the right thing, whatever the consequences of their action may be! These are they who, amidst the bright ones in Heaven, shall be doubly bright and who, here below, shall be the officers in the army of the Lord who shall be called to lead the way in the day of battle. I would that we had many among us who would come forward with brave decision and yield themselves up, without doubt or fear, to follow wherever the God of Truth and the Truth of God should lead them. High shall their renown be and great shall their reward be, even as it was with these courageous sons of Levi who so promptly responded to the challenge of Moses, "Whoever is on the Lord's side—let him come unto me!"

What I am going to try to do is, first, *to describe the conflict and show which is the Lord's side.* Secondly, *to point out to the Lord's followers what they must do.* Thirdly, *to remind the Lord's hosts of their encouragements* and, fourthly, *to repeat the question of the text—and to put forward proposals for enlistment in the army of the Lord.*

I. First, then, I have TO DESCRIBE THE CONFLICT WHICH IS NOW GOING ON AND TO SHOW YOU WHICH IS THE LORD'S SIDE. That is not a very difficult task and the conscience of each one of you ought to help me in its accomplishment.

This is where "the Lord's side" begins—*Belief in God against Atheism and other forms of unbelief*. Infidelity assumes many forms—the doubt as to whether there is any God at all—the daring defiance of God if there is a God. Or the indifference which utterly neglects God, not caring about Him either one way or another. Believers are on the opposite side to all of these and you know that the side they are on is "the Lord's side." To fear Him, to reverence Him, to trust Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to worship Him—that is being on "the Lord's side." On which side are you, dear Friend? Are you a believer, a fearer, a truster, a lover, a worshipper of God, or are you a neglecter, a rejecter, a hater of Him?

Here again are two sides—*obedience to the commands of God, or a determination to please ourselves*. Are we endeavoring to obey the moral law or are we pouring contempt upon that law and seeking to be happy by having our own way? How is it with you, my dear Friend? Are you making yourself into your only god? Are you allowing your own lusts and passions to be the supreme governing influence over you? Are you saying to yourself, "I will have my own way. I will do as I please. As long as I can make myself merry, I care nothing whatever about the commands of God"? If that is the way you talk, it is quite clear on which side you are. Between the will of the flesh and the will of God, there is no possible question as to which is "the Lord's side."

Here is another battleground—*Christ and His righteousness, or your self-righteousness*—cleansing in Christ's blood and covering with His perfect righteousness, on the one hand and—on the other, salvation by your own works, salvation by your own prayers, salvation by your almsgiving, or by anything of your own. You know, at once, which is "the Lord's side" out of those two, for the Lord is always on Christ's side. Indeed, Christ, Himself, is God! Justification by faith is the side on which God is, but

justification by the works of the Law is a lie—in fact, it is an impossibility! Now, dear Friends, on which side are you with regard to this matter of salvation by Christ or salvation by self? Are you "on the Lord's side" of that question?

Here is yet another point from which to view this great conflict—*the Gospel of the Grace of God, or the superstitions and lies of men*. The Bible teaches us that sinners are saved by believing in Jesus Christ, but superstition says, "No, they are saved by being sprinkled with water through the subtle influences that trickle from priestly fingers. They are saved by baptism, saved by sacraments. Here, then, is a sharp conflict between salvation by Christ and salvation by priests. We know which is "the Lord's side" of that controversy, but, dear Friend, on which side are you? Do you go directly to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Great High Priest and do you trust alone to the merit of His atoning Sacrifice, or will you go crouching to your fellow creature and pour the infamous story of your sin into his ear and so defile him even more than he already is? And then will you come back deluded with the false notion that you have obtained "absolution" at his hands? We know that none can forgive sins save God, alone—this is the Lord's way of making reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. So, Friends, are you for Zion or for Rome? Are you on the side of Christ or on the side of antichrist?

There is a fierce battle still raging in the world *between Scripture and tradition*—between this Grand Old Book and certain things which have been handed down by tradition from the fathers. They are said to be customs of the early church, or to have been ordained by various councils, or decreed by "infallible" popes. Well, dear Friends, are you on the side of God's Word or of man's word? Is your rule of life, "Thus says the Lord," or, "Thus say the fathers," or, "Thus say the councils," or, "Thus say the popes"? Who is on the Lord's side in this matter? There is a stern fight still to be fought over this question—the battle has long been raging and it will continue to rage until the victory is won by the Truth of God. I am looking forward to the time when there will be only two parties left to fight—the men who will have this text emblazoned on their standards, "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," and who will have nothing but the Bible for their rule of conduct—and those bearing the other banner in praise of the inventions of men and the traditions of the fathers. They will cling to their errors, I have no doubt, as long as they can, but the Lamb will overcome them—and they who are on "the Lord's side" will also come off more than conquerors through Him that has loved them!

There are two sides to all the moral questions in the world. There is holiness, for instance. You all know on whose side that is. And there is unholiness—and you have no difficulty in deciding on whose side *that* is! Then, as to order, peace, quietness, love, generosity and so on, you all know on whose side they are. And you equally know on whose side disorder, strife, disaffection, tumult, selfishness and covetousness are. You are well aware, Brothers and Sisters, that wherever there is anything that is right, true, pure, holy and of good report, that is "the Lord's side." Therefore, always be on that side. But if there is anything that is impure, unchaste, unlovely, unjust—that is not "the Lord's side" and it should

not be His people's side. At the present time this dear land of ours seems as if it were going to be swallowed up by the demon of drunkenness. Temperance, righteousness, sobriety—these are all on "the Lord's side" of that question, so let every Christian see that he takes the same side as the Lord does. I need not go into all the questions that are prominent at the present time because they keep on changing their positions—and sometimes it is one question that is most prominent and sometimes another—but to almost every question which comes up, there is "the Lord's side" and there is another side. And the question must always be asked, "Which is the Lord's side?" And I trust as soon as that question is answered, you will say, "That is the side for me to take—the side upon which the Lord is."

II. Now, secondly, I am TO POINT OUT TO THE LORD'S FOLLOWERS WHAT THEY MUST DO TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE ON HIS SIDE.

And the first thing is, *they must acknowledge it*. The Truth of God deserves to have bold adherents and brave proclaimers. Righteousness ought not to be claimed as the portion of men who are ashamed to acknowledge it. Suppose that those sons of Levi had slunk away to their tents and had said, "Oh, yes, we are on the Lord's side, but we do not mean to expose ourselves to any risk in dealing with these idolaters." That would have been like the coward spirit of a soldier who shirks his proper place on the field of battle. He is too modest, too retiring to fight—that is only another way of saying that he is a coward and unworthy of the uniform he wears! In like manner, it is a mean, beggarly spirit that will not lay down life and limb, substance and honor—and everything else that one has—for the cause of God and His Truth. Oh, for more of the true spirit of chivalry among those who call Jesus their Lord and Master! It is a shame that they should ever blush to acknowledge His name! They might rather blush with shame to think that they have ever been ashamed of Him! I count it *nothing*, Brothers and Sisters, to speak for the cause that everybody thinks to be good, or to float with the stream by agreeing with what the multitude reckons to be right. Every timeserver can do that! But, to swim against the stream, to speak unpopular Truths of God, to declare that which God has taught you, even though nobody else believes it, to beard the lion in his den, to stand—like Athanasius—against the whole world for God and for His Christ—this is being a man, indeed! No, more—this is being a Christian! And the time shall come when this shall be reckoned the noblest kind of man whom even God, Himself, has made. So, if you are on God's side, admit it!

Then, next, *rally to the standard*. Moses cried, "Whoever is on the Lord's side—come to me!" If you are a Christian, you should unite with other Christians. I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that it is the duty of all converts to test the various sections of the professing church by the Word of God and then to cast in their lot with that part which holds the Truth of God most fully and clearly. And, having conscientiously done that, to rally with the hosts of God in the great battle against wrong. Oh, you converts who have never joined the church, what are you doing? I beseech you, think over this matter, pray over it and remember that in the olden times, they first gave themselves to the Lord and afterwards

they gave themselves to His people—according to the will of God. And so ought you to do. Believers ought not to be solitary stones, lying by themselves—they should be built up into "a holy temple in the Lord, built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." So, dear Friends, if you are on "the Lords side," admit it and join with those who also are on that side.

Then, next, if you are on "the Lord's side," *be willing to be in the minority*. It is true that minorities have generally come in for kicks and blows rather than kisses and caresses, but, at the great Day of Judgment, all such wrongs will be righted. And, after all, it has often been a minority—yes, and even a minority of *one*—that has done great things for God, after all! Just now I mentioned Athanasius. You remember that when the whole of Christendom seemed to swing round to Arianism, it was Athanasius, standing alone, "*Athanasius contra mundum*," as he truly said, who brought the Church back to belief in the Deity of Christ! And in the days of Luther, who can ever tell what a pivot and hinge that one lone man was for Germany and Europe? And in Scotland, what force there was in the one brave man, John Knox, whose preaching and prayers Queen Mary feared more than an army of soldiers! Few followed these brave leaders at the first, for following meant the stake, the scaffold, prison, suffering, shame, reproach and death—yet these were the men and women who did the true work of God, after all, and who fought the good fight of faith!

Be you followers of them. Run not with the multitude to do evil—rather choose the narrow way that leads unto life, though few there are that find it. From the days of Noah the followers of the Lord have usually been in the minority. If the rightness of any course could be decided by the counting of heads, the devil would mostly be in the right—but we do not count in that way. We test every question by the Word of God, not by the votes of men! If the Lord has said anything, believe it, even if no one else does. If the Lord has revealed any Truth to your conscience, hold to it, even though, to all others, it should seem to be a lie and, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward! The sons of Levi were in a minority in comparison with the great host of idolaters in the camp of Israel, yet they came out boldly for the Lord, and are, therefore, held in honor even to this day!

Further, *you must be aggressive* if you are on "the Lord's side." These sons of Levi, as soon as they declared that they were on the side of Jehovah, had to come forth to smite and slay His enemies. So must you, if you are a follower of the Lord. There is nothing that the devil likes better than to be left alone. I am often asked, "Why do you not preach what you believe and leave other people's doctrine alone?" Ah, just so! Why don't I? And why did not the Lord Jesus Christ let the devil alone and let false teachers alone? And why does not the Gospel let error and falsehood alone? When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, one part of His work was to destroy the works of the devil. The demons said to Him, "Let us alone: what have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us?" His answer was, "Hold your peace and come out of him." And when the demons say to us, "Leave us alone," we reply, "That

is the very thing that we cannot do and that we dare not do!" We must not let falsehood, and sin, and error alone! Christ Himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." His faithful servants are to follow His example—to quarrel with error, to fight against sin—to be aggressive against everything that is opposed to our Lord and His Truth!

The devil is quite ready to make a league of peace with us, or to agree to a truce and say, "Now, do not go on fighting any longer. Let us shake hands and be friends. There can be no reason why I should not continue to be the prince of the power of the air, and Christ should also have His disciples—only let them be very decorous and quiet—and mind their own business." But we will make no such wicked league or truce as that, for we are to resist the devil! As Peter writes, "whom resist steadfast in the faith." The sons of Levi had to kill the adversaries of God and so must you, *spiritually*, who are on "the Lord's side."

You must also *let love to God rule all nature's ties* if you are on "the Lord's side." Moses expressly commended Levi for this—"Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children." They were so jealous for the Lord of Hosts, that they would not tolerate idolatry in their nearest kith and kin! Happily, Brothers and Sisters, we have not to fight anybody with a sword of steel. God forbid that any of us should ever take the life of a fellow creature! Our one weapon is the two-edged sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God! The force we use is the force of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. But, I charge you, never do a wrong thing, or even a *questionable* thing in order to please father, or mother, or wife, or child. And never allow any wrong to go unrebuked in the dearest friend you have, for, "faithful are the wounds of a friend." Some have condoned sin to please a wife or a husband, but they who are faithful to God must also be faithful to the members of their own household. This may involve persecution for themselves, but they must be willing to bear it for Christ's sake—and they must not yield an inch, or an iota, in any matter of principle, or any question of truth and right, even to the beloved of their heart. Can you do this? If so, you are worthy to be counted among those who are on "the Lord's side."

Once more, they who are on "the Lord's side" *must do as they are told*. They must be prepared to obey all Christ's commands to the letter—and also in the spirit of them—right to the end of life. I am ashamed of the way in which some professing Christians ignore so much of the Bible, shutting their eyes to Christ's commands, or, like, Nelson, turning their blind eye to those they don't wish to read. Finding themselves in a certain community, they believe what the community believes without ever testing it and trying it by the Word of God. They do not want to know too much and if anybody tries to teach them a Truth of God which they do not know, they are unwilling to learn it lest it should unsettle them in their ecclesiastical position. I bless God that when I was converted to Christ, I laid down this rule for myself—"Whatever the Lord teaches me in His Word, I will follow. If it should lead me into a path where I shall be quite alone because I can find nobody to believe as I believe, yet will I be-

lieve and teach that which the Holy Spirit reveals to me in the Word." At this moment I have not an atom of respect for any authority in matters relating to Divine Truth except the authority of God—and I would strongly urge all young people to try all catechisms, creeds, customs, doctrines, practices and everything else by that Infallible test—"To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light of God in them."

III. Thirdly, I am to remind THE LORD'S HOSTS OF THEIR ENCOURAGEMENTS.

First, we may be encouraged to be on "the Lord's side" *because it is the cause of right and truth*. To me it seems to be a sufficient reward to a man to know that he is defending a right cause even if he has to die for it. Do you crave the applause of human hands and voices? Do you covet the glance of approving eyes? If so, your self-respect has already fallen below the point which it ought to mark. Are you right in the course you are now pursuing? If you are, you need not ask for anything more. To be right and yet to be poor—to be right and to be abused, or even to be put to death—is, surely, sufficient for any follower of the Lord!

Better still, if there can be any better, remember that *you are on God's side*. He who is Almighty looks upon you as His friend! Or, rather, say that He who is Almighty is your Friend! He is much more than that, for He is your All-in-All. You may shelter yourself beneath His wings. Behind the bosses of His buckler you may hide yourself in perfect security!

Moreover, *Jesus the Crucified is with you* if you are on "the Lord's side." There He stands, whose head was crowned with the cruel thorns and whose hands and feet were pierced by the terrible nails. Blessed is every soldier of the Cross, for he has Christ for his Captain and where His flag waves, victory must surely come!

Further, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *all the saints of God are with us*—the countless hosts of the redeemed before the Throne of God, above, are all on His side and ours—and so are *all the holy angels* "that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word." All the unfallen intelligences in the universe are on "the Lord's side." Therefore let us not be afraid, who are enrolled beneath the banner of the Cross, and let others cast in their lot with us, for they will be siding with a noble host that has gone on before us! The lineage of the saints of God is a very high one. Talk of the blood royal or imperial—bah, a single drop of the blood of the martyrs flowing through our veins is far more to be desired! To walk as they walked, "of whom the world was not worthy"—those first confessors of the destitute, afflicted, tormented"—this is to be a member of the blood royal of Heaven, the highest nobility that can be gained in this world! How many of you, young men and young women, or older men and women, are ready to say, "We are on the Lord's side"? The air all around us is crowded with the spirits of just men made perfect! They are watching to see how we run the Christian race and wrestle for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus! And they sing a new song of praise unto the Lord as He leads one and another to contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints—to

stand out boldly for Christ and Him crucified—and to speak, or serve, or suffer as best shall glorify the Lord Most High!

IV. Time and strength both fail me, so I cannot say more upon that point, though much more might be said. I am, in closing my discourse, TO REPEAT THE QUESTION OF THE TEXT AND TO MAKE PROPOSALS FOR ENLISTMENT IN THE ARMY OF THE LORD. I should like to act as a recruiting sergeant and to enlist some new soldiers for King Jesus.

"Whoever is on the Lord's side? Well," says one, "I wish to be." Well, I will gladly help you enlist. You know what the sergeant does when he enlists a young man—the first thing he does is to give him something—a shilling. And if you intend to be a follower of the Lord, *you must receive something* or, rather, you must receive SOMEONE—even the Lord Jesus Christ, for, "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." You cannot be on "the Lord's side" unless you receive the Lord's Christ as your Savior! But as soon as you accept Him as the free Gift of Jehovah's Free Grace, you are enlisted into the army of the Lord! Will you take Him on those terms? Will you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your Captain? I pray His gracious Spirit to make you say, "Yes, that I will, by His Grace."

Next, the sergeant puts the ribbons in the young man's hat and, if you receive Christ, the next thing you have to do is to *confess Christ openly by being baptized*. Our Captain's own words, as recorded in the Gospel according to Mark, are these—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—and what He has joined together, no one has the right to put asunder. So, get the colors in your hat, young recruit, if you really are enlisted on "the Lord's side."

When you have done that, the next thing for us to do is to *take you to the barracks and drill you*. You will not be fully fitted to fight the Lord's battles until you have been drilled and trained by your new officers. So, submit yourself to the discipline of the Church of Christ. Be willing to take your place in the ranks with your Brothers and Sisters, to follow the New Testament Church order, to be taught what are the first principles of the Christian faith and to be instructed yet further in the things of God, so that, afterwards, you may be able, in your turn, to instruct others. Christ's commission runs thus, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (those who are made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." So, you see, we are to teach *before* we baptize and afterwards still further to teach those who have been made disciples and who have been baptized into the triune name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Then, we shall want you to *put on your full regimentals*. What are the regimentals of a Christian? The garments of holiness, the livery of love and the whole armor of God. We pray the Lord to clothe you from head to foot in the Divine Panoply wherein all the warriors of the Cross should be arrayed—the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel of Peace, the shield of faith, "the helmet of salvation and

the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." There is nothing like having your Bible always with you and being able to turn to any passage that you need when you are confronting the foe, for, "It is written," is a wondrous weapon against the devil, as Christ Himself proved! Satan flees from this sharp sword. And other adversaries of the Lord and His people feel the force of the Word when they will not yield to anything else.

Then, when you are fully armed, drilled and trained, *we shall expect you to wage war for King Jesus.* And the first war must be a civil war—war within your own soul—war to the bitter end against every sin, every evil habit, every false word! All iniquity must be driven out of your spirit at the point of the bayonet, and no quarter must be given to any enemy of the Most High God. Then even while the civil war is raging, we shall want you to carry the war into the enemy's territory. Attack the foe on all sides—speak to your friends about Christ. So live that they will see Christ's life reproduced in you, at least in a measure. Plead with those with whom you work or live—the servants in the house, or your companions, all sorts and conditions of men—tell them all about Jesus Christ! If we were once to have a church fully awakened and zealous for Christ and His Truth, we would soon have the persecuting times back again. The early Christian Church was very enthusiastic—they went everywhere preaching the Word. Somebody says, "Ah, they lived in the days of persecution." But it was not the persecution which made them enthusiastic—it was their enthusiasm that brought upon them persecution for Christ's sake! And probably if we were as good Christians as we ought to be, we would not be half as well liked by the world as we now are! And if there were more noise and opposition made against the followers of Christ, it would not be at all a bad sign! If those who hate righteousness, hated Christians more heartily than they now do, it might be a token that God was more manifestly at work in us, making us more "out-and-out" for Him than we are at present.

Now, then, you who are on "the Lord's side" in this congregation—you who really believe in Jesus—I invite all of you to confess your faith in Him if you have not already done so. No, more than that—in the name of Jesus in whom you believe, I exhort and command you to confess your faith in Him! Be not ashamed to avow your convictions. Do not try to conceal yourselves from your fellow Christians. Come out and come out soon—and may the numbers of this church, or of some other church be greatly swollen by the addition of those who are truly upon "the Lord's side." I wish I could persuade some of you not to put off this confession any longer, but to say, "I love my Savior, and I mean to come out and confess that I am on 'the Lord's side.' I have been far too long hesitating and halting between two opinions, but I will not let another week go by without saying, as plainly as words can say it, 'I have given myself to Christ and now I wish to give myself to His Church.'" May God bless you all for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 32:1-29.

Verse 1. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said to him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.* They needed something to look at—something visible that they could adore. It was not that they meant to cease to worship Jehovah, but they intended to worship Him under some tangible symbol. That is the great fault of Ritualists and Romanists—they aim at worshipping God, but they must do so through some sign, some symbol, some cross, some crucifix, or something or other that they can see.

2, 3. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.* People are often very generous in their support of a false religion and, to make idol gods, they will sacrifice their most precious treasures, as these idolaters willingly gave their golden earrings!

4. *And he received them at their hand and fashioned it with a engraving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.* No doubt they copied the Egyptian god which was in the form of a bull, which the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Moses, here calls a *calf*. The Psalmist probably also alludes to it when he speaks of "an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs." It seems strange that these people should have thought of worshipping the living God under such a symbol as that!

5. *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.* "To Jehovah." They intended to worship Jehovah under the form of a bull—the image of strength! Other idolaters go further and worship Baal and various false gods, but, between the worship of a golden calf and the worship of false gods, there is very little choice. And between the idolatry of the heathen and Popery, there is about as much difference as there is between six and half a dozen!

6. *And they rose up early on the morrow and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* It was usual to worship false gods with music and dancing and with orgies of drunkenness and obscene rites—and the Israelites fell into the same evils as they had seen among their neighbors.

7. *And the LORD said unto Moses.* Just in the midst of his hallowed communion, the Lord said to him.

7. *Go, get you down; for your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.* God would not acknowledge them as *His* people. He called them Moses' people—"your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

8-10. *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto and said, these are your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people:*

now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation. For Moses began at once to pray for the people—to interpose between God and the execution of His righteous wrath and, therefore, the Lord said to him, "Let Me alone…that I may consume them."

11. *And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people?* See how he dares even to say to God, "They *are Your* people, though they have acted so wickedly. 'Why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people?'"

11-13. *Which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Therefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath and repent of this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own Self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.* Moses pleaded the Covenant which the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—and there is no plea like that. Although it might have been to his own personal interest that the people should be destroyed, Moses would not have it so. And he pleaded with God for the sake of His own honor, His faithfulness and His Truth, not to run back from the Word which He had spoken.

14, 15. *And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people. And Moses turned and went down from the mount.* Does it not seem sad for Moses to have to go down from the immediate Presence of God and to stand among the idolatrous and rebellious people in the camp? Yet that is often the lot of those whom God employs as His servants—they have, as it were, to come down from Heaven to fight with Hell upon earth.

15-17. *And the two tablets of the testimony were in his hands: the tablets were written on both sides, on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.* For Joshua was a younger man than Moses, and also a soldier, so his ears were quicker to hear what he took to be "a noise of war in the camp."

18. *And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.* Moses knew that it was not a battle-cry either of the victors or the vanquished—but the song of idolatrous worshippers.

19. *And it came to pass, as soon as he came near unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.* In righteous indignation, preserving those sacred tablets from the profane touch of the polluted people by dashing them to fragments in his holy anger

20. *And he took the calf which they had made and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strew it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink it.* Think of the courage of this one man to go single-handed right into the middle of the idolaters' camp and deal thus with their precious god!

21-24. *And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto you, that you have brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: you know the people, who they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whoever has any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it to me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.* Which was a lie. Aaron was a poor weak-minded creature, easily persuaded to do wrong. And when his stronger-minded and more gracious brother was absent, he became the willing tool of the idolatrous people—and yet Aaron is called, by the Psalmist, "the saint of the Lord," and so he was, taking him as a whole. One black spot on the face of a fair man does not prove him to be a Negro. And so one sin in the life of a man who is usually holy, does not put him among the ungodly.

25-28. *And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies) then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, Whoever is on the LORD'S side—come to me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said unto them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Put every man, his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses.* The rebellious, the idolatrous, the men who had defied the authority of God were to be summarily executed on the spot.

28, 29. *And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day.* Such a colossal crime as that must be expiated before the Lord could again bless the chosen race.

—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 SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE
NO. 2885

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 26, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted,
He is able to aid those who are tempted."
Hebrews 2:18.

THAT which is the most simple lesson the Gospel has to teach is often the most difficult lesson for the Christian to learn. That simple lesson is that we must not look to *ourselves* for anything good, but that we must look to the Lord, alone, for all our righteousness. The lesson is short, as well as simple. It is easy to repeat but, as often as our faith is severely tried, we find how apt we are to forget that which is the very Alpha of the Gospel—that man, in himself, is wholly lost and that all his hope of help and salvation must rest on Christ, that apart from God there is nothing upon which faith can fasten itself—and that without the atoning Sacrifice and justifying Righteousness of Christ, the quickening and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the everlasting love of the Father, there is neither joy, nor peace, nor comfort, nor hope to be found anywhere. This seems to be a very easy lesson, yet even aged Believers, when their hair is getting gray and they are about to enter the land of perfect peace and rest, still find the temptation to unbelief too much for them and they begin to look for something good in the creature—and to seek for happiness in themselves—instead of seeking all good in God.

I want to try to teach you this lesson again. And to also learn it myself, for I need to learn it as much as you do—the lesson of looking away from our temptations and from our own weakness and inability to repel those temptations—to Him who, having Himself suffered in being tempted, "is able to aid those who are tempted." Let us fix our eyes upon our great High Priest and leave Satan and all his insinuations, his blasphemies and his temptations out of the question. Or, rather, let us bring them to Christ and see them all finished in Him! I am going to address three separate characters that are represented here—first, *the confirmed Believer*. Secondly, *the young beginner*. And, thirdly, *the backslider*. And then, summoning the attention *of the whole company here assembled*, I shall try to commend the comfort and instruction of the text to you all.

I. First, let me speak TO ADVANCED CHRISTIANS.

You all have your trials and those trials are of an advanced character. The troubles with which the plants of God's right-hand planting are assailed when they are saplings are quite inconsiderable compared with those which come upon them when they are like cedars firmly rooted. As surely as our strength increases, so will our sufferings, our trials, our labors, or our temptations. God's power is never given to a man to be stored up unused. The heavenly food that is sent to strengthen us, like the manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness, is intended for immediate use. If the Lord sends you much, you shall have nothing beyond what you can use for Him though, blessed be His holy name, if you have but little, you shall have no need! When the Lord puts upon our feet the shoes of iron and brass which He has promised us in His ancient Covenant, He intends that we should wear them and walk in them—not that we should put them into our museum and gaze upon them as curiosities. If He gives us a strong hand, it is because we have a strong foe to fight. If He gives us a great meal—like that which He gave to Elijah—it is in order that, in the strength of that meal, we may go for 40 days or even longer.

Perhaps, my Brother or Sister, you are, just now, in great trouble. You have grown in Grace and your troubles have also grown. You feel that you need someone to whom you can tell your trouble—your trouble very likely arises from the absence of your Lord. Let me remind you that in this respect you are very like the Israelites in the wilderness, when Moses had been absent from them for 40 days. They said, "What shall we do? Our leader is gone. He who was king in Jeshurun has departed from us and we are left like sheep without a shepherd." So they went—I dare not say that they went for counsel, but they went—to the high priest. And you remember what they said and what he did. Alas, he gave them no good counsel, for he was as unwise as they were—and as untried. He had always had Moses by his side ever since the day that the Lord had said, "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother?...He shall be to you instead of a mouth and you shall be to him instead of God." Aaron had never been left without his great leader and so, in his absence, he failed miserably and led the people in the making and worshipping of the golden calf!

How different it will be with you who mourn the loss of the Light of your Lord's Countenance, if you go to our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ! He knows the meaning of your present trial, for He had once to cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" You tell Him that your "soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and He tells you that it was so with Him, also, on that night in which He was betrayed, when, "being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." No untried Priest is He! He can sympathize and He can aid you.

Take another case—that of Hannah, the "woman of a sorrowful spirit." She was in a peculiarly trying position. Her husband's other wife had children, but she had none. Though she was greatly beloved of her husband, her adversary vexed her sorely to make her fret. Day by day this was thrown in her teeth, that, because of some sin, God had not granted

her the desire of her heart. A trial in one's own house is one of the saddest places where it can come—the saddest, perhaps, with the exception of a thorn in the flesh which comes still closer home. So poor Hannah, having that trial at home, thought she would go up to the sanctuary in Shiloh. There, she "prayed unto the Lord, and wept sorely, and she vowed a vow." But "she spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." So Eli, the high priest, thought that she was drunk and, instead of comforting and consoling her, he spoke harshly to her, depressed and broken as her spirit was. You, my Brothers, and you, my Sisters, too, may have some trouble which you dare not tell to another, though it is sorely vexing you and threatens even to break your heart. But when you go to the Great High Priest, He will understand all about it! He will not need you to explain your sorrow to Him, for He knows exactly what it is. And He will apply the healing balm to your sorrowful spirit and send you on your way full of peace and comfort!

I offer, then, to you who are advanced Believers, this very comforting reflection—*in Christ's sufferings you are quite certain to find something akin to your own* and, in Christ's heart, you are quite sure to find a deep well of Divine Sympathy! So whatever your trial may be, you need not hesitate to go to Him, or doubt that His loving heart will overflow with sympathy towards you!

But, more than that, while I would console you by reminding you that Christ has suffered even as you have, I would also comfort you with the reflection that *this very day He still suffers with you.* Suppose, now, that a man could be so high in stature that his head could be in Heaven while his feet were on earth, yet, whenever his feet suffered, his head would suffer, too. In the Canticles, the spouse says of her Heavenly Bridegroom, "His head is as the most fine gold…His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold." As John saw Him, "in the isle that is called Patmos," "His eyes were as a flame of fire and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This suggests to me a parable—the feet of Christ, which form His Church on earth, still glow "as if they burned in a furnace." The glorious Head of the Church, up in Heaven, "is as the most fine gold," but there is not the least glow of heat, in the feet on earth, which is not felt by the Head in Heaven. There is not a pang that rends your heart which Jesus does not feel. There is not a sorrow that cuts deeply into your soul which does not also cut into His! So you can still sing—

"He feels in His heart all our sighs and our groans
For we are most near Him, His flesh and His bones.
In all our distresses our Head feels the pain,
They all are most necessary, not one is in vain."

Does it not comfort you to know that Christ *can* sympathize with you and that He *must* sympathize with you—*can*, because He has suffered—*must*, because He still suffers?

I may also add, for your comfort, that *all this*—Christ's suffering as you do and His suffering with you, *must tend to shield you in your trials.*

A country minister, preaching upon the text, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" made the remark that Christ is a good Physician. "Ah," he said, "Christ is not like those doctors who come and say they are sorry for you, whereas, in their hearts, they are glad you are ill, for, if you and others were not ill, there would be no work for them. Or else," said the preacher, "they look down upon you and pity you, but not half as much as if they, themselves, had your complaint and felt all the pains that you are feeling. But suppose," he added, "that the doctor had all your pains, himself—suppose you had the headache and that he looked down on you and had your headache? Suppose when you had palpitation of the heart, he had palpitation of the heart, too—why, he would be very quick to cure you! Certainly he would not let you lie there a moment longer than was necessary because he, himself, would be suffering with you." Now there is just one objection that may be made to the countryman's argument—that is, that the physician might be willing to raise the patient up at once because he was suffering with him—yet he might say, "Here are two of us in the same plight, but my skill fails me here. If I could deliver you, you can well imagine that I would gladly do so, for, in so doing, I would deliver myself as well. But, alas, it is beyond my power! I cannot lighten your burden, nor my own—we can only sit down together and mingle our tears—but we cannot assist one another."

But it is not so with the Good Physician, for He has both the will and the power to heal us! One motion of that eternal arm and every cloud that is wrapped about the sky shall be folded up like a worn-out vesture, and cast away! Jesus speaks and the boisterous billows cease their raging and the wild winds are hushed to sleep. "Let there be light," He says, and over the thick darkness of our affliction and adversity comes the bright gleam of joy and prosperity! He did but lift up His voice and "kings of armies did flee apace." O Jesus, our Lord, when You come forth for the deliverance of Your people, who can stand before You? As the wax melts before the fire and as the fat of rams is consumed upon Your altar, so do our trials and troubles melt and vanish away when You come forth for the deliverance of Your people! Remember, Believers, that you not only have the love of Christ's heart, but you also have the strength of Christ's arm at your disposal! He rules over all things in Heaven, earth and Hell—so rest in Him, for He still bears the scars of His wounds to show that He has suffered even as you do. Still does He prove Himself to be Man, seeing that He suffers with you, yet is He also "very God of very God," into whose hands all power in Heaven and earth is committed! He can, He must, He will deliver His people and bring them out of all their trials into His eternal Kingdom and Glory!

II. Secondly, I am going to speak TO ANXIOUS ENQUIRERS AND YOUNG BEGINNERS.

I hear a plaintive voice, over yonder, saying to me, "I know, Sir, that the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. And I know that the moment I believe in Him, I have nothing to fear concerning the past, for that sin is blotted out once and for all. But my fear

is that if I commence a Christian life, it will not last long. I am afraid I shall be like Pliable and turn back at the Slough of Despond. Or if my neighbors jeer at me, I fear that I shall be ashamed to go forward in spite of their opposition. Even if I get over that, I feel that I cannot trust my own evil heart which is so apt to deceive me. If old temptations should be overcome, new ones will be sure to arise and I cannot help fearing as to what will become of me. I have seen some who made a fair show in the flesh, turn back and go straight to perdition—and I tremble lest it should also be so with me. How can I hope to withstand the imperious lusts which were too strong for me when first they allured my simple heart? How much more shall they be too mighty for me, now that sin has gathered the force of habit and practice and, like an iron net, has enfolded me in its cruel grip? When I was a youth, I could not stand against this great enemy of my soul—how, then, shall I be a match for him now that I have grown old and feeble? The old Adam will be too strong for the young Melancthon!"

Well, dear Friends, I have seen some persons who have been truly converted to God who have been greatly troubled with this fear. Indeed, in some instances I have even known of poor men kneeling down and praying that God would let them die, then and there, sooner than that they should live to prove that their feelings were only a delusion and that their supposed repentance was merely a passing excitement. Some of us can fully sympathize with those who pray such a prayer as that, for we have often felt that the most terrible death would be preferable to the disgrace of bringing dishonor upon the name of Jesus by turning back to the City of Destruction after we had once started for the Celestial City. But, my dear Friend, if the Lord has begun a good work in your soul and led you to trust in Jesus as your Savior, my text will just meet that fear of yours, for the Apostle here says that Christ "is able to aid those who are tempted." You will be tempted—I will not delude you with the notion that you will not—and you cannot, by yourself, stand up against that temptation! But Christ, "in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, is able to aid those who are tempted." This Truth of God we set before you as a shield against all these dark, mysterious thoughts—Christ can and He will, if you trust in Him, protect you from the sin and the temptation which you rightly dread!

"But how is this to be done?" someone asks. Well, first of all, *Christ can do it by the force of His own example*. He can show you as He has done in His Word. But He can also show you by His Spirit opening up that Word, how He was once subject to the same temptation that now assails you. Are you poor, and are you tempted to use wrong means to get rich? Christ can tell you how, in the wilderness, "when He had fasted forty days, and forty nights, He was afterwards hungry," and Satan came to Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Are you a man in a high position and are you tempted to do some daring and reckless deed? Christ can remind you how, when He was on a pinnacle of the Temple, Satan said to Him, "If You are the Son

of God, cast Yourself down." Or do you seem, just now, to have great power within your reach if you will but stain your hand to grasp it? Christ can tell you how Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said to Him, "All these things will I give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then He will remind you how He passed through all these ordeals without sin, for the prince of this world could find nothing in Him to respond to his temptations. He was tried and tested again and again, but no trace of alloy could be discovered even by the devil himself! Though He was often shot at by His great adversary, He was never wounded by the fiery shafts! So, inspired by His glorious example, you may say—

"Through floods and flames if Jesus leads
I'll follow where He goes."

You not only have Christ's example to keep you from sin, but you also have *His Presence*. Do you know what this means? Let me give you an example of it. There was a certain merchant who had been, again and again, tempted to an act of sin. It was the usual custom in his trade—everybody else did it. But he knew that it was wrong and his soul revolted against it. As he sat in his counting house, he saw, pictured before his mind's eye, his wife homeless and his children crying for bread. And the demon whispered to him, "Do it. Do it." Then another picture flitted before his eyes—he and his wife and children were rich—their home was filled with good things and again the adversary said, "Do it. Do it." He saw the advantages that were to be gained by doing it, but he went home and pondered the whole matter. His soul was heavy and a stern struggle was proceeding within him. Then he went to his chamber and shut himself in and, falling upon his knees, told all his difficulty and temptations to his Father in Heaven. Then, suddenly, not before his eyes, but to Faith's inner eyes, there appeared a vision of the Crucified Christ who showed him His pierced hands, and feet, and side, and then said to him, "He that takes not his cross and follows after Me is not worthy of Me. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

The merchant, fixing his tearful eyes upon his Savior, remembered Paul's words, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." He came down from his bedroom, his soul was glad, for his mind was made up and he said to himself, "I will not do it. I can be poor, but I cannot sin." Others marked the man and wondered at the change in his appearance. He walked erect, no longer like one bowed down beneath a heavy burden. Many men marvelled at him and asked what had happened to him, but none could tell. The secret was that the Crucified Christ had appeared to him and had given him the support of His Divine Presence. That was sufficient to aid him in the time of temptation, for Christ, having Himself suffered, being tempted, was able to aid His faithful follower when he, also, was tempted.

I know that I am addressing someone who says—I will use, as far as possible, his own words—"Look here, Sir, I have always been in the habit

of being a jolly fellow, meeting with a number of companions to drink, chat, sing and so on. I do not know that we did very much amiss, but still, I could not do it again if I became a Christian. Suppose, now, that I should be invited to join the same company tomorrow—I am not sure what I might do—I might refuse their invitation, but if I were asked again and again, and they jeered at me for refusing, I might give in. Suppose that I did not yield? There is another difficulty. I have been a man of such-and-such a character and have formed such-and-such habits—now, how in the world am I to overcome those habits? How am I to become a Christian and to continue so to the end?"

These are very proper questions and I answer—You are utterly helpless apart from Him who is able to aid those who are tempted. But if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give you a new nature. That new nature, it is true, will not at once cast out the old nature—your old nature will still be there, but the new nature will struggle against it and, ultimately, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, the new nature will prevail over the old nature and you will be "a new creature in Christ Jesus." Old things will have passed away and all things will have become new. You will say, as a young convert did when he came to join the Church, "I don't know which it is, but either everything else is changed, or else I am." It was in himself, of course, that the great change had been worked, but that changed the aspect of everything else!

Let me give you a little parable to illustrate this point. A lion and a tiger used, frequently, to roam the forests together in search of prey that might satisfy their bloodthirsty appetites. But one day an angel came, touched the lion and changed him into a lamb. The next day the tiger came and wanted the lion to go with him to his feast of blood. Do you think it was difficult for him to refuse the invitation? Oh, no! "I have no inclination to go," he said. The tiger laughed scornfully and said, "Aha, you have become pious, have you? Now you will go to the sheepfolds and sneak behind the shepherds' heels—you that were once so brave!" And the tiger despised him and said, "You are miserable to be thus tied up like a dog and not to dare to come and do as we have always done." "No," said the lion, "it is not that I dare not go with you, but I have no wish to go. I am not miserable because I cannot go with you on such an errand—I would be miserable if I did go. The fact is, I cannot now do what I once did, for I am not what I once was. My new nature has brought me new loves, new hatreds, new preferences, new pursuits—so I cannot go with you on your bloodthirsty expedition."

If God has worked a similar change in you—and transformed the lion into a lamb and the raven into a dove—it will not be difficult for you to be kept from sin, for you will hate sin with perfect hatred and have no fellowship with it! And besides that, as your nature will be renewed, day by day, by the Holy Spirit, with a constant infusion of everything that is good, gracious and Godlike, do you not see that sin shall no longer be like a strong spear to pierce you, but as a fragile reed which shall snap against the armor of proof which your soul shall wear?

Let me remind you who are thinking of going upon pilgrimage, but are afraid of the lions and the dragons in the way, that He, under whose banner you hope to enlist, never allowed one soldier who was in His service to perish. If you become a sheep under the care of the Good Shepherd, remember that—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep."

If you are a mariner, bound for the Fair Havens of eternal felicity, recollect that the Lord High Admiral of the seas of Providence and Grace has safely convoyed into port every vessel that has yet been committed to His charge! Not one has ever been wrecked or lost in any way. Trust yourself to His protection and guidance and He will bring you, also, safely in. What if your temper is, naturally, furious? What if your evil propensities have been indulged until they have become as giants holding you in cruel captivity? What if your passions boil, burn and blaze like Vesuvius in eruption? What if your temptations should come upon you as the Philistines came upon Samson? He to whom you commit the keeping of your soul shall make you master over all—and you shall yet be, with the great multitude whom no man can number, more than conqueror through Him who has loved you! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would constrain many of you, straightway, to leave your old master and to enter the service of the Savior! You will never find a better master than the Lord Jesus Christ!

"Ah," said a sailor, 70 years of age, who had heard a sermon that had deeply affected him and, I trust, had been the means of renewing his nature, "I am going to haul down my old flag today. I have sailed under the colors of the Black Prince all these years, but they are coming down today—and I am going to run up the blood-red Cross in their place—and I hope to sail under that flag until I die." So may it be with many of you! Say, "O Satan, we have served you far too long! Miserable is your service, despicable are your ways, degrading is our position and awful must be our end if we remain in your power." Then turn to the Lord and appeal to Him. Say, "O God, help us! We cry to You. Bring us, we pray You, from under the tyrant's sway. Help us to yield ourselves up to You this very hour. Take our hearts, black as they are, and wash them in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, Your well-beloved Son. Change the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Make us to be Your servants while we live and to enter into Your rest and Your Glory when we die."

I have thus, I hope, spoken somewhat to the comfort of young beginners and anxious enquirers.

III. Now, in the third place, I am going to speak briefly TO BACKSLIDERS.

Where are you, Backslider? I cannot pick you out, but there is an eye that sees you, and that weeps over you. Ten years ago you used to sit down at the Communion Table. Twenty years ago you were a reputable member of the church, but you fell, and, oh, what a fall was yours! Since that time you have not wholly forsaken the House of God, though you have wandered here and there—but you have never dared to call yourself

a Christian again. You lost the Light of God's Countenance long ago and you find the service of Satan very hard, yet you think you must go downward to despair. You feel that you are in the iron cage of which Bunyan wrote—and you fear that you will never get out of it. Poor Backslider, I cannot mention your name without a tear and if I, a fellow creature, thus weep over you, much more does that compassionate Savior who suffered, being tempted, and who is able to aid those who are tempted!

Hark! If you will but incline your ear, you may hear a note that will cheer your heart and yet break it, too! 'Tis God who speaks and He is having a controversy with Himself over you. Justice says, "Destroy him!" But Mercy says, "Spare him!" The very Gospel which you have despised witnesses against you, but, at the same time, pleads for you. The Lord still says to backsliders, as He did to His ancient people when they wandered from Him, "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you." "Married unto you!" This marriage bond cannot be broken! You have played the harlot and gone after many lovers, but your first Husband hates putting away and even now invites you to return to Him. So—

"To your Father's bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed
From His house no more to roam,
Come, O poor Backslider, come!"

I may even be addressing some who once drank from the cup of Communion, but who have turned aside to drink the cup of devils. I may be speaking to some to whom, for years, the Sabbath has been a day for business instead of a day for worship. Yet you could never get the sound of the Sabbath bell out of your ears and, even now, you cannot forget the profession you once made, nor the joys you once knew—and you cannot be easy in your sins. There is a spark of heavenly fire that still lingers within you and it will not die out, even though you seek to quench it that it may not hinder you from going after your lusts. That is God's grip still upon you! Oh that I might be His ambassador of peace to fling wide the doors of His mercy to you! Poor Prodigal, you are clad in rags! The sty is your only sleeping place and the swine your only companions—you would gladly fill your belly with the husks that they eat, but you must not, for you are a God-made man, and swine's food can never satisfy you. As you stand here, perhaps there is a tear trickling down your cheek because of the many years that you have spent in sin and you are saying, "I would arise and go to my Father, but I fear that He has forgotten me." Oh, say not that! But do as the prodigal did—arise and come to your Father, for He will give you such a reception as the prodigal received! You shall have the kiss of forgiveness upon your brow, the best robe of your Savior's perfect Righteousness shall be cast all around you, the ring of everlasting love shall be placed upon your finger, the shoes of peace shall be fitted to your feet, you shall eat the fat things of the promises of God, there shall be music in your ears, music in your house, music on earth

and music in Heaven, itself, because he that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found!

This should be your consolation—"In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Did I hear you say, "But I cannot see how Christ was ever in the same position that I am in, for He was never a backslider"? That is quite true, but what are your trials? First, you are tried by the burden of sin that is resting upon you—and Christ had the sins of all His people resting upon Him, so He knows what that burden means. Next, you are tried by the loss of the Light of God's Countenance—so was He, for He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then you say that you have lost all your friends—so had He, for in His time of trial, "they all forsook Him and fled." You say, also, that you are despised, that you are the subject of the song of the drunk and the mirth of the mocker—so was He, for He could truly say, "Reproach has broken My heart." So Christ can sympathize—not with your sin, for He never had any of His own—but with your sorrow, which is the consequence of sin, for He had to bear all that before you did!

IV. Now I have to close by speaking TO THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY. I think I might liken you, on a large scale, to that little band of pilgrims—Christiana, Mercy, Matthew, James and the rest of them who started from the City of Destruction—who, when they came to the Interpreter's House, were put under the escort of Mr. Great-Heart. I am not Mr. Great-Heart—I am but one of the children—but our great Savior *is* Mr. Great-Heart, and He is going with us all the way to the Celestial City! We are but like those boys and girls and we are afraid of what we may meet on the road. There are lions in the way, but Mr. Great-Heart can kill them, or restrain them from hurting us. There is Apollyon in the valley, but our Great-Heart is more than a match for the arch-fiend. We shall have to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet each one of us shall be able to say, "I will fear no evil, for You are with me." We shall have to go through the Enchanted Ground, but, as Christ will be with us, we shall not fall asleep there to our grievous hurt. We shall have to go through Vanity Fair and to bear the jeer and the jibe of the mocking mob, but we can bear all that, for we shall have our great Captain with us.

But—and here comes the dark thought to some—we shall at last come to the dark river without a bridge. Mr. Great-Heart—whom Bunyan meant to be the minister, had to go through the stream with the rest. But when we come to the river, our Mr. Great-Heart, Christ Himself—will go through the river with each one of us! He will put His almighty arm around us and when we get where our feet cannot feel the bottom, He will say to each one of us, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." To die with Jesus is better, even, than living with Him except that higher style of living with Him beyond the river of death, for—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,

While on His breast I lean my head
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

In this sense, our text shines like a cluster of stars. Jesus died, Jesus rose again—in that He died, He can sympathize. In that He rose again, He can aid. Lay hold of this text whenever you think of death with any gloomy cast in your mind. And let us go on our way, each one singing—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing
But gladly put off this garment of clay.
To die in the Lord is a Covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to Glory through death led the way."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-18.

2 Corinthians 6:1. *We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that you receive not the Grace of God in vain.* God's servants are called to take many different positions. They are ambassadors under one aspect. They are workers under another. As ambassadors, they are ambassadors for Christ. As workers, they are workers together with God. Oh, how much it costs to win a soul! I mean, not only how much it cost the Savior, so that He broke His very heart over it and poured out His life's blood—but also how much it must cost the messenger of peace! He must know how to beseech and implore—and when even this fails, he must still go on toiling, laboring as a worker together with God.

2. *(For He says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation).* I trust that if I am addressing any who say that it is too late for them to be saved and that their sin is too great to be forgiven, this text will drive away that unholy and unwarranted fear—"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Then the Apostle goes on to speak of himself and the rest of the Apostles and other preachers of the Word.

3, 4. *Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.* As those early servants of the Lord really did.

4-10. *In much patience, in afflictions in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watching, in fasting; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the Word of Truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.* All these things Paul and his Brothers were to be and to do in order to win souls for Christ. Just as the hunters in the cold North seek after furs and try all sorts of schemes to catch the wild creatures on which they grow. They will trap them, or snare them, or shoot them, but, somehow or other,

they will get them. They will be on the alert all day and all night, too. They will learn the habits of every creature they have to deal with, but they will get the furs somehow. And so must the true minister of Christ be willing to *be* anything, to *do* anything, to *suffer* anything, to bear reproach and shame, to be nothing, or to be all things to all men—if by any means he may save some.

11, 12. *O you Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. You are not straitened in us, but you are straitened in your own hearts.* If they were not saved, it was not because Paul did not open his mouth to speak to them and to warn and invite them, nor because he did not open his heart and feel in it the movements of a sacred compassion for them. Now, having thus spent himself in his endeavor to bring them to Christ, he writes to those whom he did bring.

13. *Now in return for the same.* There must be some wages for this blessed work. The Apostle wisely puts it on that footing, as if, surely, they were indebted to him, but the payment that he seeks is, of course, no personal gain to him. He only puts it in that form, but it is a gain to *them.*

13. *(I speak as unto my children), be you also enlarged.* "There has been so much earnest labor to secure your conversion, so be you also in earnest to bring in others. Get large thoughts of God; be fully consecrated to Him, spend and be spent for Him. Follow a good example." Paul could well urge them to that consecration when he had given himself so completely to the work of winning souls—"Be you also enlarged."

14. *Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.* Not in any way—neither in marriage which is the chief of all forms for yoking, nor yet in business or other partnerships.

14. *For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness?* You must be in the same world with them, but keep yourself distinct from them. Go not into their society by your own choice, nor seek your pleasure with them.

15-18. *And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the Temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore 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.*

—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.

RESTLESS! PEACELESS!
NO. 2886

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Isaiah 57:20, 21.

AMONG the greatest privileges of the Believer in Christ are those choice blessings, rest and peace. Believing in Christ Jesus unto eternal life, he knows that his sin is pardoned, that he is a child of God, that Omnipotence will preserve him even to the end and that he will, by-and-by, be with Christ where he is not only to behold, but also to share His Glory forever and ever. Consequently his heart is at rest, for he leaves all that concerns him—whether in the present or the future—in the hands of his Heavenly Father, casting all his care upon Him who cares for him. And, therefore, he has peace, perfect peace, in his soul. This peace and rest which the Believer enjoys even here and now will deepen and increase until, in eternity, they will reach their perfection and the child of God will, forever and forevermore, in the blessed state above, be without even the slightest disturbance of heart and will rest in the Presence of God with his glorified spirit as full of joy as it can possibly be. The Apostle Paul truly writes, "We which have believed do enter into rest." But he also adds, just as truly, "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God."

These choice privileges of rest and peace belong, however, exclusively to Believers. "The wicked" have no portion in them. They are, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, like the restless sea which is never quite quiet, even in its greatest calm—and is never to be trusted for a resting place, but, ever and anon, is lashed into fury, seething like the contents of a huge cauldron and hurling up from its depths the mire and dirt which have lain there unseen—such is the condition of the unregenerate heart of unrenewed man.

There are two things in our text of which I am going to try to speak. The first is, *a fact observed*—"the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The second is, *a sentence pronounced*, and it is pronounced by God, Himself—"There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked."

I. First, then, here is A FACT OBSERVED—that the wicked are like the troubled sea. Who are these wicked people who are like the restless waves of the turbulent ocean? I take the term to describe two classes of sinners.

First, by the expression, "the wicked," as used in the Scriptures, we must often understand *overt transgressors*—persons who are living in the indulgence of open and known sin. Then, secondly, there is another class of sinners—not open transgressors, like the others I have mentioned—still, *they have heard the Gospel and they have rejected it*—and, consequently, since we cannot put them down in any other category and since their sin has a special aggravation about it because of the Light of God and privileges which they have enjoyed and yet despised, or neglected, they also must be put down with "the wicked," for they, too, "are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." Let us begin with those whose sins, as Paul says, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment." Why are they unrestful and unpeaceful?

First, because they are themselves swayed by restless passions. There are some sins which will not let a man be quiet as long as he indulges in them. Take the sin of lust, for instance—who can ever satisfy its cravings? Let a man once indulge his evil passions and can those passions ever be satisfied? No, they keep on getting more and more hungry as a man would become the more thirsty through drinking brine. Does lust ever, of its own accord, cease its cravings? No, it is as insatiate as the grave, itself, and it will suck a man's very life away unless the Grace of God shall mercifully and miraculously interpose. If you, young man, give yourself up to what is erroneously called the pursuit of pleasure, it is quite certain that you will not find rest for your soul in that direction! You have taken a dose of poison that will make your blood hot and feverish and that will cause true rest to flee from your pillow. This is a subject upon which I cannot say more, in this public assembly, except to add, with the preacher of old, "Know you, O young man, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment!" Let the solemn admonition of good Dr. Doddridge come home to your heart and say you with him—

"How will my heart endure
The terrors of that day
When earth and Heaven before His face,
Astonished, shrink away?"

Then listen to his earnest exhortation—not only listen to it, but at once obey it—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there."

Take, next, the sin of anger. There are some persons who very soon get angry, but they do not, as quickly cool down. Or, if they do, they nurse their hatred and watch for any opportunity of paying back their adversary in the base coin of revenge. Let me say to such a man—You cannot

enjoy real rest and peace unless you fully and freely forgive all who have wronged you. You may try to lay a salve upon your conscience and to preach peace to your heart, but if resentment still lingers in your bosom—and especially the resentment which seeks an opportunity to display itself in an act of ill-will—you cannot rest. There are some animals that seem born to fight and if they cannot tear others in pieces, they seem as if they must tear themselves, or, like a serpent, which, in its rage, will poison itself. Such is anger! Such is malice! And you, O man, must get rid of these evil things if you desires to know what real rest means!—

"Sin, like a venomous disease,
Infects our vital blood.
The only balm is Sovereign Grace
And the Physician God.
Madness by nature reigns within—
The passions burn and rage
Till God's own Son, with skill Divine,
The inward fire assuage."

Such, too, is envy—a very common sin which is not spoken of as often as it should be. This is the sin of the poor man who cannot bear to see another man better off than he is. This is the sin of the sick man who is envious of the healthy. Yes, but envy may be found not only among the poor, but also among princes—not only among the sick, but also among the strong. And when a man once becomes so envious that another man's joy is his sorrow and another man's gain is his loss—and he cannot be content with his own lot because another man has more honor, or more money, or more friends than he has—he has a poisoned arrow rankling within him which will breed a thousand woes and make rest of heart impossible to him. Envy even grows by feeding upon itself! Therefore I charge you, whatever you do, get rid of it if you desire to find real rest!

Pride is another enemy of peace and rest. If you see a proud man, you may feel sure that he is not a restful man. It is in the Valley of Humiliation that the flowers of peace will be discovered. As for the pompous people who are so high in their own esteem that they look down on all others—*pity them*, my Brothers and Sisters—do not get angry with them. It is a sad disease from which they are suffering—their brain is turned, so deal gently with them. Think as kindly of them as you can and pray to God to heal them. Mind, also, that you do not catch their complaint, for it is very contagious and there are many who are proud of their humility—and who condemn the pride of others when, all the while, they are really still prouder, themselves!

Then there is avarice. And when a man is once possessed by the desire to amass gain, there is no peace or rest for him. Suppose he acquires what he reckons to be wealth? It ceases to be wealth as soon as he has gained it. He thought that if ever he should secure a certain sum which he had set his heart on, he would retire from business, but, having saved

that amount, he now regards it as quite insufficient and ten times as much is the mark at which he now aims. If he should ever succeed in hoarding *that* amount, he will find that he is further off the goal of his desire than he was when he started. Some there are, I do verily believe, who, if they could claim the whole world as their own, would want the sun and moon and stars as well, for nothing could ever satisfy them. Once get into the grip of avarice and rest is impossible.

And it is also much the same with ambition—not the desire to use one's capacities to the fullest, especially for God's Glory and the good of our fellow creatures—but that craving for so-called "glory" which makes a man court the homage of his fellow men and which will not let him be content unless he is set up on a high pedestal for fools to stare at! Ah, Sir, if you are ambitious in that sense, you and peace have parted company and are not likely to meet again! But if you will do the right thing and leave your reputation in the hands of God—and especially if you will leave those lofty pathways which, after all, lead only to the grave—then may you find peace. But you cannot find it as long as any of these evils that I have mentioned are reigning within your heart.

The first reason, then, why the wicked man's heart is like the troubled sea is because there are evil passions within it which will not let it rest.

The next reason is because the wicked man is agitated by the memory of his old sins. Suppose him to have been for some years engaged in an evil course—in dishonesty or unchastity? He cannot, even if he tries, forget his sins. They have burnt themselves into his very soul and, what is even worse than the memory of sin—every sin breeds other sins so that every time you sin, you have a still greater tendency to commit more sin! This is a fact that is strangely true both as to the body and as to the soul—we wear tracks for ourselves where there were none before. If we have, at first, to force our way through the brush of conscience and to cut down, as it were, the old timber of our early instruction and the gracious examples set before us in our childhood, by-and-by we make a trail for ourselves and then a beaten track so that it becomes always easier and yet easier to sin. No, more than that, there seems to be a pressure put by habit upon a wicked man so that what he once did from choice, he comes, at last, to do because he *must*. Sin in the soul is like leaven in the dough—it heaves, ferments and though it was, perhaps, put into you 20 years ago or more—it will go on fermenting and working until the whole of your manhood shall be soured by it!

Beside all this, the ungodly man is like the sea for restlessness because, like the sea, he is governed by a greater power than his own. The sea feels the force of the moon and is agitated and stirred by the mysterious agency of the winds. And the wicked man is under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. If, for a while, he would be at rest, Satan will not permit him to be in peace. He puts opportunities of sinning before him and then excites the desire to indulge in the evil thing. Satan is no myth—they who think that he is cannot, surely, have opened their

eyes—or else they would have discovered in their very unbelief, his existence and that he had given them that unbelief! Those who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon and fought with him and overcome him in the hour of temptation, will never doubt that there is a great fallen spirit who strives to lead men into sin! Satan and his myriads of followers still lie in wait for the ungodly, or openly drive them into fierce lusts and evil passions so that they sin again and again.

Nor is this all. For wicked men—those who go into open sin—are kept by the action of others from becoming quiet. If it were not for the restraints of society, what horrible places would those be where the utterly dissolute and abandoned assemble! Even as it is, every now and then we read in the newspapers records of the doings of so-called "gentlemen" that reveal to us something of what goes on when Bacchus rules or riots. Then there are the brutalized beings at the other end of the social ladder, the "fiends" who use their boots so heavily upon their wives. Put a few dozen of them together and let them have their own sweet will—do not restrain them at all and see what they will do! Only God knows what wondrous patience He has with such men when they get together and egg each other on in sin. I have often marvelled that He does not speedily put an end to their blasphemy and indecency and cruelty. Yet they are spared, notwithstanding their sin—but they cannot rest, for one will not let the others be quiet. And if, at any time, a good resolution should be formed by one of the company, another laughs that resolution down and keeps the whole society "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

I do not wonder that a wicked man cannot rest because such a man is out of gear with the entire universe of God. Lift up your eyes to yonder starry orbs and remember there is not one of them disobedient to the law of its Maker. The comet which was thought to be eccentric, obeys in all respects its great Creator's will. Everything that you can see, from the tiny atom of dust that is borne along by the wind, up to the huge Atlantic billow in which the leviathan feels at home, is under the power of the Divine Law. From the archangel before the Throne of God, down to the gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam, everything is obedient to the Lord of All—except the wicked man—and he says, "I will not obey Him." Well, as he is out of gear with all the rest of the universe, is it any wonder that he is restless as the waves of the sea and that there is no peace for him? If you were to set yourselves to disobey the physical laws of the universe—for instance paying no regard to the law of gravitation but leaping from a church spire, or falling down a precipice—you know what would come of such madness! If you ever set yourself up in opposition to the law, you may depend upon it that the law will got the mastery over you. And the man who lives in disobedience to God's moral Law will find that it will be the same with him and he will have no rest forever and ever. As God's servant, I must say to you, very plainly, and very earnestly—You cannot possibly find rest and peace in the course you are now pursuing.

May God enable you to escape from your sins and to trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, that you may have both joy and peace in believing!

Now I have to speak, very briefly, to those who cannot be put down among the outwardly and notoriously wicked. I thank God that you cannot, but still, you have heard the Gospel, perhaps for many years, and you understand it, yet you have never received it. There is reconciliation with God to be had, yet you remain His enemy. Now, I will not say, for a moment, that the moral man who is *not* a Christian, is to be put in the same category as the immoral. In many respects, he does not do as much harm in the world as the other man does. But let me tell you this, my Friend, if you sin against the Light of God and knowledge, there may be an intensity of guilt in your sin which may not be found in the man who is apparently worse than you are! He may never have had such teaching and advantages, nor such a tender conscience as you have had and hence his sin, bad as it is, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, may be such that it shall be more tolerable for him at the Day of Judgment than for you who have not sinned one tenth as much according to the judgment of others, but who have sinned against the Gospel—sinned against the dying Savior's blood—sinned against the Holy Spirit! God grant that you may never run this terrible risk!

Let me say to you, who are living without Christ, that however excellent and amiable you may be, I know that you are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. I know some special times when you cannot rest—when you hear of others being converted—your brothers or sisters coming forward to confess Christ—your friends or relatives rejoicing in Jesus as their Savior. "Ah," you say to yourself, "they are restful and peaceful, but I am not." I know how you feel, on Communion nights, sometimes, when you have to go away, or to look on at others gathered around the Table of the Lord. You do not feel easy, then, do you? And you feel very uneasy, too, when any of your companions die—those who are very much of your own sort. You attend their funeral and the thought strikes you, "Shall I die as they have done, without Christ and without hope? Shall I pass away from under the sound of the Gospel without having given any evidence of conversion?" You do not feel easy then, I know and, sometimes, you feel very much like the troubled sea when conscience begins to call you to account.

John Bunyan, in his "*Holy War*," gives a graphic description of what happened to Mr. Conscience when Mansoul was being besieged by Immanuel—and that is very much what has happened to some of you. They said that he was out of his wits, but he was never more truly in his wits than when he was crying out for Mansoul to yield to the great King Shaddai! And I feel sure that some of you have felt, upon the door of your conscience, the blows of the great battering-ram that Bunyan describes—and you have been ready to open it! Still you are not at rest, for you have not come to Christ who alone can give you rest. It is still true, as Dr. Watts wrote, long ago—

"In vain the trembling conscience seeks
Some solid ground to rest upon!
With long despair the spirit breaks,
Till we apply to Christ alone."

If you hear the Gospel faithfully preached, you cannot be at rest. Some of you try to be satisfied with a false peace, but, by God's Grace, we will plague you yet to Christ. We will love you to Christ. We will incessantly worry you till, at last, you yield yourself up to Jesus! Some of you are getting on in business. God has been very gracious in preserving you in life, restoring you from sickness, or keeping you in health. You have a better situation now than you ever had before, yet you are not restful. You feel grateful to God for all His goodness to you, yet you say, "There is something more needed." Yes, and that something is the one thing necessary. I am thankful that God is prospering you, but I hope you will never be able to rest until you have that one thing necessary—the Grace of God!

Some of you are very thoughtful and when you get alone for half an hour, it is very awkward for you, for there are certain problems that you cannot solve and they sorely perplex you. Worst of all are your forecasts of the future. Sometimes, you look ahead and you picture yourself upon a sick bed and you say, "Can I die triumphantly as I am?" You know you cannot! And then, sometimes, you picture yourself rising from the dead, when the angel's trumpet blast is sounding and the quick and the dead are standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. You cannot bear to think of that Great White Throne and the separation of the righteous from the wicked, for you know where you shall go unless a great change is worked in you! Though not outwardly wicked, you do not belong to the sheep—then you must go with the goats. And when you think of this and the future stands, for the moment, present before your mind's eye, your spirit is "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." I would that you had rest. God grant it to you this very hour! May Toplady's prayer be your prayer, also—

"Oh, may I never rest
Till I find rest in You!
Till of my pardon here possessed,
I feel Your love to me!
Turn not Your face away,
Your look can make me clean.
Me in Your wedding robes array
And cover all my sin.
Tell me, my God, for whom
Your precious blood was shed.
For sinners? Lord, as such I come,
For such the Savior bled."

II. Now, secondly, and only for a minute or two, in our text there is A SENTENCE PRONOUNCED—"No peace"—you notice that the words, "*there is*," are in italics because they are not in the original. So the text runs, "No peace, says my God, to the wicked."

It is God Himself who says it! There may be a truce, for God is slow to anger, but there is "no peace." God is at war with you if you are among "the wicked." You may be under the delusion that there is peace, but God's voice of Truth shatters that delusion to pieces. There can be no peace where there is unpardoned sin. Until you have humbled yourself before God and sought and found mercy, God is at war with you and you are at war with Him. There can be no peace where there is no purity. God has no peace with sin and never can have. Like a devouring fire, His holiness burns against sin and you must be made pure—your nature must to changed, the love of sin must be killed in you and you must as vehemently love that which is good and right—or else God's voice still thunders from Heaven's burning Throne, "No peace! No peace! No peace!"

"But I will go to church and receive the sacrament," says one. You will get no peace that way, except a false peace that is worse than none! "But I will attend the means of Grace with the Dissenters," says another. You will get no peace that way, if that is all that you do. If your sin is unforgiven by God and if your nature is unchanged by the Holy Spirit, all the religiousness in the world will bring you no peace! "But I will weep an ocean of tears and I will offer prayers continually." No peace will come to you that way as long as you remain wicked, for God says. "No peace! No peace!" And "wicked" you must remain until Jesus washes you white in the fountain filled with His precious blood and until the Spirit of God renews your nature—

"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!
The Sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of Grace—
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.
The Spirit, like some heavenly wind
Blows on the sons of flesh—
Creates a new—a heavenly mind—
And forms the man afresh."

"Oh," says another, "but I will promise to be better and to do better—I will amend my ways!" So you may and so you should! But my God still says unto the wicked, "No peace!" What say you to all this? Behold your God in arms against you! Omnipotence comes forth to war against *you*, the creature of an hour! Will you submit? Be wise, I pray you! Cast down your weapons, cry for mercy, accept the reconciliation which Christ has worked. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." If you will but trust Him, what He did shall be accounted as yours. That is to say, the punishment that He suffered shall be reckoned as if you had suffered it and the righteousness He worked shall be counted as if you had worked it! And God shall accept you in His Son's place and for His Son's sake. More than that, the

Spirit of God will overshadow you and give you a new heart and a right spirit and take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Are you willing now to yield and end this unequal war—and be at peace with God? Then the Lord who gave His Son once, gives you His Son over again into your heart and He says, "Peace! Peace! Go in peace, your sins, which are many, are forgiven you."

He who with his heart forsakes his sin and unfeignedly believes in Jesus shall have the peace of God which passes all understanding! But he who will keep his sin and so remain among the wicked, or who will keep his self-righteousness and so refuse the salvation of Christ, has nothing to go home with but this, "No peace! No peace!" And, oh, to die with that terrible knell ringing in one's ears! To look up to God and to hear Him say, "No peace!" To have the prayers of your friends for you, but to feel no peace! To lift your eyes to Heaven, but to find prayer freeze upon your soul as you hear again this sentence from God the Judge, "No peace!" And then follows the eternity in which there is no peace! God grant this may not be the sad portion of any one of us, but may the Lord give to each of us peace, perfect peace, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23; ISAIAH 55.

We will first read that choicest of all the Psalms—the twenty-third. It is like a precious pearl shining with a mild luster. This Psalm is, among the other Psalms, what the lark is among the other birds—it soars and sings till it is lost in the heights to which it ascends!

Psalm 23:1. *The LORD is my Shepherd.* What a precious title the Psalmist used in speaking of his God! It is right to call the Lord a Shepherd. "The Shepherd of Israel" is a very blessed and true title for Him, but, "*my* Shepherd" is best of all. I wish, Beloved, that each of you would truthfully say with David, "'The Lord is my Shepherd.' He owns me and as I am His property, He will preserve me, protect me, provide for me, guide me and be everything to my weakness, folly and necessity that a shepherd is to a sheep." "The Lord is my Shepherd."

1. *I shall not want.* "Not only do I not want at the present moment, but I shall never want. I may sometimes foolishly fancy that I shall come to want, but I shall never as long as God provides for me. How could such a Shepherd as He is—Almighty and All-Sufficient—ever allow one of His sheep to lack any good thing? No, 'I shall not want.' All the world besides may want, but I shall not while Jehovah is my Provider. Famine may be in the land—there may be neither dew nor rain and even the brook Cherith may at last be dried up, but since Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'" As a guarantee of His care of us in the future, we turn to our experience in the past and the present. What is our experience of our great Shepherd even now?

2. *He makes me to lie down in green pastures.* Here is blessed rest and here is also gracious provision for the needs of the sheep. The pasture is sweet and tender and there is so much of the green grass that it cannot all be eaten—and the superabundance makes a soft bed for the tired sheep! "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." Repose, O Believer, in the abundant provision of God's Grace! A sheep sometimes needs to lie down. It is as necessary for its health that it should have time to digest its food as that it should have proper and sufficient food to eat. May the Lord graciously give to each of you the sweet rest of meditation and contemplation—that blessed rest to which faith attains when it grows into firm confidence and full assurance, so that you may be able to say with David, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." But our spiritual life is not to be all spent in lying down—there must some a time for going forward, so David adds—

2. *He leads me.* What a peerless Guide He is, since Infallible Wisdom is His! And how gracious and condescending it is on His part to go first in the way which He means us to take! David does not say, "He drives me," but, "He leads me."

2, 3. *Beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness.* "In each one of them He is my Exemplar in every virtue, for He, Himself, has endured all temptations that are incident to my life's pathway and, all the way, 'He leads me in the paths of righteousness.'"

3. *For His name's sake.* "Not because of any goodness in me, but because of the goodness that is in Him and for the glory of His holy name, 'He leads me in the paths of righteousness.'" "Also, 'He restores my soul.' When I wander, He restores my soul to the right road. When I become empty, He restores my soul again with good things. *He restores* my soul."

4. *Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil.* "Not only shall there be none, but I will fear none." A sense of the Lord's Presence lifts a Christian above fear! You know how often it is true that we "feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." But if we have a sense of our Savior's Presence, when we really do walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, not a trace of fear shall come across our peaceful souls!

4. *For You are with me.* The Presence of Christ is all that His people can ever need. The All-Powerful, Ever-Faithful, Infinitely-Compassionate One being with us—what cause for fear can possibly remain?

4. *Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.* "To see Your scepter and even to feel Your chastising rod—to know that You are a King and that You rule over Israel—to know that as a Shepherd You carry "a crook to guide Your flock, shall be enough to comfort my heart and to sustain my spirit." How sweet is the next verse!

5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* How calmly the Psalmist writes! He realizes that he has enemies, yet he means to sit down to a feast! He is not going to snatch a hurried mouth-

ful or two, but "a table" is "prepared" for him as though for a banquet! His enemies may look on while he is feasting, but they cannot take away his enjoyment of the feast.

5. *You anoint my head with oil.* He receives a fresh anointing for new service, even the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

5. *My cup runs over.* "I have all I want and even more than I need, so that others, not as favored as I am, may come and catch some of the droppings from my overflowing cup! It is so full, O Lord, that it cannot hold all that You gave me! Until You enlarge my capacity, I shall still have to say, "My cup runs over." The Psalmist's next words also have much meaning and force in them.

6. *Surely.* There are no ifs, no doubts, no fears about the matter. "Surely."

6. *Goodness and mercy shall follow me.* "These two holy angels shall watch over my footsteps and follow me wherever I go—'Goodness' to preserve me and 'Mercy' to pardon me! 'Goodness' to supply my needs and 'Mercy' to blot out my sins." And these angels shall follow me.

6. *All the days of my life.* "Not merely now and then, but all my days—my dark days as well as my bright ones—these heavenly messengers will never forsake me,"

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* This life begins here, for this earth is but the lower part of God's House. And when the time shall come for us to leave this earth, we, who are the Lord's own children, shall only go upstairs to the higher rooms to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This, then, is the portion of the children of God. But there are some to whom David's language will seem strange. They cannot sing this sweet Psalm, for their life is as restless as the waves of the sea. No quiet pastoral poem could set forth their joy, for the sound of war is heard in the streets of their city of Mansoul. If any such souls are seeking rest and peace, let them hearken to the voice of God as it speaks to them from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter fifty-five.

Isaiah 55:1, 2. *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* Why have you sought rest where it can never be found? Why have you craved delights which can never satisfy you? Cease from such folly!

2. *Hearken diligently unto Me.* Thus speaks the Lord Jehovah—"Hearken diligently unto Me."

2, 3. *And eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.* "With you" who have any desire for it—"with you" who hunger and thirst after righteousness and who have no other recommendation than that, poor as it is. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you."

3, 4. *Even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him.* The Son of David—"great David's greater Son"—and God's own well-beloved and only-begotten Son, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. God says "I have given Him"—

4-7. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run unto you because of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you. Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* Blessed be His holy name!

8-13. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—661, 614, 658.

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

A DIRE DISEASE STRANGELY CURED
NO. 2887

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1876.

"With His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. ***"By whose stripes you were healed." 1 Peter 2:24.***

IT is well for the preacher, every now and then, to go back to the very beginning and once again traverse the whole ground of the Gospel, just as the schoolteacher does when, after his pupils have advanced to some of the higher branches of study, he deems it desirable to make sure that they are well grounded in the very elements of knowledge, for he knows that it is quite possible for him to be doing mischief in leading them on to the higher forms of study unless they are thoroughly familiar with the first principles. So he goes back to the beginning over and over again—and a wise preacher will do likewise. As for myself, it is not at all grievous to speak, in the simplest terms, of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation and, for you, it is safe as Paul said in writing "the same things" to the Philippians. I have always noticed that those who love Christ best and who know the most about His great salvation are just the very people who delight to hear again and again—

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

To persons of that sort, the Gospel message never grows stale! It is like that familiar song, "Home, Sweet Home," which had such a strange influence over our soldiers in the Crimea, only that whereas the playing or singing of that tune brought on such an attack of homesickness that the men who heard it, when far from their native land, were rendered quite unfit for duty! In our case, the familiar story of Jesus and His dying love, and His substitutionary sufferings will never cease to charm our ears and fire our hearts with holy ardor in His blessed service. I am also quite sure that to those who least relish the Gospel and who know the least about it, it is beyond measure important that they should hear it as often as they possibly can—for it may be that one of these days it will find an entrance into their hitherto closed hearts.

Therefore, preacher, ring that bell again and again! It may be that when you rang it before, their ears were stopped up, so that they did not catch its sweet silvery note. So, ring it again, Brother, for it may be that the next time you do so, the Holy Spirit will unstop those ears that have been so long shut to the Gospel—yes, even though the blessed bell has been ringing close to them for 70 years or more and they have grown

gray, or white, without having ever caught the sweetness of its melodious music! So, ring that bell again, Brother! Yes, even if they are dying, let them still hear it, for the dying have, through the mercy of God, at last heard and heeded it and so have begun to hear the harps of angels only a few moments afterwards!

I am going, at least on this occasion, to do what I urge other preachers often to do—that is, keep to the simplicities of the faith, trying to show how the dire disease of sin is strangely cured by the stripes that fell upon our Lord Jesus Christ—for both the Prophet and the Apostle say that we are healed by or with "His stripes"

I. So, I begin by saying THERE IS A DISEASE IMPLIED.

You cannot heal men who are not sick, or wounded. It matters not how matchless the medicine is—even though it is the substitutionary suffering of the Son of God, Himself—if it is to heal, it must heal some malady or other and, Brothers and Sisters, it is quite true that there is a dreadful disease which has attacked the whole human race! You scarcely need that I should tell you that it is the disease of *sin*. It came to this earth when that old serpent, the devil, tempted Mother Eve. Then did this dire disease begin to course through human veins and it has descended to every individual of the whole race and, at this moment, it lurks within each one of us. "Lurks," did I say? No, it is worse than that, for it has manifested itself—it has displayed its venom and virulence, it has shown itself in the life and, like the leprosy upon the brow of the man suffering from that dreadful disease—it is visible upon us all!

The disease of sin is exceedingly injurious. There are some diseases that affect the heart and sin has turned the heart of man to a stone. There are some other diseases that afflict the eyes and sin has blinded man's understanding—his mental and spiritual eyesight. There are some diseases that affect the hands and, in our natural condition, we cannot work for God's Glory, or grasp Gospel blessings because the disease of sin has spiritually withered our hands. We never know at exactly what point the danger from any disease may be the greatest, for it is not always that which appears upon the surface which is most to be dreaded, as there are hidden places in the system which may be seriously affected without giving eternally any indication of the mischief. The Lord desires truth in our inward parts, but sin is the enemy of truth and it is only the Lord who can make us to know wisdom in our hidden parts, for sin has made us foolish, even as Solomon says that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child." Sin has injured us in more ways than I can tell. When man fell, it was no slight accident that happened—it was the utter ruin of humanity that occurred! There is something grand, at least in appearance, about humanity, even in its ruined condition, for it is the work of God, but, alas, the bat, the owl and the viper and many other unclean creatures have made human nature to be their foul den. "Lucifer, son of the morning," is not the only one who has fallen as from Heaven, for this is also true of the whole race of mankind!

You see, then, that this disease of sin is most injurious. There are some diseases that make men quite helpless. We have seen a man who could not do a day's work even if his very life depended upon it. He could

not lift so much as his hand—and he had to be fed, nursed and cared for by others, for he was paralyzed. And, in a *spiritual* sense, so far as anything in the nature of good works is concerned, sin has paralyzed man altogether. Indeed, it has taken his very *life* away from him so that he is truly said to be "dead in trespasses and sins."

Sin is also a disease which frequently becomes loathsome. In some men who have had the opportunity of indulging their evil propensities and passions to the utmost, sin has become so loathsome that even their fellow men have had to put them away by themselves. What are our prisons and many of our asylums but moral morgues where we have to shut up leprous men and women lest they should 'contaminate the whole race.' I said that sin is a disease which frequently becomes loathsome—I meant loathsome to men—for it is always loathsome to God and to the holy angels. I suppose that the most lascivious ulcer which ever sickened the pitying gaze of a sympathizing onlooker could not be so disgusting to the mind of the most delicate man or woman as the slightest sin is to the mind of God. His righteous soul loathes and abhors it and He says of it, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

Frequently, also, sin makes men a source of danger to others. It is really always so, although we do not always know it, for every evil example is contagious, every foul word is infectious and there is something about even the most moral man which it would not be safe for others to copy. Certainly, if he has that dreadful disease of unbelief in his heart, it would be wrong for any other person to imitate him in that respect, whatever excellences may stand side by side with it!

In some cases this disease of sin becomes very painful. I wish it were painful to every unhealed man and woman, for they might then be anxious to be cured of it. And let me tell you that there is no disease to which our flesh is heir that can bring such pain to a man as sin can, when once his conscience is quickened by the Holy Spirit! I think I know, as well as most men, what physical pain means, but I would sooner lie bedridden, suffering all the pains that could be crowded into a human body and lie like that for 70 years than endure the tortures of a guilty conscience, or the pangs of a soul under sentence of condemnation! I know that when I was under conviction of sin, I could sympathize with Job when he said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." It is a terrible thing to see yourself as in a mirror with all your wounds bleeding and to feel that you must say, "They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." It is a truly awful experience to see a devil in each wound and to realize that you are, yourself, the worst of devils—and to hear the curse of God, like distant thunder, rumbling far away, yet constantly coming nearer and nearer—and to live in dread of the storm of everlasting wrath beating upon your unprotected head! Yes, the disease of sin is painful to the last degree to men whose consciences are not "seared with a hot iron."

Worst of all, this disease causes death. There is no human being in whom sin has not already caused spiritual death—and no one in whom it will not cause eternal death unless God, in His Almighty Grace, shall prevent it. "The soul that sins, it shall die," is a declaration that is only

too terribly true! What that death will be, I shall not, at this time, attempt to show, but such words as these, coming from the lips of Christ, may tell you—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment," "into the fire that shall never be quenched; where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." May none of you ever have to endure that death which never dies—that dread eternal death of which the Lord of Life so positively speaks! Yet, as surely as God lives, you will experience even that dread doom unless this mortal malady is healed!

II. Now, turning from the disease, let me point out to you THE MEDICINE MENTIONED IN THE TEXT—"With His stripes we are healed."

Brothers and Sisters, you know right well that the medicine here meant is the substitutionary suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ on His people's behalf. I cannot imagine how anyone can read the chapter from which our first text is taken without seeing that "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." This is strange medicine—that the wounds of Jesus should heal the wounds which sin has made—that the wounds upon His back and shoulders where the cruel scourge struck Him, should, by their blueness, bring spiritual healing to us—yet so it is. And this is the *only* remedy for the malady of sin. There have been many remedies recommended by various quacks—some have come with their so-called "sacraments." Some with their ceremonies, some with their philosophies—but they are all quacks and their medicines have no healing power! The only cure for the wounds of sin is to be found in the stripes of Jesus!

Let me put this point very plainly before you. Jesus Christ stood in the place of the sinner and bore—that the sinner might not have to bear—the righteous anger of God because of the sinner's guilt. They who say that we represent God as being angry and only to be appeased by the sufferings of His Son, know that they altogether misrepresent the Truth of God that we believe. What we say is that the Infinitely Holy God could not righteously have pardoned sin without having first vindicated His Justice and the majesty of His Law. I do not think that the enlightened conscience of man could ever have been contented without an atoning sacrifice. There is a necessity, not only with God, but also with us, for a sacrifice for sin—we must have it, or else our conscience cannot rest. This was the question I used to ask when I was in the depths of soul trouble—"How can God be just and yet forgive my sin?" I wanted Him to forgive me, but I did not want Him to do it unjustly, for, if I could have obtained the forgiveness of my sin at the expense of His Justice, I do not think that such forgiveness could ever have appeared to me to be consistent with the Character of God!

It was only when I understood that God could be both just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus that my soul rolled herself upon that blessed Truth of God and enjoyed such a luxury of rest as she had never even dreamt of before! Yes, God is infinitely just! His Justice is as stern as if it had never been blended with His Grace, yet He is as merciful and gracious as if justice had never been one of His attributes! This wonderful blending is gloriously manifested in the Atonement of Jesus Christ,

where, mark you, God Himself—for Christ is God, as He says, "I and My Father are One"—God, Himself, the righteous Judge, becomes the innocent Sufferer, standing in the culprit's place and sheathing in His own heart the gleaming blade that must, otherwise, have been bathed in human blood! O Sirs, it is what Jesus bore that will heal you—what Jesus bore when He stood in the place of sinners and offered to Infinite and inflexible Justice a full recompense for the crime, guilt, sin and transgression of all who believe in Him!

Look away from your sin to the great Sin-Bearer! We will not trace Him through all His sufferings, but begin with the "stripes" He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. Can you bear to look upon that terrible agony, to hear His piercing cries and to see His copious tears? Above all, can you bear to look upon His bloody sweat? His three favored disciples could not, for, "He found them sleeping for sorrow." Can you bear to look upon Him as the rough men, guided by Judas, the traitor, seize Him and lead Him away to the various halls of judgment and charge Him with sedition and blasphemy? Can you endure to see Him forsaken by every friend He had and denied by that impetuous follower who had said, not, long before, "Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You"? Can you bear to see Him surrounded by the brutal Roman soldiers—maltreated, mocked and spit upon by the unfeeling mob of railing legionaries? Can you bear to gaze upon His crown of thorns? Can you bear to listen to the blows from that awful scourge as they fall in quick succession upon His blessed back and shoulders?

I must not go on to tell the sad, sad story at full length—it is too sorrowful to relate—but you know how, at last, they fastened Him to the tree of the curse, then lifted Him up upon the Cross, dislocating all His bones as they dashed it into the socket in the earth which they had prepared to hold it. You have read of the fever which came upon Him till His mouth was dried up like an oven and His tongue clung to the roof of His mouth. Yet, after terrible as all this was, it was only the shell, the externals of His bodily suffering! The suffering of His soul was the very soul of His suffering. It was by the smiting of His body and the more terrible smiting of His soul—the suffering of His entire Manhood in unison with His Godhead—that He took away the sin of His people and opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers!

Let me urge all of you who are diseased through sin to go for healing to those blessed wounds of Jesus! Long ago I learned the secret of this wondrous way of healing and, now, whenever my wounds bleed afresh, I go again to the—

"Fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins"—

for it is "with His stripes" that I am healed.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to say a little about THE HEALING HERE MENTIONED.

Our second text speaks of it as a thing that was done in the past—"By whose stripes you *were* healed," so I would like you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to remember when you were healed years ago. Do you recollect the place where Jesus met with you? I remember, to a yard,

where He revealed Himself to my soul. Some of God's saints do not, but that does not matter in the least! A living man must have been born, at some time or other, even if he does not know when his birthday was. And as long as we have been healed, we need not be anxious to know when it took place. Still, it is helpful if we can recollect when God gave us healing through the wounds of His beloved Son.

Let me try to describe the process of healing. First of all, the stripes of Jesus heal us *by taking away the guilt of sin*. That is the all-important work. By nature and by practice, too, we are guilty. But when we look to Christ's stripes, we see our guilt laid upon Him and, as it cannot be in two places at one time, we know that it is not on us any longer. The moment that a poor sinner sees Christ bearing His burden of guilt and trusts Christ as his Burden-Bearer, his burden is all gone. We sang, a little while ago, that blessed hymn about Substitution in which one line says—

"Now there's no load for me."

There *was* a load on me, but Jesus took my load upon Himself, so—

"Now there's no load for me."

That was the grandest of all God's transactions, when He took sin off the sinner and laid it upon His sinless Son! As the Prophet Isaiah says, "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." Or as the Apostle Paul says, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Yes, the sinner who believes in Jesus is no longer accounted guilty by God! Though black as night, before, the moment he looks to Christ, he becomes white as the newly-fallen snow. Though he was a stranger to God and condemned for his sin, as soon as he believes, he becomes "accepted in the Beloved" and he may shout with the Apostle Paul, "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us!"

The stripes of Jesus are also *an Infallible remedy for the disease of despair.* What thousands of men and women in this world have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves while under a sense of sin! They never had even half a glimpse of comfort till they were told that Jesus took their sin and carried it, in His own body, up to the tree and there forever made an end of it, that they might be saved! I should like those who do not believe in Christ's substitution for sinners to have to deal with some troubled souls who have come to me. Ah, you may evoke, you may charm, you may use fine language and talk about the "moral influence" of the Sacrifice of Christ—but what use will all that be to those who are on the borders of despair? Will you take from us, who have to deal with sin-sick souls, the only balm we have to give them? I have done with Christianity, I have done with the Bible, I have done with all preaching if you can once convince me that the Substitution of Christ is not a fact! This Truth of God is, to me, the kernel, the core, the marrow, the vital essence of the Gospel! With this remedy in my hands, I can turn despair into confidence! But, take this away and there remains nothing for me to preach to the despondent and the despairing. Let the man who can

disprove it—if disproved it can be, and that I do not believe—recollect that he will have taken away from the sky of many of us the only sun that shines and from our life the only joy we have, for, if this Truth of God is gone, all is gone! O bleeding Savior, if You did not suffer in our place, it would have been better for us if we had never been born! But we know that Your stripes do heal the disease of despair, so we will still pass on the remedy to all whom we find in that terrible condition.

Bring the stripes of Jesus home to a man—they heal his soul of a thousand other ills, such as this—*the idea of trifling with sin*. That is a very common disease. It is incidental to sin that men sin and think nothing of it. "Oh," they say, "What is sin? We are poor frail creatures and we make mistakes, but what of that?" That is man's estimate of sin, but, O You bleeding Son of God, when we once get a clear view of Your wounds—

"Sin does like itself appear."

See God's only-begotten Son dying on the Cross that sin may be put away and you will never again think it a trifle! The Sacrifice of Calvary was upon a scale so vast that there is no human method of measuring it. God, the Creator, Provider and Judge of All, has taken upon Himself our Nature and made expiation for our sin by His own death in the midst of the utmost ignominy, shame and agony! Now, sin could not have been a little thing to need such an Atonement as that to put it away—and the man who believes in Jesus, henceforth looks on sin in the right light and never trifles with it again.

It also corrects his estimate as to eternal things. The other day he said, "What do I care about Heaven or Hell? What is the Day of Judgment to me? These are bugbears to frighten children! What is it to me whether God is angry or not? Eternal things are for old women to think about—I mind the main chance and make all the money I can." Ah, but a sight of Christ on the Cross cures all that! Now eternity seems to be everything and time insignificant! Now to be reconciled to God, to live to His Glory seems to be the one thing necessary! The Cross of Christ is the great rectifier of human judgments. We trifle no longer with eternal things, but they become of infinite concern to us.

Then, next, *the wounds of Jesus cure us of the love of sin.* By nature, we love sin, but when we understand what sin cost Christ, we cannot love it any longer. If you had a very favorite knife which you prized much, but someone took it—and with it murdered your mother—you would loathe the instrument with which so foul a deed was done! And sin that you prized and played with has the blood of Christ on it. It cut Him to the very soul! So now you hate it. You say to yourself, "How can I love that cursed thing that made my Savior bleed?" There is no cure for the love of sin like the blood of Christ!

And it cures us, yet again, *because it awakens the dull, inanimate soul which had long been indifferent to God, into life and love*. When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he must love Him and serve Him. He cannot help doing so. You may tell him about the punishment of sin in terms of terror and you may describe the Glory of God in the most glowing language, but you cannot win a human heart. The deaf adder will not

hear with such charming, but, O Jesus, if You say to a sinner, with Your own lips, "I love you and I have given Myself for you," the iceberg-soul thaws into feeling, the granite begins to throb and the man says, "Love You, my Savior? Oh, how can I have lived so long without loving You? Love You?

"'Yes, I love You, and adore—
Oh, for Grace to love You more!'"

Nothing cures the hearts of coldness towards God like a sense of blood-bought pardon—and that will dissolve a heart of stone!

And so, let me add there is no form of mischief which sin takes, but the stripes of Jesus, when we come to know them, will heal us of them. If you love the world too much—yes, if you love it at all—come and drink from my Master's cup and it will make you feel yourself a stranger in the earth and you will set no store by this world any more. If you have been redeemed, you must have been a slave, so you will bow yourself in the dust with gratitude to your Redeemer. We see advertisements of medicines which are said to cure all diseases, but this is a medicine which *will* cure all ills. There is no form of the disease of sin upon which the stripes of Christ have not been tried—and the wondrous medicine has healed in every instance! Oh, whom has it not healed? We have seen the harlot healed and she has become a joyous Magdalene singing chastely and sweetly the love song unto Him that washed her from her sins in His own blood! We have seen the thief touched with this sacred heal-all and he has become a saint amidst the seraphim above! We have seen a persecutor who has but taken a draught of this medicine and he has begun to preach—and he has preached right on and he has said, 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Yes, we have seen men lying at the very gates of Hell, in their own estimation, despairing, feeling the serpents of remorse twisting their desperate coils about them everywhere and the venom coursing through their blood—and they have lifted up themselves and smiled—and the serpents have dropped off them, as they have looked to the Son of Man, as the bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent—and they have been healed at once! I would that any here who doubt this, would try it for themselves. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good," for there never was a soul yet that received this medicine of the stripes of Jesus who was not thereby healed!

IV. Now, to close, WHAT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO GET THIS HEALING?

The answer is, first, *you must believe this to be true*. You must believe in the wondrous mystery of God Incarnate. There were many witnesses to Christ's Incarnation and death and there are four narrators of the story of His life and Sacrifice. There were many who saw Jesus risen from the dead and saw Him till He rose to Heaven—they knew that they saw Him and many of them died as martyrs because they said so. They were simple, honest witnesses—not ecclesiastics trained in twisting language and inventing fictions. They were fishermen and, many of them, poor men, with a few of another rank, but they all saw Jesus and they saw His mi-

racles. They saw Him tread the sea and they saw Him die—and saw Him after He was risen—and they tracked Him till He went up into Glory! And they received His Spirit and, in His name, they worked miracles—and they were quite sure that what they testified was true. Some of us have believed their testimony and we have been healed by this medicine. And if you would be healed, you must receive it yourselves.

I think I hear you say, "Why, I have always believed the Bible to be true." Well, then, next, *you must take the medicine.* What does the physician put at the beginning of his prescription? A great "R," which stands for the Latin word, "*Recipe.*"What does that mean? "Take." "Take of such-and-such a drug so much, and of another, so much." That is what the Gospel says—"Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." That word I leave with you, *Recipe*—take—receive. Take what? Why, take the sufferings of Christ to be instead of your sufferings! Trust in Him to save you now because He died for all who trust Him! Rest yourself on Him now!

"Suppose I should trust Him and He should not save me?" Ah, Soul, that were to suppose Him to be a liar—and that cannot be! He that believes in Him is not condemned. Or, as He put it Himself, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." You have to come to Him just as you are and trust Him to save you, relying upon the merit of His blood and righteousness to stand for you before the Justice of God. Can you do that? "Why," says one, "it seems so simple!" And are you going to quarrel with it because it is simple? Are you as foolish as Naaman who would not wash in Jordan because it was so simple? He wanted the Prophet to perform a great many ceremonies, but he would not at first bring himself down to wash, that he might be clean! Surely, my Friend, you are not such a fool as that! I will give you credit for more sense. "But do you really mean that if I trust my soul with Christ, believing He can save me, I am saved?" Mean it? Mean it? If that is not so, I am not saved myself, for this is where I stand! I have believed in Jesus Christ and rested myself on Him. and if He does not, cannot, or will not save me and I should ultimately be ashamed of my hope, I must be damned—for I have not a second hope! You have heard of the fox that had three holes to run to—but the Christian has only one—and if that is stopped up, "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I do not know what you think about sermons. Perhaps you imagine that preaching is very easy work. It is not so to me. After having been laid aside sick, I tell you that if I could crawl to this pulpit on my hands and knees, it would be a delight to me to once again proclaim my Master's Gospel! But, at the same time, I feel that I may have very few more opportunities of preaching and, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, my anxious desire is that every time I preach, I may clear myself of the blood of all men—that if I step from this platform to my coffin, I may have told at least all I knew of the way of salvation! I wish you unconverted ones could bring yourselves to take this Word of God home to yourselves, for, some day you will hear the Gospel for the last time—you will listen to

the last invitation—and *this* may be the last time you will hear the story of the dying Savior.

Will you have Him now, or not? With some of you, it is now or never! Hark to the ticking of the clock! As the pendulum swings to and fro, it says to some of you, "Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never!" Will you trust your soul with Jesus? If you will, the soft persuasions of His blessed Spirit are guiding you that way. Cast your guilty soul on Him and you are saved! But if you will have another Savior, or be your own Savior and reject Christ, I am clear of your blood! And when we stand before that dread tribunal when Heaven and earth shall shake, and reel, and pass away like a mist before the rising sun, you will have no one but yourself to blame that you are lost! God save you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:27-54.

Verses 27-30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium 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.* Ridicule is very painful to bear at any time and soldiers have been masters of that cruel art when they have been encouraged in it by their leaders. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, who it was that bore all this shameful treatment from these brutal men—your Lord and the angels' Lord—the Maker of Heaven and earth who had deigned, for a while, to veil his Deity in human flesh! And there He stood, to be "set at nothing"—to be made nothing of—by those rough Roman legionaries, the creatures of His own hands whom He could have destroyed in a moment by a word or a wish! What matchless condescension our gracious Redeemer displayed even in His own deepest degradation and agony!

31, 32. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; he they compelled to bear His Cross.* And I think that he must have been a glad man to have such an honor thrust upon him, yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you, also, to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you by way of ridicule for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden and, as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign's hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the Cross after Him!

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.* We do not know why it was so called. There have been many conjectures concerning the name, but they are only conjectures. It was probably just a little knoll outside the gate of the city—the common place of execution for malefactors. The special points to be

noted are that Jesus suffered *outside* the gate, in the regular place of doom—the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem—and so was numbered with the transgressors.

34. *They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall.* A stupefying draught was usually given to the criminals who were crucified, to mitigate their agony. But Christ did not wish for that to be done in His case.

34. *And when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* He came to earth that He might suffer and He would retain all His faculties while suffering. He would have every nerve made into a straight road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, for He would drink, even to the last dregs, every drop that was in the cup of suffering for His people's sin.

35, 36. *And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there.* Some of them gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of His suffering. Others watching Him out of mere curiosity. But there were some, hard by the Cross, who stood there to weep in sympathy with Him—a sword piercing through their own hearts while the Son of Man was being put to death.

37. *And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* And so He is. When will the Jews acknowledge Him as their King? They will do so one day. Perhaps they will do so when Christians begin to think and speak more kindly of them than they usually do. When the hardness of heart on our part towards them shall pass away, it may be that their hardness of heart towards Christ will also pass away. Long have they been despised, oppressed and persecuted in many lands, so that, by some means, they might be brought to look, in penitence, upon Him whom they crucified—and to claim Him as their Lord and Savior!

38-40. *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 destroyed the temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.* That is the devil's old Doctrine—"Save yourself. Look out for yourselves. Live for yourselves. Be selfish." But Christ could never act like that. He came to live and die for others. "Save yourself," was not the Doctrine that He either preached or practiced. And this is another old taunt of Satan and those who follow him—"If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross and we will believe in You." There are plenty who would be willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ Crucified. "He was a good Man," they say, "a great Prophet, no doubt far in advance of His times," and so on. But, if you talk like that, you are not on safe ground, for if Christ was not the Son of God, at any rate He professed to be and He made people think He was—and if He was not, He was an impostor and not a good Man at all! You must either repudiate Christ altogether, or take Him with His Cross—it must be Christ Crucified, or no Christ at all.

41-44. *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. The thieves also. Those who were crucified with Him and were sharers of His misery.

44-46. *Which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth. 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?* This was the climax of His grief—not merely to suffer intense agony of body, not only to be mocked alike by priests and people—but to be forsaken of His God. Yet this was necessary as a part of the penalty that was due to sin. God must turn away from anyone who has sin upon him, so, as sin was laid upon Christ, God had to turn His face even away from His well beloved Son because He was bearing His peoples' sins upon the accursed tree.

47-49. *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.* Mocking Him even in His prayers, for they well knew the difference between Eloi and Elijah!

50. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.* You know what He said when He cried with a loud voice—"It is finished."

51-54. *And, behold, the veil of the Temple was torn 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 earthquakes, and these things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly that was the Son of God.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 819.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—14.

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"CHRIST IS ALL"
NO. 2888

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 4, 1876.

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is All and in all." Colossians 3:11.

PAUL is writing concerning the new creation and he says that, in it, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is All." The new creation is a very different thing from the old one. Blessed are all they who have both seen the Kingdom of Heaven and entered into it. In the first creation, we are born of the flesh—and that which is born of the flesh is, even at the best, nothing but flesh and can never be anything better. But in the new creation, we are born of the Spirit and so we become spiritual and understand spiritual things. The new life in Christ Jesus is an eternal life and it links all those who possess it with the eternal realities at the right hand of God above.

In some respects the new creation is so like the old one that a parallel might to drawn between them, but, in far more respects, it is not at all like the old creation. Many things are absent from the new creation which were found in the old one—and many things which were accounted of great value in the first creation are of little or no worth in the new—while many distinctions which were greatly prized in the old creation are treated as mere insignificant trifles in the new creation. The all-important thing is for each one of us to put to himself or herself the question, "Do I know what it is to have been renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who creates anew? Do I know what it is to have been born twice, to have been born-again—born from above by the effectual working of God, the Holy Spirit? Do I understand what it is to have spiritually entered a new world wherein dwells righteousness?" It is concerning this great Truth of God that I am going to speak and, first, I shall say something upon *what is obliterated in the new creation.* And, secondly, upon *what stands in its place.*

I. First, as to WHAT IS OBLITERATED IN THE NEW CREATION. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free."

That is to say, first, in the Kingdom of Christ *there is an obliteration of all national distinctions.* I suppose there will always be national distinc-

tions in the world until Christ comes, even if they should then be all terminated. The mischief was worked when men tried to build the city and tower, in the plain of Shinar, and so brought Babel, or confusion into the world. The one family became transformed into many—a necessary evil to prevent a still greater one. The unity at Babel would have been far worse than the confusion has ever been, just as the spiritual union of Babylon, that is, Rome, the Papal system, has been infinitely more mischievous to the Church and to the world, than the division of Christians into various sects and parties could ever have been. Babel has not been an altogether unmitigated evil. It has, no doubt, worked a certain amount of good and prevented colossal streams of evil from reaching a still more awful culmination.

Still, the separation is, in itself, an evil and it is, therefore, in the Lord's own time and way to be done away with. And *spiritually* it is already abolished. In the Church of Christ, wherever there is real union of heart among Believers, nationality is no hindrance to true Christian fellowship. I feel just as much love toward any Brother or Sister in Christ who is not of our British race as I do toward our own Christian countrymen and countrywomen. Indeed, I sometimes think I feel even more the force of the spiritual union when I catch the Swiss tone, or the French, or the German breaking out in the midst of the English, as we often do here, thank God. I seem to feel all the more interest in these beloved Brothers and Sisters because of the little difference in nationality that there is between us. Certainly, Beloved, in any part of the true Church of Christ, all national distinctions are swept away and we "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God."

Under the Christian dispensation, the distinction or division of nationality has gone from us in this sense. We once had our national heroes—each nation still glories in its great men of the heroic age, or in its mythical heroes—but the one Champion and Hero of Christianity is our Lord Jesus Christ who has slain our dragon foes, routed all our adversaries, broken down the massive fortress of our great enemy and set the captives free! We sing no longer of the valiant deeds of our national heroes—St. George, St. Andrew, St. Patrick, St. Denis and the other so-called "saints" who were either only legendary, or else anything but "saints" as we understand the term! We sing the prowess of the King of all saints, the mighty Son of David who is worthy of our loftiest praises! King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table we are quite willing to forget when we think of "another King, one Jesus," and of another Table, where they who sit are not merely good knights of Jesus Christ, but are made kings and priests unto Him who sits at the head of the festal board. Barbarian, Scythian, Greek, Jew—these distinctions are all gone as far as we are concerned—for we are all one in Christ Jesus. We boast not of our national or natural descent, or of the heroes whose blood may be in our veins. It is enough for us that Christ has lived, Christ has died and Christ has "spoiled principalities and powers" and trampled down sin, death and Hell even as He fell amid the agonies of Calvary.

Away, too, has gone all our national history, so far as there may have been any desire to exalt it for the purpose of angering Christian Brothers and Sisters of another race. I wish that even the names of wars and famous battlefields could be altogether forgotten, but if they do remain in the memories of those of us who are Christians, we will not boast as he did who said, "But 'twas a famous victory." Nor will we proudly sing of—

"The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze."

As Christians, our true history begins—no, I must correct myself, for it had no beginning except in that dateless eternity when the Divine Trinity in Unity conceived the wondrous plan of Predestinating Grace, electing love, the Substitutional Sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of His chosen people, the full and free justification of all who believe and the eternal glory of the whole redeemed family of God! This is our past, present and future history! We who are Christians take down the Volume of the Book wherein these things are written and we make our boast in the Lord—and thus the boasting is not sinful.

As to laws and customs, of which each nation has its own, it is not wrong for a Christian to take delight in a good custom which has been long established, or earnestly to contend for the maintenance of ancient laws which have preserved inviolate the liberty of the people age after age. But, still, the customs of Christians are learned from the example of Christ—and the laws of Believers are the precepts laid down by Him. When we are dealing with matters relating to the Church of Christ, we have no English customs, or French customs, or American customs, or German customs. Or, if we have, we should let them go and have only Christian customs henceforth. Did our Lord Jesus Christ command anything? Then, let it be done! Did He forbid anything? Then away with it! Would He smile upon a certain action? Then perform it at once! Would He frown upon it? Then mind that you do the same! Blessed is the Believer who has realized that the laws and customs for the people of God to observe are plainly written out in the life of Christ and that He has become to us, now, "All and in all."

Christ, by giving liberty to all His people, has also obliterated the distinctions of nationality which we once located in various countries. One remembers, with interest, the old declaration, "*Romanus sum*," ("I am a Roman"), for a citizen of Rome, wherever he might go, felt that he was a free man whom none would dare to hurt, else Roman legions would ask the reason why! And an Englishman, in any country wherever he may be, still feels that he is one who was born free and who would sooner die than become a slave, or hold another man or woman in slavery. But, Brothers and Sisters, there is a higher liberty than this—the liberty with which Christ has made His people free! And when we come into the Church of God, we talk about *that* liberty and we believe that Christians—even if they have not the civil and religious rights which *we* possess—should still be as free in Christ as we are. There are still many in various parts of the world who do not enjoy the liberties that we have,

who, notwithstanding their bonds, are spiritually free, for, as the Son has made them free, they are free, indeed!

Christ also takes from us all inclination or power to boast of our national prestige. To me it is prestige enough to be a Christian—to bear the cross Christ gives me to carry and to follow in the footsteps of the great Cross-Bearer. What is the power, in which some boast, of sending soldiers and cannon to a distant shore, compared with the Almighty Power with which Christ guards the weakest of us who dares to trust Him? What reason is there for a man to be lifted up with conceit just because he happens to have been born in this or that highly-favored country? What is such a privilege compared with the glories which appertain to the man who is born-again from above—who is an heir of Heaven, a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ—and who can truthfully say, "All things are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's."

What is the wondrous internationalism that levels all these various nationalities in the Church of Christ and makes us all one in Him? Spiritually we have all been born in one country—the New Jerusalem is the mother of us all. It is not my boast that I am a citizen of this or that earthly city or town. It is my joy that I am one of the citizens of "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Christ has fired all of us who are His people with a common enthusiasm. He has revealed Himself to each one of us as He does not unto the world and, in the happy remembrance that we belong to Him, we forget that we are called by this or that national name and only remember that He is our Lord and that we are to follow where He leads the way! He has pointed us to Heaven as the leader of the Goths and Huns pointed his followers to Italy and said, "There is the country whence come the luscious wines of which you have tasted. Go and take the vineyards and grow the vines for yourselves." And so they forgot that they belonged to various tribes and they all united under the one commander who promised to lead them on to the conquest of the rich land for which they panted. And now we who are in Christ Jesus, having tasted of the Eshcol clusters which grow in the heavenly Canaan, follow our glorious Leader and Commander as the Israelites followed Joshua, forgetting that we belong to so many different tribes, but knowing that there is an inheritance reserved in Heaven for all who follow where Jehovah-Jesus leads the way!

The next thing to be observed in our text is that *ceremonial distinctions are obliterated.* When Paul says that "there is neither circumcised nor uncircumcised," he recalls the fact that, under the Law, there were some who were peculiarly the children of promise to whom were committed the oracles of God. But there is no such thing as that now. Then there were others who stood outside the pale of the law—the sinners of the Gentiles, who were left in darkness until their time for receiving the Light of God should come. But Christ has fused these two into one and now, in His Church, "there is neither Greek nor Jew." I marvel at the insanity of those who try to prove that we are Jews—the lost ten tribes, forsooth! I grant you that the business transactions of a great many citizens of London afford some support to the theory, but it is only a theory—and a very

crazy one, too! But suppose they were able to prove that we are of the seed of Abraham after the flesh? It would not make any difference to us, for we are expressly told that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised"—for all Believers are one in Christ Jesus!

The all-important consideration is—Are we Christians? Do we really believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of our souls? The Apostle truly says, "Christ is All," for He has done away with all the distinctions that formerly existed between Jews and Gentiles. He has leveled down and He has leveled up. First He has leveled down the Jews and made them stand in the same class as the Gentiles, shutting them up under the custody of the very Law in which they gloried—and making them see that they can never come out of that bondage except by using the key of faith in Christ. So our Lord Jesus has stopped the mouths of both Jews and Gentiles and made them stand equally guilty before God, for, on the other hand, He has leveled up the outcast and despised Gentiles and has admitted us to all the privileges of His ancient Covenant, making us to be heirs of Abraham in a *spiritual* sense, "though Abraham is ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not." He has given to us all the blessings which belong to Abraham's seed because we, too, possess like precious faith as the father of the faithful had. So, "now in Christ Jesus we 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 ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace." Oh, what a blessing it is that all national and ceremonial distinctions are gone forever and that "Christ is All" to all who believe in Him!

A more difficult point, perhaps, is that of *social distinctions*. But that also has gone from the Church of Christ. "There is neither slave nor free," says the Apostle. Well, blessed be God, slavery has almost ceased to exist! Among Christians it has become a by-word and a proverb, though there was a time when some of them pleaded for it as a Divinely-ordained institution. But, oh, may the last vestige of it speedily disappear and may every man see it to be both his duty and his privilege to yield to his brother man his God-given rights and liberties! Yet, even in such a free country as ours happily is, there are still distinctions between one class and another and I expect there always will be. I do not suppose there can ever be in this world, any system, even if we could have the most profound philosophers to invent it, in which everybody will be equal. Or, if they ever should be all equal, they would not remain so for more than five minutes. We are not all equal in our form, shape, capacity and ability—and we never shall be! We could not have the various members of our body all equal—if we had such an arrangement as that, our body would be a monstrosity! There are some members of the body which must have a more honorable office and function than others have—but all the members are in the body and necessary to its due proportion.

So it is in the Church of Christ which is His mystical body. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, how very, very minute are the distinctions between the

various members of that body! You, my Brother, are rich, as the world reckons riches. Well, do not boast of your wealth, for riches are very apt to take to themselves wings and fly away! Probably more of you are poor, as far as worldly wealth is concerned. Well, then, do not murmur, for "all things are yours" if you are Christ's! And soon you will be where you will know nothing of poverty again forever and ever! True Christianity practically wipes out all these distinctions by saying, "This man, as one of Christ's stewards, has more of his Lord's money entrusted to him than others have, so he is bound to do more with it than they do with their portion—he must give away more than they do." This other man has far less than his rich brother, but Christ says that he is responsible for the right use of what he has—not for what he has not. As the poor widow's two mites drop into the treasury of the Lord, He receives her gift with as sweet a smile as that which He accorded to the lavish gifts of David and Solomon. In His Church, Christ teaches us that if we have more than others, we simply hold it in trust for those who have less than we have—and I believe that some of the Lord's children are poor in order that there may be an opportunity for their fellow Christians to minister to them out of their abundance.

We could not prove our devotion to Christ, in practical service such as He loves best, if there were not needy ones whom we could succor and support. Our Lord has told us how He will say in the Great Day of Account, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat," but that could not be the case if there were not one of the least of His brethren who was hungry and whom we could feed for His sake. "I was thirsty and you gave Me drink." But He could not say that if none of His poor brethren were thirsty. "I was sick and you visited Me." So there must be sick saints to be visited and cases of distress, of various kinds, to be relieved, otherwise there could not be the opportunity of practically proving our love to our Lord. In the Church of Christ it ought always to be so, Brothers and Sisters—we should love each other fervently with a pure heart, we should bear each other's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ—and we should care for one another and seek, as far as we can, to supply one another's needs. The rich brother must not exalt himself above the poor one, nor must the poor Christian envy his richer Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for in Him all these distinctions are obliterated and we sit down, at His Table, as members of the one family of which He is the glorious and ever-living Head—and we dwell together in unity, praising Him that national, ceremonial and social distinctions have, for us, all passed away and that "Christ is All and in all."

II. Possibly I have taken up too much of our time in describing what is obliterated from the old creation, so, now I will try more briefly to show you WHAT TAKES ITS PLACE IN THE CREATION—"Christ is All and in all."

First, Christ *is all our culture*. Has Christianity wiped out that grand name, "Greek"? Yes, in the old meaning of it and, in some senses, it is a great pity that it is gone, for the Greek was a cultured man. The Greek's every movement was elegance itself. The Greek was the standard of clas-

sic beauty and eloquence, but Christianity has wiped all that out and written, in its place, "Christ is All." And, Brothers and Sisters, the culture, the gracefulness, the beauty, the comeliness, the eloquence—in the sight of the best Judge of all those things, namely, God, the Ever-Blessed—which Christ gives to the true Christian, is better than all that Greek art or civilization ever produced! So we may cheerfully let it all go and say, "Christ is All."

Next, *Christ is all our Revelation.* There was the "Jew"—he was a fine fellow and there is still much to admire in him. The Semitic race seems to have been specially constituted by God for devout worship and the Jew, the descendant of believing Abraham, is still a firm Believer in one part of God's Word. He is, spiritually, a staunch Conservative in that matter, the very backbone of the world's belief. Alas, that his faith is so incomplete and that there is mingled with it so much tradition received from his fathers! Will you wipe out that name, "Jew"? Yes, because we who believe in Jesus glory in Him even as the Jew gloried in having received the oracles of God. Christ is "the Word of God" Incarnate—and all the Divine Revelation is centered in Him—and we hold fast the eternal Truths of God which have been committed unto us because of the power of Christ that rests upon us.

Then, next, *Christ is all our ritual.* There is not a circumcision now. That was the special mark of those who were separated from all the rest of mankind. They bore in their body undoubted indications that they were set apart to be the Lord's peculiar possession. Someone asks, "Will you do away with that distinguishing rite?" Yes, we will, for, in Christ every true Christian is set apart unto God—marked as Jesus Christ's special separated one by the circumcision made without hands!

Further, *Christ is all our simplicity.* Here is a man who says that "uncircumcision" is his distinguishing mark and adds, "I am not separated or set apart from others, as the so-called 'priest' is. I am a man among my fellow men. Wherever I go, I can mingle with others and feel that they are my brethren. I belong to the 'uncircumcision.' Will you rule that out?" Yes, we will, because we have, in Christ, all that uncircumcision means, for he who becomes a real Christian is the truest of all men—he is the most free from that spirit which says, "Stand by yourself, come not near me for I am holier than you." He is the true philanthropist, the real lover of men, even as Christ was! He was no separatist, in the sense in which some use that word. He went to a wedding feast. He ate bread in the house of a publican. And a woman of the city who was a sinner was permitted to wash His feet with her tears. He mingled with the rest of mankind and "the common people heard Him gladly." And He would have us to be as He was—the true Man among men, the great Lover of our race.

Once more, *Christ is all our natural traditions and our unconquerableness and liberty.* Here is "the rude barbarian," as the poet calls him. He says, "I shall never give up the free, manly life that I have lived so long. By my unshorn beard," (for that is the meaning of the term, Barbarian), "I swear it shall be so." "By the wild steppes and wide plains over which I roam unconquerable," says the Scythian, "I will never bend to the con-

ventionalities of civilization and be the slave of your modern luxuries." Well, it is almost a pity to have done with Barbarians and Scythians, in this sense, for there is a good deal about them to be commended—but we must wipe them all out. If they come into the Church of Christ, He must be "All, and in all," because everything that is manly, everything that is natural, everything that is free, everything that is bold, everything that is unconquerable will be put into them if "Christ is All" to them. They will get all the excellences that are in that freedom—without the faults appertaining to it!

Further, *"Christ is All," as our Master, if we are a "slave."* I think I see, in the great assembly at Colosse which Paul addressed, one who said, "But I am a slave! A man bought me at the auction mart and here, on my back, are the marks of the slave-holder's lash." And I think I hear him add, "I wish that disgrace could be wiped out." But Paul says, "Brother, it *is* wiped out! You are no slave, really, for Christ has made you free." Then the great Apostle of the Gentiles comes and sits down by his side and says to him, "The Church of Christ has absorbed you, Brother, by making us all like you—for we are all servants of one Master. And look," says Paul, as he bares his own back and shows the scars from his repeated scourging, "from henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." "And so," he says, laying his hand on the poor Christian slave, "I, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ, share your servitude and with me you are Christ's free man."

Lastly, *Christ is our Magna Charta. Yes, our liberty itself if we are "free."* Here comes the free man who was born free. Shall that clause stand, "neither slave nor free"? Oh, yes, let it stand! But not so stand that we glory in our national freedom, for Christ has given us a higher freedom! I may slightly alter the familiar couplet and say—

"He is the free man whom
The Lord makes free,
And all are slaves beside."

Oh, what multitudes of people in London are slaves—miserable slaves to the opinions of their neighbors—slaves to the caprice of Mrs. Grundy—slaves to "respectability!" Some of you dare not do a thing that you know to be right because somebody might make a remark about it. What are you but slaves? Yes, and there are slaves in the pulpit, every Sunday, who dare not speak the Truth of God for fear somebody will be offended! And there are also slaves in the pews and slaves in the shops and slaves all around. What a wretched life a slave lives! Yet, till you become a Christian and know what it is to wear Christ's bonds about your willing wrists, you will always feel the galling fetters of society and the bonds of custom, fashion, or this or that! But Jesus makes us free with a higher freedom, so we wipe out the mere terrestrial freedom which is too often only a sham—and we write, "Christ is ALL."

So, to conclude, remember that if you have Christ as your Savior, you do not need anybody else to save you. I see an old gentleman, over there in Rome, with a triple crown on his head. We do not want him, for "Christ is All." He says that he is the vicegerent of God. That is not true, but if

it were, it would not matter, for "Christ is All," so we can do without the Pope! Then I see another gentleman with an all-round dog collar of the Roman kennel type—he tells me that if I will confess my sins to him as the priest of the parish, he can give me absolution—but, seeing that "Christ is All," we can do without that gentleman as well as the other one, for anything that is over and above "all" must be a superfluity, if nothing worse. So is it with everything that is beside or beyond Christ—faith can get to Christ without Pope or priest! Everything that is outside Christ is a lie, for "Christ is All." All that is true must be inside Him, so we can do without all others in the matter of our soul's salvation.

But supposing that we have not received Christ as our Savior? Then how unspeakably poor we are! If we have not grasped Christ by faith, we have not laid hold of anything, for "Christ is All!" And if we have not Him who is All, we have nothing at all. "Oh," says one, "I go to chapel regularly." Yes, so far, so good. But if you have not Christ, you have nothing, for "Christ is All." "But I have been baptized," says another. Ah, but if you have not savingly trusted in Christ, your Baptism is only another sin added to all your others! "But I go to communion," says another. So much the worse for you if you have not trusted in Christ as your Savior. I wish I could put this thought into the heart of everyone here who is without Christ—no, I pray the Holy Spirit to impress this thought upon your heart—if you are without Christ, you are without everything that is worth having, for "Christ is All."

But, Christians, I would like to make your hearts dance by reminding you that if you have Christ as your Savior, you are rich to all the intents of bliss, for you have "all" that your heart can wish to have! Nobody else can say as much as that! The richest man in the world has only got something, though the something may be very great. Alexander conquered one world but you, Believer, in getting Christ as yours, have this world and also that which is to come—life and death, time and eternity! Oh, revel in the thought that, as Christ is yours, you are rich to an infinity of riches, for "Christ is All."

Now, if Christ really is yours and as Christ is All, then love Him, honor Him and praise Him! Mother, what were you doing this afternoon? Pressing that dear child of yours to your bosom and saying, "She is my all"? Take back those words, for they are not true! If you love Christ, *He* is your All and you cannot have another "all." Someone else has one who is very near and very dear. If you are that someone else and you have said in your heart, "He is my all," or, "She is my all," you have done wrong, for nothing and no one but Christ must be your "all." You will be an idolater and you will grieve the Holy Spirit if anything, or anyone except Christ becomes your "all." You who have lately lost your loved ones and you who have been brought low by recent losses in business—are you fretting over your losses? If so, remember that you have not lost your "all." You still have Christ and He is "All." Then what have you lost? I know that you have something to grieve over, but, after all, your "light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for you a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory." Therefore, comfort yourself with this thought—"I

have not really lost anything, for I still have All." When you have all things, find Christ in All and when you have lost all things, then find all things in Christ. I do not know, but I think that the latter is the better of the two!

Now, if Christ is all, then, beloved Brothers and Sisters, let us live for Him! If He is All, let us spend our strength and be ready to lay down the last particle of it that we have and to die for Him—and then let us, whenever we need anything, go to Him for it, for "Christ is All." Let us draw upon this bank, for its resources are infinite—we shall never exhaust them!

Lastly, and chiefly, let us send our hearts right on to where He is. Where our treasure is, there should our hearts be, also. Come, my Heart, up and away! What have you here that can fill you? What have you here that can satisfy you? Plume your wings and be up and away, for there is your roosting-place! There is the Tree of Life which can never be felled. Up and away and build there forever! The Lord help each one of you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-25.

Verse 1. *But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* I cannot pause to comment upon each of the precious sentences here, but every word is full of marrow and fatness. Ask the Lord to enable you to feed upon each sentence as it passes before your mind.

2-5. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not flow over you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. Fear not: for I am with you.* That always seems to me to be the master-consolation—"I am with you." What more does the most troubled heart need than God's Presence?

5. *I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west.* O Church of God, your elect members shall all, in due time, be fetched in—however far they may have wandered!

6, 7. *I will say to the north, Give up; and to the South, keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even everyone that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.* And that in a double sense, for God's people are twice made—made first in creation, but marred by the Fall—and then new-made as "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

8. *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.* There are plenty of them, for our proverb is true, "There are none so

blind as those that will not see, and none so deaf as those that will not hear." But even to such people as these God makes His appeal.

9. *Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.* God challenges all the false gods and their worshippers to produce a single fulfilled prophecy—to show one instance in which they have truly and correctly foretold any event or a chain of events! But all Jehovah's prophecies have been fulfilled, or will be in due season.

10-13. *You are My witnesses, says the LORD, and My servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are My witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God. Yes, before the day was, I am He and there are none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall reverse it?* It is a great blessing to know that the Lord is God—and not merely to know that as a matter of fact, but to feel it, to realize it—and to trust in God and act towards Him conscious that He, and He alone, is the living and true God.

14-17. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, which makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as a wick.* You know what happened to the army of Sennacherib when it came against Jerusalem. Horses and chariots were there in vast numbers and all the pomp and pageantry of a vast host of armed men. But they slept their last sleep—from which they never rose—when the Angel of the Lord flew through their ranks. So was it with Babylon itself. When the set time came, that long-established empire with its colossal power, was swept away like a vision of the night! It blazed like a wick and then was quenched forever. What cannot God do for His people when He lifts up His almighty arm?

18. *Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old.* For something better is going to be done in the future than all that God has done in the past! He will eclipse all His previous achievements and outdo the mightiest of His own miracles!

19, 20. *Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me.* As it slakes its thirst at an unknown spring.

20. *The dragons and the owls.* Alarmed and startled, as God's people pass by on their way to the land which God would give them.

20-22. *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise. But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob.* Have any of you restrained prayer of late? Has your path to the Mercy Seat been but little trodden? Then listen to God's gentle rebuke—"You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

22. *But you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* Weary of God? Have any of us grown weary of fellowship with Him? Weary of His Truth? Weary of His Day? Weary of His service? Oh, what strange ingratitude this is on our part!

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices.* There are some of God's people, at any rate, who forget to offer their sacrifices to God. If they do love Christ at all, their love is not practical, not self-sacrificing—it does not lead them to bring love-gifts to Him.

23. *I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* "I have made no irksome tax of it. I have not demanded anything of you. I have left it to your own free will to give according as your love suggests."

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but*—Alas, instead of good, there has been evil!

24. *You have made Me to serve with your sins.* What? Made God our servant when we ought to have served Him? Alas, I fear it is often so even with some of His own people!

24. *You have wearied Me with your iniquities.* O Sirs, how sad it is when God's people are weary of Him and He is weary of them! What shall we read after this? Surely the next sentence will be a thunder-clap and a lightning flash will blaze out of the sacred page! Listen—and be amazed at the mercy of the Lord!

25. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* What a blessed God to deal so graciously with His ungrateful erring people!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136 (SONG 1), 738, 732.

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

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS
NO. 2889

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples." Matthew 9:10.

How strangely different was our Lord Jesus Christ from the philosophers of Greece! They were reserved in their demeanor—eclectic, or studiously choice in their tastes and jealous of contact with their fellow creatures. Retiring from the busy haunts of men to encircle themselves with an atmosphere created by their own breath, they wanted none in their society but those who were fit companions for men so exalted in wisdom. Their disciples looked up to them with profound and insincere reverence—and they, themselves, in their various halls and classrooms, talked as men might who were teaching little children. And their pupils were completely subject to their dictation, but they always kept "the common people" at a distance, for they concerned not themselves to instruct the many, but only to teach the few who were ambitious to become wise like themselves!

Our blessed Lord and Master was no philosopher of this sort, shut up with His few disciples by themselves. He had His chosen twelve, but He and they mingled freely with the populace. He was a man among men and not a philosopher among those shut out from men. True, He taught greater wisdom than all the sages knew—and better philosophy than all the wise men of Greece understood—but He was still familiar with the people, tender-hearted, mild and of a gentle spirit. We have an instance of this here, where we read of Jesus doing what Solon or Socrates would never have done, for He sat down to take a meal with the common people around Him, eating with publicans and sinners!

How different, moreover, we may add, was Christ from the great Prophets of the olden time! With the utmost stretch of imagination, you cannot conceive of Moses sitting down to eat with sinners. He was a king in Jeshurun—an awful majesty surrounded the Prophet of Horeb who was mighty in word and deed. Wherever he went, he appeared as the man whom his high office had exalted above his fellows. His whole character, like his face on that memorable occasion when he had been in the mountain with God, shone so brilliantly that ordinary men could scarcely gaze upon him unless he covered his face with a veil. More than once he

was hidden in complete seclusion with God. True, he was accessible enough in the due exercise of his office to all who had complaints or charges to be decided at the bar where he presided as judge—but who would presume to think of being a companion to the mighty Moses? Even his brother, Aaron, and his sister, Miriam, seem to have had a great gulf fixed between them and their truly regal brother—they could not approach him without becoming deference, nor could he comes down to be on a social level with them.

Think also of Elijah, the very pattern and model of a Prophet of the Most High God. How high he towered above the men of his age! The fire which Elijah called from Heaven upon the Carmel sacrifice and upon the captains of fifties and their fifties, seemed to be a fitting type of his own character. One can admire him as a Prophet and follow him as a leader, but who could think of having him as a companion and friend? Stern, unflinching, faithful, he has little or no pity for the sinner. The only thing that an erring man could say to Elijah would be what Ahab said to him, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" His sternness in rebuking sin, his bold, thundering denunciation of idolatry made men tremble before him—and we can hardly imagine that publicans and sinners would have been anxious to sit down to eat with him.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, the Christ whose Gospel we preach is no unapproachable philosopher! The Glory of His Person reflects even a brighter luster than the dignity of His office. He appeared among men not as one who had been lifted up from the ranks to obtain a position for Himself, but as one who bowed Himself down from the Heaven of heavens that He might bring blessings to the sons of men—yet the ignorant and the illiterate may find in Him their best Friend. He is no stern Law-Giver, like Moses, who, wrapping around himself the robe of his own integrity, looks upon the transgressor simply with the eye of justice! Neither is He merely the pitiless denouncer of iniquity and crime, or the bold enunciator of penalty and punishment. Christ is the gentle Lover of our souls! He is the Good Shepherd coming forth, not so much to slay the wolf as to save the sheep! As a nurse tenderly watches over the child committed to her charge, so does Jesus watch over the souls of men and, like as a father pities his children, so does He pity sinful men. He does not stand upon a lofty height and bid sinners ascend to Him, but, coming down from the mountain and mingling in social communion with them, He draws them to Himself by the magnetic force of His Almighty Love. "Jesus, the sinners' Friend"—that is His true title, for that is what He really is! O Jesus, may we personally know You as our Friend just now! We are sinners, be You our Friend.

Before I come directly to the subject, I want to paint three pictures in order to show you, by the force of contrast, the way in which Christ, the Physician of Souls, really cures and heals. There have been various schemes for cleansing society from the pollution that comes through sin. Even men who were sinners have been conscious that iniquity so saps and undermines the foundations of society that it must, if possible, be uprooted and destroyed. Behold the many schemes which men have de-

vised for this purpose! Listen to the voices which have charmed men's ears and awed their hearts, but have not been able to change for the better their condition!

First came *Severity*, and he said, "There is a plague broken out among the people! Clear out the tainted ones. There are the fatal spots upon their brows, the venom of the dread disease has worked its way to their skin—there is no doubt about their being infected—therefore, slay them—let them be destroyed! Take them away, executioner, it is better that they should be put to death than that the whole nation should perish. Cut off the few sickly sheep lest the whole flock should be affected." But the Savior came and He said, "No, no, not so. Why will you destroy them? If you do so, the disease will be spread all the more, for their blood shall be spattered on the men who slay them and shall infect their executioners. And they, in their turn, will come back and infect the man who condemned the plague-stricken to be slain! And here, in the very Hall of Judgment, the signs of the dread disease shall be seen even upon the judge's brow! Why deal you thus hardly with your brethren? You are all diseased—there is a plague upon every one of you! If you thus begin to uproot some of the tares, you may not only uproot the wheat, but you may uproot the whole field which, after all, might bring forth something which would be better than absolute sterility. No, spare them, spare them! Let them not die! Give them into My hands."

His request was, of course, granted, and He went to those whom He had rescued and He said, "Your forfeited lives are spared. It is well known that according to the laws of your fellow men, you deserve to die, but I have undertaken that and, without the violation of law—and so you shall escape" Then He touched them, healed their running sore, and said to all who stood near, "Now these men shall spread life through your ranks, for I have restored them from their sickness. And now, instead of being to you wellsprings of everything that is abominable and filthy, they shall become fountains of everything that is lovely, pure and of good repute." Glory be unto You, O Jesus! Glory be unto You, for You have done far more than Severity could ever have accomplished!

Next came one called *Stern Morality* and he said, "Let us not kill them. Let not the laws be like those of Draco, written in blood, but let us build a leper house with high walls and let us thrust them in there and shut them out from all contact with their kind. In this way they shall live, but shall do no injury to their fellows. And the self-righteous Pharisee said, "Let my house be far away from the infected spot lest the wind should blow from them to me. Let them be shut away from their fellows, as persons under a curse—let not others speak to them, or go near them." The Pharisees were practicing that method in Christ's day. They had tabooed the publicans and sinners, saying to them, "We will not touch you with so much as one of our fingers." They drew their garments around them and gave the moral lepers plenty of room in the streets and if, by any chance, they did come into contact with them, or were obliged to have any dealings with them in the marketplace, they were careful to wash before they ate lest they should be defiled. So society decided that a leper

house should be built and that the infected sinners should be put in there to rot and die by themselves.

But Jesus said, "Not so, not so. If you mean to shut up all the infected, every one of you must also be shut up, for you are all suffering from the same disease in a greater or less degree! Why shut up these few when all are affected? You do not well—if you build the walls of the leper house as high as Heaven, the festering disease within will still find an outlet and taint your sons and your daughters, notwithstanding all that you do—and that place will be the hotbed of everything that is foul and noxious—and will tend to your own destruction despite all your efforts to be removed from it." You know how, even to this day, a certain class of sinner is considered by some good, reputable people as being unworthy even to be spoken of, or noticed—and some are foolish enough to try to forget that they are actually in existence! But our Divine Master went to the gate of the leper house and knocked. And when it was opened, He said to those within, "You may come forth." Society outside objected, so He said, "Well then, if they may not come out, I will go in with them." And to those inside, He said, "Shut the door and keep out the over-righteous. I am come to eat bread and to dwell with you, the infected and sinful ones." He put out both His hands and touched them and healed their diseases—and the blood again leaped in their veins and their flesh came again to them like the flesh of a little child!

Then He opened the gate, again, and, strange to say, society outside was infected this time! And He said to them who had once been lepers in the leper house, "Go you forth and heal them." And they went forth to carry healing to those who formerly thought themselves to be well! And thus He made the very curse itself to be a channel through which to spread the blessing! Blessed are You, O Jesus! You have done for sinners what the sternest laws and the strictest customs of society could never have done!

But there have been others of a gentler spirit—*Philanthropists*—who have been sensible of the claims of humanity upon them. They have said, "Let us look at the case of these rebellious sinners in the most favorable light possible. Let us consider them as hopeful. Let us use remedies that will be the means of healing them, but let us keep them in quarantine for many a day before we let them out. Let us fumigate them and put their clothes out until every trace of infection has gone from them. And if, after a long probation, they are proved to be really healed and cleansed, then let them go forth to freedom." But Jesus said, No, not so. Why would you keep them thus shut up by themselves? If one of them should become better, contact with his fellows would make him sick again. Will you deny them your help and your sympathy and shut them away by themselves? Your quarantine arrangements will breed further disease and all your fumigations will be in vain, for, while you are seeking to cure, you will be generating the very disease you seek to destroy! The only effective remedy is for Me to go in with them where they are."

So He presented Himself before them. They were covered with running sores and they themselves were most obnoxious—yet He touched them—

no, more, He *embraced* them! They were filthy, but He took them in His own hands and washed them. They were ragged, but He, Himself, took off their rags, clothed them in the spotless robe of His own righteousness and gave them the kiss of His love upon their sin-stained cheeks. "Oh," they said, "this is healing, indeed! We were never healed before. People told us to get well and said that, then, they would do something for us. They told us to cleanse ourselves and said that, *then*, they would receive us. But You, O blessed Savior, did take us just as we were—all black, defiled and loathsome—and You have made us clean!" Glory be unto You, O Jesus, for You have done ten thousand times more for poor lost souls than Philanthropy ever even suggested! Your wisdom has availed where our prudence has defeated its own ends! Our sympathy has been marred by our vanity! Our counsels have been rendered valueless by our conceit! We have repelled the confidence of sinners while You have won their hearts, for You have sat down to eat with them and Your disciples have shared the feast.

I have thus tried to paint three pictures. I do not know whether I have held the brush steadily enough, or have had sufficiently good colors to paint them true to life. I only want to show you that while we are condemning the outcasts, Jesus Christ comes forth and saves them! While we are trying to keep sinners away from us, He goes to them and heals them! And while we are hoping the best concerning them and thinking of the means by which they can be gradually renovated, He goes to them and restores them! Christ takes into His arms some whom we would not touch with a pair of tongs! He receives into His very heart some whose names we would hardly venture to mention! He lifts up the beggar from the dunghill! He raises the despairing from the Slough of Despond! He takes the vilest of the vile, transforms them, by His Grace, and makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

I. After so long an introduction, I must compress the rest of my discourse as much as I can. And, first, I am going to ILLUSTRATE THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.

There was a man, a tax-gatherer—who had an evil reputation everywhere—no one was more obnoxious than he was to the proud, moral, orthodox Pharisees. One day he heard that Jesus of Nazareth, the great Prophet and Miracle-Worker, was about to pass through his native place—the accursed city of Jericho. And having a great curiosity and nothing but a curiosity to see this mighty Savior—thinking, doubtless, no better of Him than that He was a strange enthusiast—he climbed up a tree in the hope that, concealed amid its leaves, he might look down, unobserved, upon the famous Stranger. If a Pharisee had been walking that way, he would have avoided even the shadow of that tree, lest sin should be hidden by its shade and he should thereby be defiled. But Christ, whose instincts of mercy always make Him sharp-sighted where there is an objective for His compassion, came right underneath that tree and, looking up, cried aloud, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house." No wonder that the Pharisees and the people in general murmured because Christ went to be a guest with a

man who was "a sinner" in a very special sense! They were surprised that a man in such ill repute should have the honor of entertaining the Lord Jesus Christ.

But our Lord entered the house of Zacchaeus and His Truth entered the heart of Zacchaeus. And there, on the spot, that "sinner" became a saint—practically proving the reality of his conversion by saying to Jesus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house." O my Savior, You have done right well! Suppose the Lord had passed by Zacchaeus without taking any notice of him? He would have remained as great a sinner as ever! Suppose He had upbraided him? Possibly, then, the tax-gatherer would have replied in language not at all complimentary! But that kind word, that sweet look of pity, that gracious token of forgiveness broke the hard heart of the rich oppressor and he gladly entertained his Savior and became His disciple.

This is the way in which Jesus Christ deals with sinners. Have we a sinner in this house—the house where Christ has, for many a day, worked miracles of mercy? Sinner, He will not despise you and we are rejoiced to see you in the place where Christ is preached! His eyes are on you now—where you are, I cannot tell, but He can—and it may be that this very hour He will say to you, "Sinner, make haste and come down, for tonight I must abide at your house." Who can tell? It may be with you as it has been with many a score in this house—you may go home to forsake the drunkard's cup, to leave the Sabbath-breaker's haunts, to forsake the abodes of blasphemy and to say, once and for all, "Christ has called me! I am His and He I desire to serve." This is how Jesus deals with sinners, even with sinners who are only moved by curiosity to see Him as Zacchaeus was.

On another occasion Christ was by the seaside and he passed a certain toll-house where a tax-gatherer was "sitting at the receipt of custom." His name was Levi—at least that was his name when he was at home—but now that he had become one of the hated publicans, he had taken the name of Matthew, just as many a young man, when he runs away from home and enlists in the army or navy, takes a name which does not belong to him. Little did he think that when Jesus was passing by, He would take any notice of him! But He did, for He said to him, "Follow Me." That was all He said, but there was a volume of meaning in those two words! And the glance of His eyes and the majesty with which He pronounced His Divine command produced instant and most willing obedience, for "he arose and followed Him." And Matthew the publican became Matthew the Apostle and Matthew the Evangelist!

Now, if Christ needed an Apostle, why did He not select one of the Pharisees? If He needed an Evangelist, why did He not choose one of the scribes? The reason is that a publican and a sinner was more adapted to His purpose. Perhaps the Lord is, at this moment, looking for a valiant preacher of the Truth of God—and it may be that you, my Friend, away there among the crowd, are the man whom He has chosen for this high

and noble enterprise. Christ found John Bunyan playing "tip-cat" on Elstow Green and He found Richard Weaver down in the mines, blaspheming the name of God! Who knows whether He may not find you for this high purpose, to bless you and to make you a blessing? There may be some here who will make Hell's old pillars shake, though they are, today, the sworn friends of sin and Satan! But He who has permitted them to go so far into sin may issue His Divine mandate concerning each one of them—

"Almighty Grace, arrest that man"—

and he shall be renewed in heart, changed in life and made to be "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

Certain it is that many of the most useful and honored servants of the Lord Jesus Christ have been taken from that very class with whom Jesus and His disciples ate bread. There was a certain person needed, on one occasion, to be—if I may use the term—lady-in-waiting to the King of kings. Queens might have been well content to part with their crowns in exchange for such an honor as that, yet "a woman in the city, who was a sinner," was chosen to render this lowly service to the Lord Jesus Christ! And she "stood at His feet behind Him, weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment." Simon, the Pharisee, found fault with Christ for allowing her to do this, but Jesus said it was her great love which had moved her to do what the Pharisee had neglected to do for his Guest. And to the woman, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Am I addressing any woman who might truly take the term, "sinner," to herself? My Sister, this is how Christ received this woman who was a sinner. He accepted the homage of her love—love such as only she could render, love that could only come from a woman who had borne such a character as she had borne and who, therefore, was filled with such intense gratitude to her Lord and Savior. This is how Christ receives sinners—oh, that He might thus receive you just now!

Here is another case in which Christ received a sinner. I have reminded you how He visited the house of a sinner, how He chose a sinner to be one of His Apostles and how He was anointed by a woman who was a sinner. Now He was about to die and someone was needed to go with Him from earth to Heaven. When He returned Home, it was not meet that He should go back alone. The great Conqueror must not re-enter Heaven without some token of His victories here below. O mighty Hero, You may not pass the gates of Your paternal metropolis without taking some captive with You! Who shall accompany the Savior into His Glory? Shall it be some martyr, who, in fiery chariot, shall mount to Heaven with his Redeemer? Shall it be some devout disciple and deacon, like Stephen, who, amid a shower of stones, shall see Heaven opened unto him and enter it side by side with his Lord? No. But there is a thief dying on a cross hard by the suffering Son of God, for Jesus was numbered with the transgressors and died in the company of sinners even as He had lived among them. The thief prayed, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your

Kingdom." And Jesus answered, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise" and, probably the first soul to enter Heaven after the return of the King was the soul of this poor penitent thief!

I will only mention one more case of Christ receiving a sinner. After He had gone back to Heaven, He needed a man who should be His Apostle to the Gentiles. Peter, the Jew, was far too bigoted even when his nature was overruled by Divine Grace—there was still so much of the Jewish exclusiveness in him that he was not fit to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Master, therefore, resolved that, for once, He would call out of Heaven with an audible voice and that, as a pattern for all who should afterwards believe on Him, He would have some one special soul. Who should that one be? You might send an officer through Greece and Rome and he might find scores whom he would recommend for the post, but the least likely individual in the whole world was selected by Christ, Himself! There he is, "breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," for he hates Christ and His followers as well. When Stephen was stoned, he gloated over the dying martyr. He is constantly casting the Christians, both men and women, into prison. And he is now on his way to Damascus, being exceedingly angry against the saints, that he may persecute all whom he can find there who are followers of Christ!

The sequel of the story is given in Paul's own words to Agrippa, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying, in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" The further sequel is given in Paul's words to the church at Ephesus, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

This is my Master's way of dealing with sinners, even with him who called himself the chief sinner! Proud professors, is this the way you deal with them? Professing Christians whose hearts have grown callous, is this the way you act towards poor sinful souls? And O poor lost soul, is this the way that you thought Christ would deal with you? He will do with you as He did with them! He is as ready to save, today, as He was in the days gone by! He has as great a love for sinners now as He had when He went through the towns and villages of Galilee, teaching and healing the people, or when He poured out His soul unto death that He might redeem the lost by purchasing them with His blood!

II. I now turn to my second point and ask—HOW IS IT THAT CHRIST IS SO WILLING TO COME DOWN TO POOR SINNERS AND SAVE THEM?

Do not imagine that it is because He is insensible to their guilt. Sinner, Jesus Christ knows far better than you do what an evil and bitter thing sin is. It is as hateful and loathsome to Him as anything can possibly be. It is not, therefore, because He is insensible to their guilt that He seeks the society of lost souls. Why, then, does He desire to be in their company?

It is *because He has such deep affection for sinners*. There is a little child crying upstairs. Some people in the house wish that noise could be stopped, for they say they cannot endure it, but the mother says, "It is my child who is weeping up there," and she hurries up to comfort and soothe her baby. So, when we hear the sinner blaspheme, we are angry with him, but Christ weeps over him and comes forth to save him. "He is My child," He says—

"Joint heir with Me, He yet shall be
In Glory everlasting."

There is all the difference between what a wife will do for her sick husband and what a stranger might do for him. Imagine the husband suffering from some loathsome disease. The nurse says, "No, for no money in the world will I stay any longer. Besides, the disease is infectious and I might take it to my dear ones at home." But if it were as infectious as the plague, itself, and as noxious as the great pit into which the unconfined dead were cast, that wife would still remain with her loved one—if necessary, to sicken, suffer and die—for she says, "He is my husband." And here is a sinner so full of filth that even the most sympathetic stand aside and will not come near him—but the Lord Jesus sees, in that abject sinner, a fit objective for His pity and Saving Grace. "He is one with Me," He says, "by eternal covenant and union, and I will stay with him till I have healed him. I will watch by him till I have saved him from all his filthiness and all his sin."

Besides, poor Sinner, there is another reason why the Lord Jesus Christ is so deeply interested in you. *He sees in you the purchase of His precious blood*. "I bought him," He says, "with My heart's blood. Do you think that I will lose him after that?" "But, Lord, he blasphemes You!" "Yes, but I have bought Him with My blood." "But, Lord, he has made a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell." "Yes," says Christ, "I know he has, but I will disannul that covenant and cancel that agreement, for I have bought him and I will have him as My own." Jesus never forgets the price He paid for the redemption of even one soul! I think I hear Him say, my Brothers and Sisters, "By My agony and bloody sweat, by My Cross and passion, by My death and burial, I will have him as My own, for I cannot have suffered all these things in vain."

Moreover, Christ *views the sinner, not as he is in himself, but as he is in the purpose of Redemption*. "His whole head is sick," says Christ, "but I can cure him. His whole heart is faint, but I can restore him and I will do it. His feet have gone astray, his mouth is an open sepulcher, his eyes are windows of lust, his hands are stained with blood, but I will amend all that and make him a new creature fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Jesus looks, you see, not so much to what the sinner is in himself, as to what He can make him. He sees in every sinner the possibility of making a glorified saint who shall dwell with Him forever and ever. If He chose you, poor Sinner, before all worlds were made, and bought you with His blood, He sees you not as you now are, but as you shall be when He has perfected you! Oh, what a wonder it will be when that poor drunk over there shall sing in Heaven as one of the

spirits of just men made perfect! And when yonder harlot shall have a golden harp in her hand and sound forth the praises of Him who has saved her and washed her from her sins in His own blood! He who has said it, will do it! He who is "mighty to save," will redeem by power those whom He has secured by purchase! And, *penitent Sinner*, Jesus already hears you hymning His praise and He sees you as you will be—without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—washed in His blood, renewed by His Spirit, brought safely Home and glorified with Him forever! No wonder, then, that Christ is willing to come to poor sinners and to dwell with them! He can see what you and I cannot see—what they shall be when He has fulfilled His purposes of mercy and Grace concerning them!

Sinner, you are so ashamed of your sin that you dare not approach a minister, but you can approach Christ. There is no pride in Him and no cautious reserve such as we might rightly exercise in dealing with you. Though you cannot tell even your own father all about yourself, you can tell Jesus. You cannot tell all the story of your sin and your repentance to the wife of your bosom, but you can tell Jesus. There is no music that He loves so much as the voice of a sinner confessing his sin! There are no pearls that He prizes so highly as those pearly tears which repentance forms in the eyes of the soul that trembles at His Word! Do not imagine that He is hard to please, for He loves sinners! Do not fancy that it is difficult to obtain access to Him. Like the father in the parable, He can see a sinner when he is a great way off and He will run to meet you and give you a hearty reception and a loving welcome. You will be happy in being saved, but He will be more happy in saving you! You will rejoice in being pardoned, but He will rejoice more in pardoning you! I cannot put this blessed Truth of God about Christ's compassion for sinners in such words as I would do if I could.

If you do not admit that you are a sinner, I have no Gospel to preach to you. But if you stand self-condemned, I have a message of mercy to deliver to you. To the self-convicted, to the law-condemned, the prisoners that plead guilty, those who are ready to confess that they are undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners, I have to say that Christ is an approachable Savior! No, more than that, He is waiting to be gracious! He stands with arms outstretched, longing to clasp poor sinners to His heart. Why do you wait?

III. Now I close my discourse by endeavoring to teach you THE PRACTICAL LESSON WHICH OUGHT TO FOLLOW from the fact that Christ receives sinners and eats with them.

Let me just utter a word of warning here. When we speak of Christ receiving sinners, everybody says, "Well, I am a sinner." It is a curious proof that people do not know what a sinner is, or they would not be so ready to admit that they are in that class. If I were to say to almost any man I met, "You are a criminal," in almost every case he would reply, "No, Sir, I am not." But what is the difference between being a criminal and being a sinner except that the sinner is the worse of the two? A criminal is a person who offends against the laws of men. "A sinner" is a theological term, signifying one who offends against the Laws of God! People

say, "To be criminals—oh, that is horrible! But to be sinners—well, we are all sinners." And they do not appear to think anything of that terrible brush. Ah, but, unless the Grace of God shall change you, the day will come when you will think it would have been better to have been a frog, a toad, a viper, or any other creature rather than to have been a sinner, for, next to the word, "devil," there is no word which has so much that is dreadful in it as that word, "sinner." "A sinner" means one who cares nothing for God—one who breaks God's Laws, despises God's mercy and who will, if he continues as he is, have to endure God's wrath as a punishment for his sin!

Yet these are the persons whom Jesus Christ is willing to receive! You cannot, therefore, any of you, say, if you perish, that you perish because He would not receive you. "Oh, but," you say, "He would never receive such a sinner as I am." How do you know that? Have you ever tried Him? There is not, even in Hell itself, a sinner who will ever dare to say that he came to Jesus, yet Jesus refused to receive him. There is not a lost soul in the Pit who can look up to God and truthfully say to Him, "Great God, I asked for mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, but You said, 'I will not grant it to you.'" No, that can never be! Neither on earth, nor in Hell, shall there ever be one soul that trusted in Christ and then perished!

You say that Christ will not save you, so I ask again—Did you ever try Him? Did you ever give Him a fair trial? Did you ever, on your knees, conscious of your lost condition, say to Him, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? You are spiritually blind—did you ever say to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me"? Did you cry to Him, again and again, and did He turn His back on you and leave you in darkness? Leper, you are loathsome in His sight by reason of your sin, but did you ever say to Him, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean"? No, you know you never did, though you have often resolved that you would!. Under an earnest sermon you have said, "I will seek the Lord"—but when you got outside the House of Prayer, some idle companion met you and you soon forgot all about your good resolution.

But let me say to you now—Despite all the years in which you have heard the Gospel in vain, if the Holy Spirit shall move you even now to confess your sin to Jesus and to say to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me. I put my soul's affairs into Your hands from this moment"—Sinner, He will save you! Or, if He will not, then I will perish with you and the whole Church of God will also perish with you, for this is all our hope—that Jesus died to save the lost! And if one soul, believingly gazing upon His wounds, can perish, then all must perish and the Pit must engulf the whole blood-bought family of God. But that can never be!

There is an old tradition which I will repeat as a rebuke to the self-righteous, and a comfort to the sinner. Dean Trench, quoting from a Persian moralist, tells one of his old fables about Jesus. Of course it is only a fable, but it contains the very spirit of the Truth of God about which I have been preaching. When Christ, according to this fable, was travelling through a certain region, He stayed at the cave of a hermit. It so hap-

pened that there was living in the neighboring town a young man whose vices were so great that, according to common report, the devil, himself, did not dare to associate with him lest he should become worse than he was before. This young man, hearing that the Savior, who could pardon sin, was in the hermit's cave, went to Him. Falling down on his knees, he made confession of his guilt and acknowledged that he was utterly unworthy of mercy. But he entreated Christ, in the love of His gracious heart, to forgive him for the past and make him a new man for the future.

The monk who lived in the cave said to the young man, "Get out! You are not worthy to be in such a holy spot as this!" And, turning to the Savior, he said, "Lord, in the other world appoint me a place as far away as possible from this wretch." The Savior answered, "Your prayer is heard—you are self-righteous so I appoint you your place in Hell—this man is penitent and seeks mercy at My hands—I appoint him his place in Heaven. Thus both of you shall have your heart's desire." There is the very essence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in that old fable. You who trust in your own good works go and perish! Come, you who confess your evil deeds—hate them, flee from them, trust in Jesus and you are saved! But they who go about to establish their own righteousness shall perish everlastingly!

Oh, that my Master would draw some of you to Him at this moment! What do you say? Will you go with this Man who receives sinners? He bids you come to Him—will you come? You cannot plead that you are too vile, for He takes the very off-scouring of men—the devil's outcasts—He will not cast them out if they will but come to Him! However despairing of yourself you may be, you must not say of Him, "He will reject me." Trust Him to receive you and trust Him now!

O Spirit of the living God, prove the Divinity of Christ's Gospel this very hour by turning lions into lambs and ravens into doves—and let the chief of sinners prove Your power to save! 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
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UNBELIEVERS UPBRAIDED
NO. 2890

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"He...upbraided them with their unbelief."
Mark 16:14.

I SHALL not dwell so much upon this particular instance of the disciples' unbelief as upon the fact that the Lord Jesus upbraided them because of it. This action of His shows us the way in which unbelief is to be treated by us. As our loving Savior felt it right to upbraid rather than to console, He taught us that on some occasions unbelief should be treated with severity rather than with condolence.

Beloved Friends, let us never look upon our own unbelief as an excusable infirmity, but let us always regard it as a sin—and as a great sin, too. Whatever excuse you may at any time make for others—and I pray you to make excuses for them whenever you can rightly do so—never make any for yourself. In that case, be swift to condemn. I am not at all afraid that as a general rule we shall err on the side of harshness to ourselves. No, we are far too ready to palliate our own wrong-doing, to cover up our own faults and to belittle our own offenses. I very specially urge every Believer in Jesus to deal most sternly with himself in this matter of unbelief. If he turns the back of the judicial knife towards others, let him always turn the keen edge of it towards himself. In that direction use your sharpest eye and your most severely critical judgment. If you see any fault in yourself, you may depend upon it that the fault is far greater than it appears to be—therefore deal more sternly with it. It is a very easy thing for us to get into a desponding state of heart and to mistrust the promises and faithfulness of God and yet, all the while, to look upon ourselves as the subjects of a disease which we cannot help—and even to claim pity at the hands of our fellow men—thinking that they should console us and try to cheer us. Perhaps they should, but, at any rate, we must *not think that they should*. It will be far wiser for each one of us to feel, "This unbelief of mine is a great wrong in the sight of God. He has never given me any occasion for it and I am doing Him a cruel injustice by thus doubting Him. I must not idly sit down and say, 'This has come upon me like a fever, or a paralysis which I cannot help.' But I must say, 'This is a great sin in which I must no longer indulge. I must confess my unbelief with shame and self-abasement, to think that there should be in me this evil heart of unbelief.'"

Notwithstanding what I said, just now, concerning our dealings with others, I must give very much the same advice with regard to them as to ourselves, though in a somewhat mitigated form. When we see any of our friends falling into sin and unbelief, we must seek to deal wisely with them—always kindly—never harshly. Let us reserve all our severity for ourselves as I have already urged you. Still, I am sure that it is quite possible for us to be doing our fellow Christians serious harm by excusing their unbelief and by pitying them for it instead of pointing out to them, tenderly, yet faithfully, the great sin they are committing by this doubting.

Have you ever seen a "coddled" lad? I have seen one who ought to be in the open air at play, shut in a room because his parents were fearful that he was delicate and unable to do as other lads do. He ought to have been taking part in various healthy exercises that would have developed and strengthened the muscles in his body, but, instead of that, he was sitting down, tied to his mother's apron strings and so was being made weaker than he was before! He was kept in an atmosphere which was not fit for him to breathe because his foolish parents were afraid the fresh air might be too trying for him—and long before he was ill, he was dosed and treated until he really became ill! Many a child has been murdered by being thus coddled, or, if he has lived to grow up to manhood, he has been a poor, feeble, effeminate creature because the abundant love which had been lavished upon him had been linked with equally abundant folly.

You can easily treat Christians—and especially young converts—in the same senseless fashion! If they are unbelieving, you can keep back from them the stern Truth of God about the sinfulness of such a state of heart and mind because you fear that they will be discouraged if you deal faithfully with them. That is quite as wrong as saying to the unconverted, over and over again, "Only believe," without ever mentioning the need of repentance and regeneration! There is a way of misapplying even the promises of God to unbelieving hearts and of giving the consolations of the Gospel to those who are not in a condition to receive them as one might give sweetmeats to sick children and do them harm. People who are thus unwisely treated are apt to remain in the same sad state until their unbelief becomes chronic—and their unhappiness becomes a lifelong burden to them. Sometimes when a man is in great pain, it is wise to give him something that will afford him even temporary relief, but the better course is, if possible, to strike at the root of his disease and eradicate it once and for all. That should be our method of dealing with the unbelief of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We must make it clear to them that unbelief is no trifle and that it is a thing for which its owner is not to be pitied, but to be blamed—and to be severely blamed—for it is a most grievous fault and sin. Our Savior dealt thus with the 11 when He upbraided them because of their unbelief. He did not excuse them, or comfort them, but He upbraided them! Upbraiding does not seem to be in harmony with the usual character of Jesus, does it? Yet you may depend upon it that it was the right thing for Him to do—and the kind thing, too—otherwise, He would not have done it.

Jesus upbraided these disciples of His because of their unbelief upon a very special point on which they ought to have been the first to believe. Many persons had seen their Lord after He had risen from the dead. And the 11 Apostles who ought, by reason of their greater spiritual advantages and their more intimate companionship with Christ, to have been the readiest to believe the good tidings, were not so and, therefore, Christ "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He had risen." Yet these eyewitnesses— Cleopas and his companion, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the other Mary and the rest of the holy women—who had come to the eleven, were their own Brothers and Sisters in the faith! So Christ might well say to them—and I daresay He did—"Why did you doubt their testimony? You did them an injustice by acting in such a manner. They are honest and truthful and they have told you the truth. You have not been accustomed to doubt their word, so, as you have believed their witness concerning other matters, why did you not believe them in this instance? Moreover," our Lord might well say, "there were many of them—it was not merely one who might have been mistaken, but a considerable number saw Me and I spoke with them and they came and told you that it was even so—yet you did not believe them. The number of the witnesses and their well-known character are sure signs that you must have been in a wrong state of heart and mind not to be able to receive such clear evidence as theirs and, therefore, you are blameworthy for your unbelief."

In the case of these Apostles, unbelief was peculiarly sinful, for they had the promise of their Lord to back up the testimony of His disciples. He had often told them that He would rise again from the dead—and had even foretold the very day of His Resurrection, so that the unbelief of the Apostles was altogether inexcusable. Yet this very fact which was a cause of stumbling to the Apostles appears to me to give point and power to the appeal which I make to myself and to you against our unbelief. We all believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. We have no difficulty in accepting that great fundamental Doctrine of the Christian faith. All of us who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ fully endorse Paul's words to the saints in Rome and say that our Lord, "was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." Well, then, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, the ground is completely cut from under the feet of unbelief, for His promise is, "Because I live, you shall also live." If He lives, then the Gospel is true and the promises of the Gospel are sure to all who believe in Him! If He lives, then He lives to intercede for us and, through his intercession, every Covenant blessing is certain to come to us! Therefore if we harbor unbelief in our hearts, we are doubly guilty—and if the Savior were here in bodily Presence, though His face would still beam with Infinite Love to us, I am quite sure that He would, even in sterner tones than He used towards those 11 Apostles, upbraid us because of our unbelief!

If Thomas will not believe that Christ is risen until he has put his finger into the print of the nails in His hands and thrust his hand into his Savior's wounded side, that is bad enough—but it is worse if you who do believe that He is risen and who do not doubt any one of the doctrines

that He has taught you—still have unbelief mingled with the faith which you possess! Whether that supposed faith is all true, or not, is more than I can say, but, with so much faith as you profess to have, how can you still continue to doubt?

I want, in this discourse, to upbraid myself and you, also, for any unbelief that we may have harbored, by noticing, first, *the evil of unbelief in itself* and then, *the evils that surely flow out of unbelief.*

I. First, then, I have to say to any of God's children who have given in to unbelief in any degree—YOUR UNBELIEF IS AN EVIL THING IN ITSELF.

This truth will come very closely home to you if you will just *think how you would feel if others disbelieved you.* If anyone were to question your veracity, you would be very vexed and if you made a promise to any man and he expressed a doubt as to the fulfillment of it, you would feel hurt. And if those with whom you are most closely connected were to disbelieve you, you would feel still more grieved, for you expect absolute confidence from them. If mutual trust were taken away from any family, how unhappy the members of that family would be—the children suspecting the sincerity of their parents' love—the wife doubting the reality of her husband's affection—the husband dubious of his wife's faithfulness! Try to conceive, if you can, what it would be if those who now call you friend, or child, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister should no longer accept what you say as being true. Suppose, also, that you were perfectly conscious that you had never broken your word to them—that you had faithfully kept every promise that you had made to them and had been in all things honest, true and sincere—would you not feel their doubts and suspicions most acutely? I am sure you would—they would touch the very apple of your eye and cut you to the quick—you could not endure such treatment from them! Then how can you mete out to the Lord Jesus Christ such treatment as would be so painful to yourself? And further, how can you expect your child to trust you when you doubt your Savior? How can you even look to your wife for confidence in you when, if there is some little trouble, or things go somewhat awkwardly, you straightway begin to mistrust your God and Savior?

Remember, too, that *the sin of your unbelief may be measured by the excellence of the person whom you mistrust.* I said, just now, that if you were conscious of your absolute sincerity, you would be the more deeply wounded by the suspicion of those who doubted you. What do you think, then, of the sin of doubting Christ, who cannot lie, who is "the Truth" itself? I know, Beloved, that you have a very high opinion of your Lord and Savior—do you not worship Him as Divine? Do you not also feel His truly human sympathy? You know that there is no clause in His Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which He has not already fulfilled or which He will not fulfill at the appointed time. His Incarnation, His life here below, His shameful sufferings, His vicarious death—all these He promised to undergo and all these He performed in due season. And He will go right through, to the end, with the great work of your eternal salvation! By the mouth of His servant Jeremiah, the Lord asked, long ago, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness?"

And the Lord Jesus might well say to His professed followers, "Have I been as the barren fig tree was to Me when I found on it nothing but leaves?" As He points to the long list of His favors to us, He may well ask, "For which of them do you thus misjudge and mistrust Me?"

And when He spreads out the whole roll of His life and work before you, He may well enquire, "Upon which part of My life or work do you base your suspicions? What is there in My Nature, as Divine and Human—what is there in My Character—what is there in My life below, or in My life above—that should lead you to question My faithfulness to you, My power to help you, My readiness to sympathize with you, My willingness to bless you?" Why, you are doubting Him whom the angels adore and worship! You have felt, sometimes, as if you would like to wash His feet with your tears. How, then, can you ever insult Him with your doubts? You have even said that you could die for Him! And it has been your great ambition to live for Him, yet you cannot trust Him? If you have run with the footmen in the matter of these minor trials of your faith—and they have wearied you—what would you do if you had to contend with horsemen as many others have had to do in the day of martyrdom? And if, in the favorable circumstances in which you have been placed, you have doubted your Savior, what are you likely to do when you are in the swellings of Jordan? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, when you think of unbelief as aiming her darts at Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved of our soul, surely you will say that it is a shameful sin and a disgraceful crime against Infinite Love!

Then, *remember, Beloved in the Lord, the relationship in which Jesus Christ stands to you*. You know that the more closely we are allied to a person, the more painful any suspicion on the part of that person becomes. I have repeatedly used in this connection the figure of a child's trust in a parent, a husband's trust in his wife and the wife's trust in her husband—and you have readily accepted the comparisons because you have felt that the nearness of the relationship would involve a corresponding degree of trust. How near—how very near—we are in kinship to Christ! Are we not married to Him? Has He not espoused us unto Himself forever? There is a conjugal union between Christ and His Church of which the marriage bond on earth is but a feeble type. Then can you who have been renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit and washed in the blood of the Lamb, doubt Him whom your soul loves? Can you distrust Him to whom you are so closely allied? Oh, shame, shame, shame, that lack of confidence should come in to mar such a wondrous union as that!

But we are even more closely knit to Christ than the marriage union implies, for "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." I cannot explain that secret, mystical union of which the Scripture speaks, but it is a true union, whatever mystery there may be about it. Then shall there be such disunion among the members of the body that the eye shall begin to doubt the heart and the hand to mistrust the foot? It would be pitiful if such a state of things could prevail in our bodies! Then what must it be if such a state of things prevails among the members of the mystical body of Christ? Beloved, may God render this unbelief impossible by sending such life floods of Grace through all the members of

Christ's body that never more shall a single thought of mistrust of our glorious Covenant Head enter our minds even for a single instant!

Consider next, I pray you, dear Friends, *how many times some of us have doubted our Lord*. The sin of unbelief becomes all the greater because it is so frequently committed. God be thanked that it is not so with all Christians—there are some who walk in faith and dwell in faith. I suppose that as birds fly over everybody's head, doubts fly around all good men's minds, but our old proverb says, "You need not let birds build in your hair," although there are some people who let doubts come and lodge in their minds and even dwell in their hearts! We know some persons of this kind who seem to be very easily led into despondency, doubt and mistrust of Christ. Well now, if a man has done this only once, I think he might well say to himself, "I did once question the everlasting Truth of God. I did once stain the spotless robe of Infinite Veracity with a dark blot of suspicion"—and I think that he might find it difficult to forgive himself for having done so vile a thing even once! But when it comes to many times and when it comes to long periods of doubt and mistrust, it is still worse. I want to press this point home upon all whom it concerns and I want your consciences to be wide awake so that as you recall the many times in which you have thus sinned against your Heavenly Father, and against His blessed Spirit, and against His Divine Son you may recollect that each distinct act of unbelief is a sin—each act of mistrust is another wounding of the Lord! God grant that we may truly repent as we think of the many times in which we have been thus guilty!

Then there is this further point—*some of these actions have been repetitions of former ones*. For instance, a man is in trouble and he has doubts concerning the Providence of God. But he is delivered, God is gracious to him and helps him out of his difficulty. Well now, if he falls into a similar trouble and if he is again guilty of harboring doubt, this is far worse! If a man should doubt your word the first time you speak to him, you might say, "Well, he does not know me." The second time you might say, "When he has proved me more, he will trust me." But what shall I say of those whose hair has a sprinkling of gray in it and whose Christian experience extends to a score of years or more—perhaps two score—possibly, three score? Oh, if you doubt the Lord now, it will be a crying shame! It will not be too surprising if some of us act thus, for so did Israel for 40 years in the wilderness—but that does not excuse the evil in our case. It is a desperately evil thing that God should be mistrusted over and over again—and that He should have to say, "How long will it be before you believe Me?"

I scarcely like to linger on such a sad theme, yet it does our hearts good to be thus upbraided. So, remember that *oftentimes our unbelief has come in the teeth of our own assurance to the contrary*. Do you not sometimes catch yourself saying, after a very great mercy, "Well, I can never doubt the Lord again"? When you have had an answer to prayer of a very memorable kind, you have said, "Oh, I must believe in the power of prayer now! For me to ever think that the Lord will deny me would be impossible." Yes, in that respect, also, we are just like the Israelites who promised to keep the Covenant, yet speedily broke it.

There is also this aggravation of your sin—*although you do not trust the Lord as you should, you do trust your fellow creatures*. You can believe that lie of the old serpent—

"The Lord has quite forsaken you—
Your God will be gracious no more"—

yet you cannot so readily believe the oath and promise of God! If an earthly friend were to say to you, "I will help you," how readily you would jump at his offer! If there is an arm of flesh near, how cheerfully you lean upon it and, though perhaps there is nothing for you to rest yourself upon but a broken reed, you think it is a strong staff and throw all your weight upon it! It is quite true that ungodly men who have no faith generally have any amount of credulity. They cannot believe the truth, but they can believe lies to any extent! So is it, alas, with God's own people when they get off the track of faith. They seem to become credulous concerning the things seen, which are temporal, in proportion as they become dubious of the things unseen, which are eternal! Is not this a sin of the greatest blackness? You cannot trust your husband, but you can trust a flatterer who deceives you! You cannot trust your God, but you make idol gods unto yourself and trust them! You cannot rest yourself on Jehovah, but you can on Egypt! You can rest yourself on the promise of man who is but as a moth which is soon crushed, but as for Him who made the heavens and the earth and all things that are, you cannot rely upon Him! I feel as if I could sit down and cover my face for shame when I think of those occasions wherein I have been guilty of this sin. Perhaps the best thing we could all do would be to go home, fall on our knees and ask our blessed Savior to wash away all this unbelief—and not to believe us when we talk about doubting—but only to believe that as He knows all things, He knows that, after all, we do trust Him.

II. Now, with great brevity I have to speak upon the second point which is THE MANY EVILS WHICH COME OUT OF UNBELIEF TO THOSE OF US WHO LOVE THE LORD.

Brothers and Sisters, it is enough of evil—if there were no more—that *unbelief is so cruel to Christ and grieves His Holy Spirit so much.* I should but repeat myself if I reminded you how mistrust grieves you and, speaking after the manner of men, in the same fashion it grieves the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you—shall He dwell in you to be grieved by you? He relieves your grief—will you cause Him grief? Your vexations vanish because He is the Comforter—will you vex the Comforter? And what can vex Him more than suspecting the ever-faithful heart of Christ? That is evil enough—to wound Christ and the Holy Spirit!

Next, remember—though this is a more selfish argument—*how much unrest and misery unbelief has caused to yourself*. You have never had half as many trials from God as you have manufactured for yourself. Death, which you so much dread, is nothing compared with the thousand deaths that you have died through the fear of death. You make a whip for yourself and you mix bitter cups for yourself by your unbelief. That is quite enough trial for you to bear and God will help you to bear it, but you put away the helping hand when you are unbelieving and then you increase your own burden! Oh, you can sing, even by the rivers of

Babylon, if you have but faith! You may lie on your sick bed and feel great pain, yet your spirit shall not smart, but shall dance away your pain if your heart is but looking in simple confidence to Christ. And you shall die, as the Negro said his master died—"full of life"—if you have true faith in Jesus. But if faith shall fail you, oh then you are distressed when there is no cause for distress—and full of fear where there is no fear!

And then, *how much you lose in other things besides happiness!* A thousand promises are missed because there is not the faith to claim them. There are the cases and you have the keys—yet you do not put the keys into the locks to open them. There are Joseph's granaries and you are hungry—but you do not go to Joseph and show your confidence in him by asking for what you need. You are not straitened in God, but in yourselves! If you believe not, you shall not be established—neither shall your prayers prevail, nor shall you grow in Grace. If you believe not, your experience shall not be of that high and lofty kind that otherwise it might have been. We live down here in the marsh and the mist when, had we faith, we might live in the everlasting sunshine! We are down below in the dungeons, fretting under imaginary chains when the key of promise, which will open every door in Doubting Castle, is in our bosom! If we will but use it, we may get away to the tops of the mountains and see the New Jerusalem and the land which is very far off.

Further, *unbelief weakens us for all practical purposes*. What can the man who is unbelieving do? O Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is a terrible thing to think how much work there is that falls flat because it is not done in faith! You saw the trees when they were covered with blooms—there seemed to be a promise of much fruit—but there were chilling winds, sharp frosts and so, perhaps, only one in a hundred of the blossoms ever turned to fruit. The tree of the Church seems, at times, covered with beautiful blossoms—what can be more lovely to the eyes? But the blossoms do not knit—faith is the bee that carries the pollen—it is faith that fructifies the whole and makes it truly fruitful unto God. What might my sermons not have done had I believed my Master more? You Sunday school teachers may say, "Had I taught in greater faith, I might have won my scholars." Or you may say, "Had I gone to my visiting of the poor and the sick in the strength of the Lord, who knows what I might have done for Him?"

Faith is the Nazarite lock of Samson—if it is shorn away, Samson is weak as other men. Then, as to suffering, wonderful is the power of faith there. If you are trusting your Heavenly Father, believing that all is right that seems most wrong, that everything that happens is ordered or permitted by Him and that His Grace will sweeten every bitter cup, you can suffer patiently and, as your tribulations abound, so will your consolations abound in Christ Jesus! Like the Ark of Noah, as the waters deepen you will rise upon them and get nearer to Heaven in proportion as the great floods increase.

Unbelief in any Christian, no doubt, *has a very injurious effect upon other Christians*. There are some who are like sickly sheep which—

"Infect the flock,

And poison all the rest."

Especially is it so, dear Brothers, if you happen to be in office in the church, or to be doing any prominent work for Christ. If the commander-in-chief trembles, the army is already conquered! If the captain begins to fear, fear will take possession of every soldier's heart in his company. Was it not grand of Paul, in the shipwreck, when all others were dismayed and thought they would go to the bottom, when he said, "Have no fear, Sirs," and he bade them eat, as he ate—calmly giving thanks to God before them all? Why, Paul saved them all by his calm confidence in God! If we have but faith, we shall strengthen our Brothers and Sisters! But if we have it not, we shall weaken them.

I am sure, too, that *the influence of unbelief in Christians upon the unconverted is very serious, indeed.* If we do not play the man in times of trial—if we do not show them what faith in God can do—they will think that there is nothing in it. And suppose, Brothers and Sisters, you should make anyone think there is nothing in religion? How sad that would be! When the devil needs a friend, surely he could not find one more able to do him service than a child of God who is full of mistrust. The children say, "Our father only trusts God for bread when there is plenty in the cupboard." And the servants say, "The master is only happy in the Lord when he is in good health." And those who know our business affairs say, "Oh, yes! So-and-So is a great believer, but he has a big balance at his banker's—you should see him when trade is bad! You should see him when there are bad debts! Then you will find that he is not a bit more a believer in Jesus Christ than any of the rest of us! He is a fair-weather Christian—he is like the flowers that open when the sun shines. But take away the summer prosperity and you will see but little of his religion!" Let it not be so with any of us, but may God deliver us from this tremendous evil of unbelief!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 11:1-13, 32-40.

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.* So it was written, in the olden time, that Believers "obtained a good report." And this second verse shows that they obtained it by their faith. The best part of the report about them is that they believed their God and believed all that was revealed to them by His Word and His Spirit.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* The facts about Creation must be the subject of faith. It is true that they can be substantiated by the argument from design and in other ways, but still, for a wise purpose as I believe, God has not made even that matter of the creation of the universe perfectly clear to human reason—so there is room for the exercise of faith. Men like to have everything laid down according to the rules of mathematical precision, but God desires them to exercise faith and, therefore, He has not acted according to their wishes.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it, he being dead, yet speaks.* The first of the long line of martyrs triumphed by faith! And if you are to be strong to bear witness for God, you must be made strong by the same power which worked so effectually in Abel. If, like his, your life is to be a speaking life—a life which shall speak even out of the grave—its voice must be the voice of faith.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* It is faith that muzzles the mouth of death and takes away the power of the sepulcher. If any man who had *not* been a Believer had been translated as Enoch was, we should have been able to point to a great feat accomplished apart from faith. It has never been so, for this which was one of the greatest things that was ever done—to leap from this life into another and to overleap the grave altogether—was only achieved "by faith."

6, 7. *But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not as yet seen.* These are the things with which faith always deals—not with the things that are seen or are apprehensible by the senses or the feelings.

7. *Moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* So you see that faith has a condemning power towards an ungodly world. You do not need to be constantly telling worldlings that they are doing wrong—let them see clearly the evidence of your faith, for that will bear the strongest conceivable witness against their unbelief and sin, even as Noah, by his faith, "condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.* That is, surely, the very masterpiece of faith! God bade Abraham go forth from his native land. He believed that God knew where he was to go though he did not himself know. So he left the direction of his wanderings entirely in the Lord's hands and obeyed—and "went out, not knowing where he went." We are not to ask for full knowledge before we will be obedient to the will of the Lord, but we are to obey God in the dark, even as Abraham did.

9. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.* It is one of the great evidences of true faith for her to keep on, to continue, to abide without any visible signs or tokens of what she knows is hers. The *life* of faith is wonderful, but so, also, is the *walk* of faith. Her walk has much about it that is mysterious. She knows that the land she treads on belongs to her and yet, in another sense, she cannot claim a solitary foot of it. She knows that she is at home, even as Abraham was in his own land—yet like he, she knows herself to be a sojourner in a strange land, but is quite content to be so.

10. *For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* What a depth of meaning there is in those five words, "a city which has foundations"—as if all other cities had none! They come and they go as if they were molehills raised on the surface of the earth, or little mounds of sand made by the children's wooden spades upon the seashore which the next tide will wash away! What vast numbers of cities have already been destroyed! We are constantly picking up the relics of them, but there is, blessed be the name of the Lord, "a city which has foundations," a city founded on eternal power—and we are, I hope, on our way to that city.

11, 12. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.* Perhaps the reference is to Abraham who was as good as dead, being so old—or to Isaac, who was as good as dead, for he was laid upon the altar and was practically "offered up" as a sacrifice unto the Lord. There were many deaths to work against the life of faith, yet life triumphed over death after all.

13. *These all died in faith.* That is the epitaph which God has carved over the resting place of His faithful ones—"These all died in faith." Will this be the record concerning all of us, "These all died in faith"?

13. *Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* The chapter is a very long one so I must condense it, as the Apostle, himself, did when he came to the 32nd verse. There was so much to be said that he added—

32. *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets.* There are some names in this chapter which we would hardly have expected to see there—the characters mentioned having been so disfigured by serious faults, flaws and failings—but the distinguishing feature of faith was there in every instance—and especially in the case of Samson. Perhaps there was no more childlike faith in any man than there was in him. Who but a man full of faith would have hurled himself upon a thousand men with no weapon in his hand but the jawbone of an ass? There was a wondrous confidence in God in that weak, strong man, which though it does not excuse his faults, yet nevertheless puts him in the ranks of the Believers. Happy is the man or woman who believes in God! There were multitudes of others beside those whom the Apostle named—

33. *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness.* Is that as great an exploit as subduing kingdoms? Yes, that it is—to have, by faith, preserved a holy character in such a world of temptation as this is a far grander achievement than to have conquered any number of kingdoms by force of arms!

33, 34. *Obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,* Do you notice how, every now and then, there is the men-

tion of a feat which seems altogether beyond you, but then there follows one in which you can be a partaker with these heroes and heroines of faith? It may be that you have never "quenched the violence of fire" yet, often enough, it has been true of you that, by faith, "out of weakness" you have been "made strong." Others—

34, 30. *Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection.* What wondrous faith it was which sustained the saints under the awful tortures to which they were subjected! The story flusters one's heart to even read it—what must it have been actually to endure?

36-39. *And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.* These worthies lived before Christ came, but, since then, equally noble exploits have been performed by the heroes and heroines of faith. The Christian martyrs have shown the extremity of human endurance when they have been sustained by faith and the roll of Christian heroes, since their Lord ascended to Heaven, is longer and even brighter than that of the faithful ones who came before them in the earlier dispensation!

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect.* The new dispensation is necessary to complete the old—the New Testament is the complement of the Old Testament—and New Testament saints join hands with Old Testament elders. Let us all be worthy of our high pedigree and may God grant that if the saints of these latter days are to perfect the history of the Church of Christ, the end may not be less heroic than the beginning was! A true poem should gather force as it grows and its waves of thought should roll in with greater power as it nears its climax. So should the mighty poem of faith's glorious history increase in depth and power as it gets nearer to its grand consummation—that God may be glorified yet more and more through all His believing children. So may it be! Amen.

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

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

A SABBATH MIRACLE
NO. 2891

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 7, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1876.

And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God."
Luke 13:10-13.

WHAT blessed days Sabbath days are! I mean not only the Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, but the Christian Sabbath on the first day of the week. I remember a friend in Newcastle telling me that when he was looking at a house in that city which was to be let, he was taken to the top of it and the agent said to him, "You see that there is a fine view from here. You can see a long way today, but on Sundays you can see Durham Cathedral." My friend asked, "Why on Sundays?" And the reply was, "You cannot see it the rest of the week because of the smoke, but, on Sundays it is usually clear enough to get a glimpse of it." What views some of us have had of Heaven and what views of Jesus Christ have been accorded to us on Sabbath days! We might have seen Him on other days if there had not been so much smoke from business, care and sin, but the blessed breath from Heaven has blown it all away on the Lord's Day and we have been able to look even into that which is within the veil!

Our Lord Jesus Christ has performed wonders of Grace on all the days of the week. I would not be surprised to hear that there are Christians here who were converted on a Monday, or a Tuesday, or a Wednesday, or a Thursday, or a Friday, or a Saturday! But I should quite expect to learn that for every one of them, there are 10 here who were brought to Christ on the Sabbath! Heaven's gates seem to be set more widely open on that day than during the rest of the week, or else we have more inclination to enter them then. When the full history of the Sabbath shall be unfolded, we shall begin to know what infinite mercy it was on God's part to set aside one day in seven especially for His worship and for our spiritual benefit. Thousands upon thousands, yes, millions upon millions have found Jesus very near and rejoiced in Him on the Lord's Day!

Our Savior was known to use the day for public worship and for the pursuance of His high and holy calling of blessing the children of men.

So, finding that on that day He could meet with many in the synagogue, He was accustomed to go there and teach. Among the people who came on the particular Sabbath of which our text speaks, there was one poor woman who was possessed by an evil spirit. And that evil spirit had, I suppose, so affected her nerves and so influenced her entire system that her spinal cord was greatly weakened. Evidently she had suffered from the worst kind of curvature of the spine, for she was bent double, "and could in no wise lift herself up." I am afraid that if any one of you had been in such a sad state as that, you would have said, "I shall never go to the synagogue anymore," and that your friends would have said, "We think you had better not go. You are such an object and you are so unwell, that you will be best at home. You can read a good book there and you can worship God just as acceptably in your own parlor as you can by going up to the public assembly of His people."

I am also afraid that there are some here who would have felt that they could be excused for a much lighter affliction than that poor woman suffered from, for I have known some who could not come out to the service if it happened to be wet—though they went to business on wet days. Many people imagine that Sunday is a convenient day for being ill and getting a little rest so as to be fortified for the more important business which requires all their energies Monday and during the rest of the week. It seems as though they thought that cheating God out of His day is a very small matter, but that robbing themselves of even a portion of a day would greatly grieve them.

If this poor woman had not gone to the synagogue, I do not know that she would ever have met with Christ. So I commend her example to you even if your bodily infirmities increase so much that you might make very justifiable excuses for being absent. There was a dear Sister, now in Heaven, who attended this Tabernacle for years though she was so deaf that she never heard a word that was spoken. The reasons she gave for being here were that, at any rate, she could join in the hymns and that had she stayed away, she would have felt as if she was dissociated from the people of God and other people, perhaps, might not have known the reason for her absence—and it might, therefore, have been a bad example to them. So she said, "Though I do not hear a word, I love to be there," and she has told me that some of the happiest hours she has ever spent have been those when she has thus had communion with the people of God, although she could not fully understand all that was being said or done. In like manner, dear Friends, as often as the people of God assemble for worship, join with them!

Notice one thing more about this woman. She did not get any good through going to the synagogue, as long as she merely went there. She went to the synagogue bent double and she came back bent double. If she went all those 18 years, as I daresay she did, she was unable to lift herself up all that long time! Do not, I pray you—you who are regular attendants at the House of God and yet remain unsaved—get into the notion that all you need is to attend Divine Service so many times on the Sabbath or on weeknights, for, if you do, you will not likely ever get a

blessing. This poor woman was not healed until she met with the Lord Jesus Christ! And I wish each one of you would come here saying, "Oh, that I might meet with Jesus today! Oh, that Jesus would meet with me!" It is a rule, with very few exceptions, that what a man fishes for he is most likely to catch. If any come here merely out of idle curiosity, it is possible, though not certain, that their curiosity will be satisfied. If any come to find fault, I have no doubt that they will find plenty to complain of. But if any of you have come determined to find Christ if He is to be found, it will be a very surprising thing if you have to go away without discovering Him! This is what you really need if you are to be restored from all the ills that sin has worked—you must come to Christ Himself.

I. Coming to the story of this poor woman who was bent double, the first thing to be noted is that CHRIST'S COMPASSION WAS EXCITED. Jesus, while He was teaching in the synagogue, looked into the faces of His congregation and as He looked at them, He saw this woman and His heart was at once moved with compassion towards her.

Note that it *was not her prayers that moved Him*, or any plea she urged, for she did not speak to Him, or plead with Him. This was one of the cases in which no request for healing was presented to the Savior. It was the sight of her misery that touched His heart. Perhaps, dear Friends, if she had not been bent double, Christ's notice might not have been so quickly drawn to her. But because she was what people call, "quite an object," and looked so sad, she attracted Christ's attention.

Notice, also, that Christ *was not moved to compassion by the prayers of anybody else for her*. Sometimes He healed the sick when their fathers, or mothers, or friends brought them to Him. But nobody brought this poor woman to Jesus. It does not seem as if anybody had sufficient compassion upon her to ask Jesus to heal her, or, if they had the compassion, they had not enough faith to believe that it was possible for her to be healed. There she was, a poor lone woman and, possibly, it was the sight of her with not a friend to help her, that touched Christ's heart and moved Him to fix His gaze upon her with a view to curing her sad complaint.

Notice, further, that *Christ's heart was not touched by any description which she gave Him of her condition*. She gave Him no description and none was needed. He looked at her—that was all that was required, for He already knew all about her. She did not say, "I have been bound by Satan for 18 years," but Christ knew that she had been. As He looked at her, He read her life story as a man reads a book. And as He read the story, His heart was moved with compassion towards her. I wonder whether there is a soul here that has not been asking the Lord for a blessing because that soul does not think it is likely that any blessing would come? I wonder whether there is anyone here who has not dared to hope and, therefore, has not dared to pray? My Master has a wonderful eye for such souls as these! There may have been in that synagogue a man wearing a gold ring, or a lady in a fine dress, but Christ did not notice them or their adornment. He picked out the person who was the most miserable, the most wretched and who most needed His pity—and

upon her He fixed those blessed eyes of His with a compassion tender as the heart of a woman! And His whole soul was moved with pity for her because she was so grievously bound by the accursed power of Satan.

Now let us look at this woman's case a little more closely. She "was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up." That, in itself, was a painful thing—all the beauty of the woman's form and figure had gone. And being bent double like that must have produced most serious injury to every organ of the poor creature's body. I have no doubt that she was the subject of a thousand aches and pains through the posture in which she had been bent. Besides, it is a beautiful thing to be able to look up—but to be always obliged to look down is something terrible! Through this trying affliction, the poor woman could not even see the Savior though, happily, He could see her, bent down as she was in the crowd. Instead of looking up with the face of a woman, she had to carry her head down towards the earth like a poor beast—and I would not wonder if the spirit of evil that was in her had made her feel unhappy, sorrowful and almost despairing. I am also inclined to think that her mind may have been, like her body, bent towards the earth and that this, too, was caused by Satanic influence.

Perhaps the worst point about her case was that she had been for 18 years in that sad condition. We do not know how it came about. She may, as a girl, have been able to run in the fields and spend her days right merrily but, all of a sudden, perhaps, there came upon her this evil spirit and she began to feel weakness of the spine and, by-and-by, she was bent double, the sun of her life was put out and her days were dark with sorrow and pain—and this had continued for 18 years! What a long time that is to be such a sufferer! Eighteen years of happiness may pass very quickly, but 18 years of pain is a very long period. This woman, for 18 years, could not lift up her head to look at the sun. For 18 years Satan had possessed her, bowed her body together and filled her mind with morbid thoughts, dreary dreams and terrible forebodings of dreadful things to happen in the future! Jesus knew all about those 18 years, so we do not wonder that He had compassion upon her.

Possibly in this congregation—no, I am quite sure I have some who, in soul, are like this poor woman was in body. You feel that you would gladly give all you have to be saved, but you have long ago given up all hope of that. You did, at one time, hear the Gospel with some degree of pleasure, but now, even while you listen to it, you keep on condemning yourself and saying, "Salvation will never come to me." You have fallen into a condition of chronic melancholy and you are so sad that friends who used to cheer you, gave you up in despair long ago. Perhaps they call you foolish, but God knows that it is not folly, but a most grievous calamity that has happened to you. You cannot see Jesus and you do not think that He can see you—but He does and that is your only ray of hope! If I were to attempt to comfort you, I know that I would fail. If you are the person of whom I am thinking, no language from merely human lips will ever comfort you—there will have to be a Divine Voice reaching your inmost soul or else you will never be loosed from your infirmity! We meet

with some such persons every now and then and we try to cheer them. It is right that we should do so. We pity them and we are quite sure that our Lord Jesus Christ pities them still more, for there is not one of us whose heart is one half as tender towards his fellow man as the heart of Christ, Himself, is and must be. So, you poor afflicted ones tossed with tempest and not comforted—you downtrodden, sin-burdened souls—Jesus picks you out of this throng, as He picked out that poor woman in the synagogue, that He may have mercy upon you as He had upon her!

II. Secondly, JESUS ISSUED A COMMAND—"He called her to Him."

Somehow or other He managed to attract her attention and then, probably not without considerable difficulty and pain, she made a great effort and, at last, was able to see Him. And He said something to this effect, "Will that poor woman over yonder who is bent double, come here to Me?" Whatever words He may have used, we know that "He called her to Him." Was not that command *a proof of great Grace and condescension on Christ's part?* If He, the Messiah, who spoke as never man spoke, had called the ruler of the synagogue and spoken familiarly to him, one might not have wondered so much. Yet, out of all that throng He did not call anyone except that poor decrepit, bowed-down, Satan-possessed daughter of Abraham! And we are expressly told that, "He called her to Him." He might have called to her from a distance and said, "Be healed," but He did not, for He wished to show His special sympathy with such a sad case of suffering.

This call was not only given in great condescension, but it was also *given directly and personally to her*—"He called her to Him." If Jesus had said, "I wish any person here who suffers from a spirit of infirmity to come to Me," perhaps she might have come, perhaps she might not. But, instead of giving a general intimation like that, He fixed His eyes on her, and "called her to Him." Do any of you remember a sermon—I do very well—in which the preacher seemed to speak to nobody but yourself? I am fully persuaded that if I had been like the prisoners in some of our jails—shut up in a box where I could not see anybody but the preacher—on the occasion when the Lord met with me, the preacher could not have addressed himself more pointedly to me than he then did! And on the occasion to which our text refers, Christ addressed Himself to this woman personally and pointedly. I am hoping that the description I have given of the woman will make someone here say, "Ah, that is just my case!" Well, if so, O poor bowed-down daughter, poor languishing, desponding man, Jesus calls you! If that description applies to you, take the personal call to yourself and say, "This condescending, pointed call is addressed to *me*."

Then do as this poor woman did—make it *a call which was promptly obeyed*. I daresay that the other people in the synagogue were very surprised that Christ called *her*, yet they made way for her and, strange object as she was—perhaps, every step painful to her—she managed to get where Christ was. As she was coming towards Him, she heard Him make this extraordinary statement, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And when she got close to Him, He laid both His hands on her, "and

immediately she was made straight." How startled she must have been—even at Christ's first call—and little did she dream that He was going to cure her in such a fashion! And perhaps there is someone here whom Christ means to save, yet you have not even been thinking of Him. Nevertheless, thus is it written in the counsels of eternity, "In the Tabernacle, on that summer Sunday night, such-and-such a soul must be delivered from the bondage of Satan." If it is so written, all the devils in Hell cannot hold you captive beyond the appointed moment! And all the weight of your sins and the evil habits that you have formed and so long practiced shall burn like so much straw in a blazing fire, for God's eternal decree of Mercy must be fulfilled! And He who comes to deliver you is none other than Christ, the Son of God, "mighty to save," before whom gates of brass are broken and bars of iron are snapped in sunder!

It was a glorious Sabbath for that poor woman when the Lord came forth, determined to heal her! And this will be a glorious Sabbath for you if the Lord now resolves to save you! He is even now calling you doubters, you desponding ones, you who have given up all hope! He is calling *you*, will you not come to Him? Will you not trust Him? He asks you to believe, not that *you* are good, but that He is good—not that you can be healed by your neighbor, but that you can be healed by your Savior! He asks you to come and listen to His gracious words while He says, "Your sins are forgiven you; go in peace." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you."

III. We have so far noticed two things—Christ's compassion excited and His command issued. Next, CHRIST'S POWER WAS MANIFESTED—and that was done in a very instructive way.

Jesus said to her, "*Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity*." It is the Word of the Lord that has power in it. Whenever people are converted and brought to Christ, it is by God's Word that the deed is done. Fine sermons never win souls—you may blaze away, young man, at a terrific rate with your brilliant oratory and your fine pieces of poetry and quotations from eminent authors! And your sermon ending may be like the set piece at a display of fireworks, or the final burst of brightness with which it all ends—but all that will not save souls! What does save souls, then? Why, the Word of the Lord, the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! I have noticed that the very words of Scripture are usually those that reach the heart, so, Brothers and Sisters, if you really want to find the Lord, give good heed to His Word! Incline your ears and come to Him—hear, and your soul shall live, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of the Lord."

In addition to speaking to the woman, *Christ laid His hands on her* and that is the way that healing reaches sin-sick souls, by being brought into contact with Christ! When the pure Humanity of Christ is recognized by us and we perceive that He is our Brother and our Friend—when we see that He bears both our sins and our sorrows and carries our sicknesses in His own blessed Person—when we realize that Christ has become our

Representative and Surety—a sense of peace comes to our soul! One reason why Jesus is so well qualified to save us is that—

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same"—

and He is, therefore, able to aid those who are tempted. Bowed-down woman, He puts His pierced hands upon you! Sorely troubled man, know you not that God has taken your nature upon Himself and now says to you, "Be you comforted, for I have loved you and lived for you and died for you"? God grant that you may feel that healing touch and experience that Divine Deliverance this very hour!

That afflicted woman was healed immediately. One of the most wonderful things about Christ's cures was that, as a general rule, they were worked in an instant. Can you imagine—I have often tried to do so—the strange sensations that passed through some of those people when they were healed in a moment? Think of this poor woman—18 years bent double and then completely restored in a single instant! What a paradise must have been condensed into those few minutes! At first I suppose she may have thought that she was only dreaming. What? Was she able to stand upright and to look into the face of Him who had worked such a wonderful cure for her? The rapture must have seemed almost too much for her when she realized that she was healed in an instant! And what if, just now, you should be *saved* in an instant? Remember that to pardon sin does not take God a single second—to save a soul from death and Hell is a more rapid work than for the lightning bolt to fall from Heaven! At one moment a great load of sin may be upon you and you may be fully conscious of the terrible burden—the next instant every sin is gone and you are conscious that it is so—and ready to leap for joy! Nobody can work this mighty miracle of mercy but the Lord Jesus Christ, yet He can do it more swiftly than I can speak of it. Oh, that some who have been bound by Satan for 18 years, or even longer, may prove that they do not need 18 minutes, or even 18 seconds to get free—but may they now look to Jesus and, believing in Him, find instantaneous healing!

Once more, *this woman's cure was perfect* as well as instantaneous. She did not lift herself up a little and find that the Satanic bondage was being somewhat relaxed. No, she was perfectly healed and, better still, she was *permanently* healed! Her malady did not come back. We have known doctors set a man up for a little time and, after that, there has been a relapse. But this woman was both made straight and kept straight—and if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation which He gives us, though it is instantaneous, is also perfect and everlasting, for whoever trusts in Christ is saved immediately and saved forever! The gifts and calling of God are not matters for repentance on His part—He does not give salvation and then take it back, but, having once given it, it remains the property of its possessor world without end! Then what a precious Christ He is and what a glorious Healer! I hope some sick one here is saying, "I wish He would look this way, oh, that Jesus would look on me!" He is looking upon you, Soul! Hear what He says to you, "Come unto Me. Trust in Me." If you trust Jesus now, though you have been

bent double these eighteen, these twenty-eight, these thirty-eight, these forty-eight, these fifty-eight, these sixty-eight—these 98 years, or these 118 years, if such a person could be, if you did but look to Him, come to Him, trust Him—in a moment He would make you whole! Oh, that you may do so!

IV. The last thing of all is this—CHRIST'S POWER WAS GLORIFIED.

It is said of this woman that, immediately, being made straight, she "glorified God." I should think she did! I should not mind having interruptions in our service from people who had found Christ. Our Methodist friends in the olden times, when they found peace, used to shout, "Hallelujah!" Well, if they really had found Christ, I think they were warranted in shouting. If ever a man might cry, "Eureka! Eureka!" it was not the old philosopher, but the new-born child of God! Oh, what bliss it is to find the Savior! If one were, for a little while, delirious with the excessive joy of being saved by Grace, it might be excusable. It is said that some of our young converts are wonderfully enthusiastic. Yes, and well they may be! If you had received such a blessing as they have, you would be enthusiastic, too! If you have ever known the weight of sin crushing you to the dust and then have had it suddenly borne away, you must have felt a mighty rebound when that great load had been removed. Could that healed woman help clapping her hands? Did she not stand up before the whole congregation in the synagogue and say, "That Man must be the Son of God, blessed be His holy name! After 18 years of bondage, He has healed me in a moment!"

Or suppose that she was of the very quiet sort—like the most of you good Sisters—if she did not say a word, yet I think she glorified God by simply standing up straight. If she did not say anything, but just walked away home, all who had known her in her long time of affliction, when they saw her stand up, a fine tall handsome woman—and knew that she must be the same person—must have been struck with wonder and have said, "What new power is this? Who but God could thus have restored this woman?" I would like, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that you and I would so live that our very lives would preach for Jesus Christ—that people would only have to listen to our ordinary conversation, or to see the cheerfulness of our countenance, or to perceive the hopefulness of our spirit under trouble, our justness and integrity, our readiness to forgive, our zeal for God! It is good to preach with your tongue if God has called you to do so. But never forget that the best preaching in the world is done by other members of the body. So, preach with your feet—by your walk and conversation! Let your whole being be a living, powerful, irresistible illustration of the power of Jesus Christ to bless and save!

It was so in the case of this woman, for I do not think that after she had clapped her hands once and stood up to testify before the whole congregation, that she was finished glorifying God. Oh, no! All her life she would be glad to tell that story over and over again! I wonder whether she got married after that wonderful healing? It is very likely that she did. And if so, and she had children of her own, as they sat on her knee one of the first stories she would tell them would be about when she was

bent double for 18 years and then that wonderful Prophet called her to Him in the synagogue, one Sabbath, and made her straight in a moment! Perhaps she lived long enough to tell the story of Christ's suffering and death. If she ever saw any of her grandchildren, I am sure they would say, "Come, Granny, tell us your story," and she would tell it so well that they would want to hear it again and again!

I think that every Christian should go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for them. There is a Brother—not far from me at this moment—who had been a wild young man, fond of all the sports of the country. He went to London and heard a sermon that was the means of his conversion. When he went home, one of his friends with whom he used to follow the hounds, said to him, "Well, Tom, what is the best thing you heard in London?" And Tom replied, "The best thing I heard in London is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Oh," said his companion, "you have gone mad!" "No," answered Tom, "I was mad before I went to London, but I have been cured." I hope you will be able to give such testimony as that concerning what Jesus Christ has done for your souls, even as this poor woman "was made straight, and glorified God."

Some people may say to you, "You had better hold your tongue, for you will break down if you try to tell such a story as that." That would be the very best thing you could do! There is nothing like a break-down when you are telling your story of redeeming Grace and dying love—it is the very glory of it when you break down with emotion and cannot say any more—for your hearers will be all the more anxious to know the rest of it! And there will be a deeper impression produced by your breaking down than there would have been if you had kept right on. But, anyway, do tell the story! Tell it as long as you have any breath in your body! Tell how "Jesus has done all things well" and saved your soul. Make Heaven and earth to ring with the glad news! And when you go Home to Glory, tell the angels all about it, for they will be glad to hear your story and they will break out into fresh praise as they listen to it! May God thus bless every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 9.

This Psalm has a dedication which is very difficult to understand—"To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben. A Psalm of David." Either "Muth-labben" is the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, or some musical instrument that is now forgotten, or else it alludes to Ben, who was one of the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:18. In all probability, however, the true translation of the title is, "A Psalm on the death of the son," or, "on the death of the champion," and it is thought by some that it was composed by David after the death of giant Goliath. If it is so, I think you will see, as we read the Psalm, that it well proclaims the victory which God had worked.

Verse 1. *I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Your marvelous works.* It will be well if we also resolve that we will praise the Lord. Most people have something or someone to praise, so let us select the Lord, even Jehovah, as the Subject of our song. Let us resolve that we will praise Him continually, for it may be difficult, sometimes, to do it. The heart may be very heavy—it may even be inclined to rebellion and murmuring—but let us make this strong resolution in the power of God's Grace—"I will show forth all Your marvelous works." Here is room for great variety of praise and here are abundant topics for praise, for there is no work of God which is not marvelous and worthy of being praised with our whole heart! So, Lord, I will not be dumb. You have given me a tongue—I am not like the brute beasts that cannot speak—my tongue is the glory of my frame, so with it I will show forth all Your marvelous works.

2. *I will be glad and rejoice in You: I will sing praise to Your name, O You most High.* Get up, then, my Soul, out of the dark places of your despondency! Rise, my drooping spirit, to something higher and better. If you cannot be glad in anything else, be glad in your God—be glad that you have a God and such a God—and that He is still your God. Whatever else you may have lost, you have not lost Him. "I will be glad and rejoice." The reduplication of the words indicates a double joy—a double gladness! As the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Be glad twice over, for you have double cause for rejoicing in the Lord.

3. *When my enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at Your Presence.* As much as to say, "The Presence of God is quite enough to make my adversaries flee—yes, and to utterly cut them off." As John Wesley said, "The best of all is God is with us." And if God is with us, it matters little to us who are against us!

4. *For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat in the throne judging right.* One of our noblemen has this for his motto, "I will maintain it." But the Christian has a far better one—"You have maintained my right." If David sang thus after he had hurled the stone from his sling into Goliath's skull, he might well magnify the name of the Lord who had maintained the rights of His people and put the uncircumcised champion of the Philistines to confusion and death!

5, 6. *You have rebuked the heathen, You have destroyed the wicked, You have put out their name forever and ever. O you enemy.* You can conceive of David, standing on the prostrate form of his fallen foe, and looking on that gigantic countenance and those mighty limbs, crying out, "O you enemy"—

6, 7. *Destructions are finished forever! And you have destroyed cities, their memory is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure forever: He has prepared His Throne for judgment.* "You have destroyed cities," but you could not destroy God. When you did defy the armies of other nations, you could easily put them to rout, but when you did defy the living God—then there was the end of you, for you could not overcome Him, nor overcome His people. Blessed be God for this—our faith is founded

upon a rock that never shall be removed—and our confidence is fixed upon One who can never fail us and whose Truth must stand fast forever!

8-10. *And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Your name will put their trust in You.* The basis of faith is knowledge and there is no knowledge like that which comes from experience. If you know the name of God as Jehovah—the Self-Existent and Ever-Living God—you will have good reason for trusting Him. And then, if you know His many precious names—such as Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord Our Righteousness, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord My Banner, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord Will Provide, Jehovah-Shalom, the Peace-Giving God and Jehovah-Shammah, the God Who Is There Where His People Are—yes, if any one name of God is fully understood by you, you will put your trust in Him!

10-12. *For You, LORD, have not forsaken them that seek You. Sing praises to the LORD who dwells in Zion: declare among the people His doings. When He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them.* When the great Coroner's Inquest shall be held upon all who have wrongly suffered, the commission will open by an enquiry concerning the blood of the martyrs—"When He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them." His suffering ones, who laid down their lives for the Truth of God's sake, shall find that their blood was precious in His sight.

12. *He forgets not the cry of the humble.* Is there no consolation in these words for some of you? You have been humbled and brought down from your high place. Now, then, is your time to cry—and when you do so, you will prove that "He forgets not the cry of the humble." There are many who give heed to the petitions of their needy fellow creatures and feel their force for a time—but they are engaged in business, or occupied in other ways—and they soon forget. Other things crowd out the needy one's petition and so he is left without help. But it is never so with God—"He forgets not the cry of the humble." Notice in the next verse how David avails himself of that Truth. He seems to say, "Is it true that God does not forget the cry of the humble? Then I will cry to Him and my humble cry shall go up to His ear and to His heart."

13. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord.* What a blessed prayer that is—a prayer useful on all occasions—under a sense of sin, or under a load of sorrow—burdened with labor, or crushed with despondency. It is a prayer which is like the cherubim's sword which turned every way—you may use it as you will. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord."

13. *Consider my trouble which I suffer by them that hate me, You that lifted me up from the gates of death.* What a lift that is—lifted up from the gates of death into life and ultimately into Heaven! What an Almighty God our Lord proves Himself to be at a dead lift! When every other arm is paralyzed, He comes to us and lifts us up from the gates of death.

14. *That I may show forth all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.* From the gates of death to the gates of Zion is the lift which God gives to His poor suffering people!

14, 15. *I will rejoice in Your salvation. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made.* If you picture David with the carcass of the giant before him, the Philistines put to ignominious flight and the Israelites in full pursuit after them, you can understand His saying, "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made."

15, 16. *In the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known by the judgment which He executes: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah.* The probable meaning of these words is, "Consider and pause." They are musical rests, perhaps, but they also suggest to us how well it is, in our reading of the Scriptures, sometimes to stop a while and inwardly digest the Words that we have read.

17. *The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.* Even if they are not outwardly as wicked as other men are, yet their forgetfulness of God is the highest form of injustice to Him! It is treason against the Majesty of Heaven! It is robbing God of what is His right! It is a combination of everything that is evil!

18-20. *For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O LORD, let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.* They boast that they are men and that they quit themselves like men. Yet let them know that although they are men, they are only men—with all the infirmities and imperfections of men—and that there is a God who will, in due time, let men know that they are but men and that the best of men are but men at the best!

20. *Selah.* Pause again, think over what we have been reading and lift up your heart in prayer to God, seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit to apply His Truth to your soul.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—9, 146.

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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1876.

"And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town, and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town." Mark 8:22-26.

THERE are several points in which these people who brought the blind man to Christ deserve our commendation and our imitation. They believed that Christ could open that blind man's eyes. In like manner, may we all believe that Jesus can save our relatives, friends and acquaintances. If we are ourselves saved, let us always be firmly convinced that He is also able to save any whom we bring before Him in prayer. Let us never give way to despair concerning any person, however far he may have gone into sin. Who but the Divine Savior could open the eyes of this blind man? Nobody. Yet He could do it. So, if your friends are very sinful and hardened, no one but the Lord can save them. But He can do it, so believe that He can do it and in prayer bring your friend to the Savior as these people of Bethsaida brought this blind man to Christ.

Their faith was of a practical kind. They were not content to simply believe that Christ could heal this man and then to remain sitting still. True faith is *active* faith, so these people brought the blind man to the Savior in whom they believed. If you are praying for any man's salvation, mind that you use the means that will best help to bring about that result. If there is any instrumentality which God peculiarly blesses to the conversion of souls, take care that you bring your friend under that instrumentality in the hope that God will bless it to him. Further, note that the blind man was willing to be brought to Jesus. Evidently he had at least as much faith as his friends had in the power of Jesus to open his eyes. It was a very hopeful case when the man and his friends believed in Christ's power to heal him—it was not likely to be long, then, before the miracle of mercy would be worked!

Observe, also, that the faith of these friends of the blind man was further proved by their earnest prayers on his behalf. They brought him to Jesus, "and *besought Him to touch him*." It was prayer of a very forceful

kind, as the word, "besought," clearly implies. It was also a very plain prayer—they did not make use of fine language, or beat about the bush so as to leave anyone in doubt as to what they wanted for their friend—they brought him to Jesus, "and besought Him *to touch him*." They desired that the blind man should be made to see and they thought that result would follow from Christ's touch—so they asked for that gift—and, dear Friends, whenever you pray for the conversion of anyone, mind that you pray straight for it. There are prayers that one has heard in Prayer Meetings which seem to go all round the world, but never to come to the case in hand. Let it not be so with you, especially in your private prayers, but pray for Jane, pray for Thomas, pray for your children or friends by name. Believingly, earnestly, in a business-like way put their case before the Lord Jesus Christ, just as if they were ill you would state their symptoms to the best physician you could find and ask him to prescribe for them!

In all these points that I have mentioned, these people are to be commended and imitated—they believed in Christ's power to heal the blind man, they brought their friend to Him and they besought Christ's favor for him. In doing so, however, they made the mistake of prescribing to Christ the way in which they thought their friend should be healed—they "besought Him to touch him." It was quite the usual thing—indeed, it was almost universally the Savior's rule to heal sick folk by laying His hands on them. And having seen Him do this, perhaps, on several occasions, these people had imbibed the notion that Christ healed the sick by His touch—that this was the special or the only way in which His power was manifested. They did not appear to know that it operated in any other way, so they, "besought Him to touch him." Possibly they had more confidence in the touch than they had in the Christ who gave it! In any event, they thought that the touch was essential to the cure and did not realize that Christ could cure the sick in any way that He pleased—not only by His touch, but by His word, or, if He willed it, even without a word. Thus, they did, as it were, tie the Savior down to one particular method—and their faith, though it was real, was weak. Though it was acceptable as far as it went, it was imperfect—there was a measure of ignorance mingled with it. I am going to deal only with that point as I expect that some of us are making the same mistake that these people made.

I. My first observation will be that IT IS A COMMON WEAKNESS OF FAITH TO EXPECT GRACE TO COME IN A CERTAIN FIXED WAY.

Just as these people expected the healing of the bind man to come by the touch of Christ's hands, so many expect *deliverance from trouble* to come in a certain specified way. You know it is so with many of you to whom I am speaking. You have taken your troubles to the Lord—you have told Him all about your case and you have entrusted it to Him, but you have laid down the plan by which God is to work on your behalf. You remember how He delivered you on a former occasion and you expect Him to deliver you in exactly the same way again. Or you have been reading the biography of some worthy man who cast his care upon the Lord and he was helped in a certain manner—so you think you will be helped in the same manner. But, very likely, God will do nothing of the kind! He

is not bound to give you any blessing in the particular way which you choose to select. He has His own method of giving a blessing and His own plan of warding off evil, so you must leave the, "how," and the, "when," entirely with Him. It is useless for you to think of mapping out the route for Him to whom the Psalmist said, "Your way is in the sea and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known."

The same error also occurs with many *in seeking sanctification and growth in Grace*. They are moved to ask, "Lord, is this how we are to grow in Grace?" Then the great Husbandman says, "Yes, 'tis even so. Good vines must feel the pruning knife. That is the way to make them more fruitful." A perplexed soul enquires, "Dear Master, is this the way that I am to be made like You?" And He replies, "Yes. I was made perfect through suffering and you must have fellowship with Me in this respect if you are to become like I." We had marked out quite another mode of procedure—our Lord's hands were to be laid upon us and so we were to be blessed! Yet He knows best—therefore let us say, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight."

The same mistake is often made *with regard to conversion*—the conversion of others, or our own conversion. I hope I am addressing many persons who are earnestly seeking faith in Christ, or who already have a measure of faith in Him, yet they have never obtained the full assurance of peace and rest because they have looked for it to come to them in a certain way. You expected to receive the blessing of forgiveness while you were listening to the preaching of the Gospel. Or having heard that many people have been converted under such-and-such a preacher, you have gone to hear him, earnestly praying all the while that the Lord would save you through that man's preaching. Yet He has not done so. It may be that He has ordained to bless you through some other means—well, be not cast down on that account, but be thankful if He blesses you anyway. Possibly you went with the great crowd that gathered to hear some notable evangelist and, after the public service, you went into the enquiry-room, as you heard that many had been led to Christ in that way, and you thought it would be so with you, but it was not. Well, be not surprised or sad if that is the case—it was not your place to dictate the way in which the Lord should reveal Himself to you!

It may be that you heard of a certain book being very useful to enquirers and seekers, and you said, "I will read that book and ask the Lord to bless it to me." You did so, yet you were none the better and you blamed yourself for not getting any good out of the book which had been blessed to others. Yet you must remember that God has His own ways and times of revealing Himself to His people. It is quite possible that you thought too much of that preacher, or that enquiry-room, or that good book—and that you did not think enough of Jesus, Himself—and probably if you had looked to Him rather than to the instrumentality, you would long before this have had your eyes opened and have seen everything clearly! You laid down certain conditions for Christ, but He would not comply with those conditions, but acted according to the good pleasure of His own will.

It is the same when we try to lay down conditions with regard to the conversion of our friends. I remember well the story of two Christian gen-

tlemen who had a young companion who was about to start on a long voyage—I think, to China—and they persuaded him to spend a week with them. And they made it a matter of earnest prayer that during that week their young friend might be converted to God. They had real faith and they very properly used the means which they thought likely to be blessed to him. They induced him to attend various places of worship during the week, taking him to hear a different preacher each night—but apparently in vain. At last there remained only the Friday night—and only one man whom they had not taken their young friend to hear—that was good old Rowland Hill and they had left him to the last because he was said to be so eccentric and so likely to say strange things which they were afraid might disgust the young man.

They prayed very earnestly that God would keep Mr. Hill from saying anything amusing, lest their friend should be made to laugh, but, that night, the preacher was more humorous than usual and Surrey Chapel was made to ring again and again as peals of laughter followed the telling of some extraordinary story in his inimitable way! And the very proper gentlemen were quite shocked and saddened. Among other things, Mr. Hill said that during the day he had seen some pigs follow a butcher into the slaughterhouse and he could not make out why they did so until he noticed that the butcher had his pocket full of peas which he threw out to the swine and so induced them to follow him to their death. "Then," added Mr. Hill, "I understood why people follow the devil though he leads them to death—it is because he draws them after him with the pleasures of the world—as the butcher drew the pigs after him with the peas!" Those gentlemen thought it was a pity that the preacher spoke like that and when they came out, they felt sorry they had taken their young friend to hear him.

But he walked along very quietly for a time and then said, "That was a very striking story about the pigs and the peas, and most appropriate to my own case. I have gone after sin for the sake of the pleasure of it, without thinking of the consequences, and now I see what a fool I have been." That rather rough illustration was the means of leading the young man to lay hold on Christ as his Savior before he went on his way! Those two gentlemen brought their friend to Christ, as these people brought the blind man to Him, "and besought Him to touch him," but the Lord Jesus chose to work by the very instrumentality of which his followers were afraid! He often uses very strange means—means we do not like, perhaps—means which would never occur to us as helpful. And He does this to teach us that the power to cure is not in the man, or in the means, or in the place, or in the excitement of the hour, but it is in Himself alone! And He works just how He wills and when He wills—and when it is His set time to save a sinner, He uses His own instrument—whether it is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the learned, or the eloquent, or the impulsive!

II. Secondly, THE LORD TAKES CARE TO PREVENT THE DISHONOR WHICH WOULD THUS COME TO HIM.

Observe how He did it in this case. They brought this blind man to Him and besought Him to touch him. So, first, *Christ did touch him, yet did not heal him*—"He took the blind man by the hand." That was certain-

ly touching him, yet his eyes were not opened. Jesus kept His hand on the blind man "and led him out of the town," but he was still a blind man! How very surprised the poor man, himself, must have been! His own faith led him to expect that if Christ would but touch him, his eyes would be opened. He must have had a feeling of astonishment and despondency when he felt that touch—a prolonged touch—a touch that gripped his hand and led him through the town, right away past the last of the houses and out into the fields—yet a touch that did not enable him to see! But did not that very disappointment make the man realize, once and for all, that it was not merely Christ's touch that opened blind eyes, but Christ Himself who worked the miracle? It was evident that He could, if He pleased, give a touch that did not open the eyes of the blind. Manifestly, there was no magic about the mere touch of Christ's fingers, for His fingers were touching the blind man's fingers all the while, yet he did not even begin to see anything.

This is the lesson which the Lord is still teaching us. *The preaching of the Gospel is the great means of the salvation of sinners,* for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But if you look merely to the preaching—and especially if you look simply to the preacher, instead of looking to Christ, Himself—it is more than likely that the preaching will be in vain as far as you are concerned. You may listen to it attentively and even ask God to bless you by means of it, yet it may be to you only like Christ's hand was to the blind man. It is even possible for the Gospel to be a savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life! And even to those whom Christ means to bless, it may be without power as long as they look to it instead of looking to Christ.

The next thing that Christ did for the blind man was this. *His friends expected that Christ would heal the man before the crowd but He did not.* They probably thought, "Now, if the Savior will but put His fingers on our friend's eyes and make him see, all the onlookers will know of it, their faith will be strengthened and Christ will be glorified." But Christ will not do anything to the blind man before the crowd. He takes him by the hand and leads him right away from the throng. He will not begin to operate upon him while anybody else is near, but conducts him away where he will be quite alone. Now, in the preaching of the Gospel, it is a very usual thing for our Lord Jesus Christ to save men in the crowd there. And many thousands of souls have heard of Jesus, believed in Him and found salvation in the midst of a throng of their fellows. But nowhere in His Word do we read that He intends to always save people in throngs and crowds. On the contrary, there are some to whom He seems to say, "I shall not save you here. Come away from the public assembly and get into the quiet of your own home."

Do not object and say, "But, Lord, I thought I could believe in You, here and now, and so find peace." That is not His will, for your believing is to be exercised out in the fields where you can be quite alone, or upstairs in that little room of yours where, in the dead of night you shall sit up in your bed, with nobody near you, and turn over in your mind the Truths of God you have been hearing and then and there put your trust in Jesus. It is dishonoring to Christ for us to say, "If we can only get large companies of people together and arouse them with stirring appeals and

sweet singing, we are sure to get them converted." The crowd has really nothing to do with the matter of conversion! And while Christ, blessed be His name, does save many in the crowd, yet if we get to regard the presence of the crowd as essential to the conversion of anybody, He will very likely take that individual apart, as He did with this blind man when He took him by the hand and led him out of the town!

The next point is this. *Our Lord usually worked His miracles instantaneously, yet He would not be tied down to work always in the same way*. So this blind man is *gradually* enabled to see. First, only partial sight is granted to him, then the obscuring film is removed and he sees clearly. There is a deep spiritual lesson for us in this action of our Lord. Perhaps somebody has said, "I know that So-and-So found peace with God in a moment—and I will not believe until I get the blessing in the same way." My dear Friend, let me tell you very solemnly that you must not presume to make any stipulation with Christ as to how you are to believe and when you are to believe! If you mean to be His follower, you will have to get rid of that proud spirit and leave the Lord to save you in His own way. Some find joy and peace in an instant, but there are others who first receive a little Light and then a little more, and a little more till gradually they see as clearly as this man did.

In the tropics, the sun seems, in the morning, to leap up the horizon and to turn darkness into light in a very short period. But in this country the sun gives us longer notice of its coming. It shoots many arrows of light before it, with rosy steps, advances in the full glory of the dawning day! It is just so in the spiritual realm—there are some tropical Christians who pass from darkness to light in a moment. Others are of the temperate zone—slower in their growth, yet they receive the Light of God just as surely as the others. When you read the story of anyone's conversion, do not say, "That is the way I am going to be saved." Of course there is only one way of salvation—that is, by faith in Christ—but there are many ways in which Christ gives this great blessing to the sons of men! And you must leave Him to work in His own way. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where He wishes and when He wishes and if you try to dictate to Him, you will grieve Him and miss the blessing you desire to obtain.

Further, *the Savior employed means which these people had not suggested and which probably appeared to them to be quite unsuitable*. In a similar fashion, my Friend, I hope that you are going to be saved and I urge you to look to Christ that you may obtain salvation through Him. Yet it is quite possible that you are not going to be saved in the way you think. You are very fond of your minister and he is very helpful to you in many ways—yet God probably means to bless you by some other servant of His. Perhaps by some godly woman. The Lord has, many a time, brought "her ladyship" into the light by means of the cook or the housemaid! And "my lord" has been brought to the Savior by a man whom he would hardly have employed to black his boots. The Lord can use whatever means He likes—and sometimes He uses means which we would never have thought of using.

I have heard of a father who used to pray much for the conversion of his sons and daughters, yet he did not see one of them saved. When he

came to die, his family had all grown up and they had, themselves, become the heads of other households. He sent for them to come to his bedside and he prayed very earnestly that he might die so joyful and triumphant a death that they might be convinced of the beauty and power of vital godliness—and seek the Savior for themselves. That was his plan of bringing his family to Jesus, but it pleased the Lord to allow him to be in great pain of body and much distress of mind. Indeed, he was in such anguish of heart that his testimony to the power of Divine Grace was of a very negative character! He had no songs of triumph, but he had many moans of pain and many questions about his spiritual state. God puts many of His children to bed in the dark, but they are His children all the same. It is of the wicked that it is written, "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." God's best servants often pass away under a cloud—and it was so with the friend of whom I am speaking. One of his last utterances was the expression of his intense regret that his sons would be confirmed in their unbelief by his experience in his dying hour—yet mark what really happened!

They all knew of his genuine piety. They had not a doubt about that matter, for they reckoned him to be one of the best of men and, as they gathered in the house after the funeral, the eldest son said to them, "Brothers and sisters, our father died a very sad death, yet we know that his soul was saved. We all know that he trusted Christ as his Savior and that he lived a most godly life. Now," he said, "if such a man as our father found it hard to die, think how much harder it will be for us if we have to die without a Savior." The same thought had occurred to the rest of the family and it was not long before they all sought and found their father's God and Savior! You see, the Lord really heard his prayer and granted him the desire of his heart—though not in the way he expected. And He will hear you, my Brother, and He will hear you, my Sister, but the answer may not come in your way. The Lord has His own way of doing His own work and, sometimes He adopts very singular methods to teach us that there is no power in the method He uses, but that all the power lies in Himself!

III. The third thing to be noted in this narrative is that OUR BLESSED LORD TAKES CARE TO HONOR FAITH EVEN WHEN HE REBUKES ITS WEAKNESS. He did not open this blind man's eyes in the way his friends asked Him to do, but He did open his eyes and He did a great deal more than that for him. And I want you to notice how the Lord Jesus honored the imperfect faith of this man and his friends—though He also rebuked its imperfections.

First, *our Lord condescended to guide this blind man.* This is one of the most beautiful incidents in Scripture. I should like to meet with an artist who could worthily depict Christ leading that blind man out of the town. It is not everybody who would undertake such a task as that, but our Lord condescended to take this poor fellow who could not see anything by the hand and lead him right away from the crowd that had gathered. It was something to be that blind man—I think I would be willing to lose the sight of my eyes if I might be led by Christ as he was! O blessed blindness that brings Christ into such close contact with this poor man!

Was he not greatly honored? Surely he was the most highly honored blind man who ever lived, thus to have Christ to guide him. Sometimes you see a blind man led by a dog and, sometimes, by a child—but Christ Himself undertakes the task in this case! The blind man believed in Jesus sufficiently to be led by Him and Jesus led him further than he expected.

Note next that *Christ left all the rest of the crowd for the sake of this one blind man.* I do not know how many there were to whom Christ was preaching, but He said, "Good-bye" to them all that He might take this poor blind man by the hand and lead him out of the town. Have not you, dear Friend, found the Lord Jesus Christ deal with you, sometimes, as if you were the only person in the world? Has not His love been so graciously manifested that you have said, "Why, if I were the most important person in the world, He could not do more for me than He has done." So, on this occasion, Christ left everybody else, for the time being, that He might devote all His attention to this one blind man. He seemed to say to him, "My Friend, I am going to take you into My surgery room that I may perform an operation upon you. And I want you to be alone with Me that I may give all My thoughts to your case."

So, putting all others aside, "Christ begins to cure this blind man. For ointment, He uses the spit from His mouth. Then He lays His hands upon the man and asks him whether he can see anything. After his answer, telling that the cure is working, Christ puts His hands again upon the blind man's eyes and makes him look up. Christ does not give His system a shock by revealing the full light to him all at once, but He works the miracle as gently as the wisest nurse or the most loving mother might have done. So it comes to pass that although the man does not get what his friends asked for him, he gets something a great deal better, for Christ gave him a complete cure, so that "he saw every man clearly." Christ did not send him away with one eye opened and the other still remaining closed, or revealing just a little light in one corner of it. Christ did not leave him cross-eyed or short-sighted, but he "saw every man clearly."

It seems to me that Christ must have cured this man entirely out of love to him. He may have cured some others partly with the view of their publishing His name and fame so as to attract other sufferers to Him, but He did not cure this man for that reason, for, when He had opened his eyes, He said to him, "Do not go into the town, and do not talk of this miracle to anybody who comes from the town. You can go home to your own village and tell the people there all about what I have done, but, otherwise, this is a matter between you and Me alone."

Now, dear Friends, you who are seeking the Lord, but cannot find Him, is there not a lesson for you in this narrative? I pray you to give up dictating to the Lord as to how He is to save you, for He has a far better way of working than you have even dreamt of at present and, possibly, His way will be to get you quite alone and gradually to lead you into the light. He means to have some private talk with you, not meant for any other ear. He means to make Himself known to you in a peculiarly special manner—not in your way, but in His own far superior way! Then, why do you object to His plan? Your one business is to believe in Him, to

rely wholly on Him and to praise Him for His great goodness to you. I pray you, do not quibble about ways and methods, but trust the Lord fully. If you do so, it shall not be long before you will get the Light of God and the joy, and the peace for which you are praying!

How long I was, myself, dictating to God instead of trusting Him! I thought I must have a certain amount of conviction of sin before I could be saved. I really had it all the while, though I did not know that I had it. I thought I must feel a certain weight of guilt. I *was* feeling it and, for that very reason, I thought I was not. I might have been spared much needless suffering if I had only believed what the Lord had taught me in His Word—that I had nothing to do with feeling burdens or anything else by way of preparation for coming to Christ, but that I had to come to Him just as I was. If I could not come to Him with a broken heart, I was to come to Him to break it. If I did not feel any true conviction of sin, or a single atom of repentance in my soul, there was all the more reason why I should come to Him and, without money, buy all that I needed. So, poor blind ones, come to my Master, blind as you are—but do not lay down any rules or regulations as to how He is to save you, for He will do it in His own way, which is, after all, the best possible way.

IV. Now I close with a fourth remark. WHEN THE LORD HAS TAKEN PAINS TO PREVENT US FROM ATTACHING TOO GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE MEANS, THEMSELVES, HE PUTS HONOR UPON THE MEANS.

I have already called your attention to this fact. The blind man's friends trusted too much to Christ's touch and too little to Christ Himself! He wanted to cure them of that evil, so He touched the man yet left him unhealed. But after He had taken him out of the town and away from the people, He did, after all, heal him by a touch, or something more than a touch, for He put His hands upon him twice, so that, though there was a touch that did not heal, there were afterwards two touches that did! It was as though Christ would say to them, "How foolish you are to trust in the touch instead of in Me! But when I have cured you of that folly, then will I put honor upon My touch which is the method by which I usually heal the sick."

It is so, too, with you who hear the Gospel, yet who seem to hear it in vain, for the Lord means you not to trust in your *hearing*, but to trust in *Him*. After He has cured you of that evil, I should not wonder if you hear the Gospel twice as well as anybody else does—and I expect that it will come with double power to your soul! It is so in this narrative and it is often so as a matter of spiritual experience. When the Lord has taken us away from trusting in ordinances, then He shows us what great blessings come from the ordinances when they are rightly observed. When we trust to the preacher, or the preaching, we get nothing—but when we trust in Christ alone, then He makes the preacher, the preaching and other means of Grace to be the channels of blessing to our souls!

Then, lastly, *the Lord sent that man home without letting anyone in that neighborhood know of the cure He had worked.* Christ thereby seems to say, "There are many whom I heal of whom nobody knows." There is a message to us preachers in this incident! Christ seems to say to us, "This is often My way of saving souls. I give the healing touch, but you do not know anything about it." Certainly, none of us can calculate the amount

of virtue which pours out of Christ through the preaching of the Word. The Last Great Day will reveal the myriads of men and women who have been brought to Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel, but, who, nevertheless, were never known to the preacher, himself, although they were converted through his instrumentality!

O Brothers and Sisters, keep on telling poor sinners about the Savior! Try to bring them into contact with Christ! You may not actually see Him open their eyes, for He may take them out of the town and work the great miracle privately. You bring them into contact with Christ and although that may not save them, it will lead up to their salvation and, therefore, you will be doing good service to them and to your Master, too! Preach away, my Brother, and preach nothing but Jesus! Teach your classes, my Brothers and Sisters, nothing but Jesus and seek to get His hands into contact with the children of men! But when you work, and when you pray, do not lay it down that God must bless souls by you, or by anybody else! But say to Him that if He will but save them anyhow, you will be content and thankful.

And as for you, poor Sinners, seek salvation by simply trusting in Jesus and if you have not any clear vision of Him at this moment, get to your knees and do not rise till you have found Him as your Savior! He has His own ways and methods of working, so you must trust *Him*—not the method—and He will bless you with life eternal! So may He do for His own name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 4:33-41; 5:12-17.

We are going to read some verses in the fourth and fifth chapters of Luke's Gospel—hospital chapters, I may call them, for they record many marvelous cures which were worked by the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall begin at the 33rd verse of the fourth chapter.

Luke 4:33, 34. *And in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth?* There are many people in the present day who have this evil spirit in them and they also say, "Let us alone." They do not want to have their consciences disturbed. They would rather sleep on until they wake up in another world where their awaking will be too late to be of use for their repentance.

34. *Have You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are, the Holy One of God.* That is an old trick of the devil, to acknowledge the excellence of the preacher that he may avoid the personal application of the sermon—and there are many people who are quite satisfied when they have said concerning the Word which they have heard, "Yes, it was all true, and it was very well put." But that is not the purpose of a true minister of the Gospel—simply to win the compliment of your approbation—he wants to see the devil cast out of you and to stir up your hearts so that you will no longer let religion alone, but will flee to Christ to save you!

35, 36. *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.* Ah, dear Friends, when we see what the Gospel can do—how it can reclaim the thief, how it can make chaste the harlot, how it can lift up the very vilest of men from the lowest depths of degradation—we may well say, "What a Word is this!" The power of the Gospel does not lie in the preacher, but in the Truth of God which he proclaims. What a Word is this, which not only knocks at the door of the human heart, but which carries on its belt the key with which it can open that door! It does not simply invite the sinner to trust the Savior, but there is a power which goes with it which sweetly woos the heart until the unwilling become willing and those who have hitherto despised God and His great salvation, cheerfully yield themselves to Him. Christ not only comes to those who seek Him, but, in the splendor of His Grace, He is often found of them that sought Him not! Yes, those who cried, "Let us alone," are not let alone, for Grace brings them beneath her blessed sway.

37-39. *And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about. And He arose out of the synagogue and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they made request of Him for her. And He stood over her and rebuked the fever and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.* Here is a type of another form of the disease of sin. This time it is a hot and burning fever and there are many men who have the fever of pride, or the fever of ambition—and some who have the fever of impetuous lust. Yet we have never read of such a cure as this in the lives of the doctors of ancient or modern times! They have worked remarkable cures by long dosing the patient with various drugs, but Christ just stood over Peter's wife's mother and rebuked the fever—and instantly it fled.

40. *Now when the sun was setting.* Ah, it is setting with some of you! Those gray hairs are like the streaks of light upon the horizon as the sun goes down! But blessed be God, He who heals the spiritually sick in the early morning by bringing children to Himself does not cease to work until the sun goes down!

40. *All they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.* Oh, that He would do that just now! Still is He mighty to save! Oh, that He would now display His ancient power and lay His healing hands on everyone of you! What fame He would get if He would do so! What joy there would be if all of you should now be turned to God! And why should it not be? Christ is able to do this—then let us ask it of Him in earnest believing prayer!

41. *And devils also came out of many, crying out and, saying, You are Christ, the Son of God. And He rebuking them did not allow them to speak: for they knew that He was Christ.* Perhaps they thought that their testimony would tend to blacken His Character. We are, in a sense, pleased when bad men find fault with us, for that is really the best commendation that they can give us. But when they begin to praise us, we feel sus-

picious that there is something wrong. We think of how Christ acted when the devils said to Him, "You are Christ, the Son of God," and we would have them hold their tongues. What a vile thing sin is, for it makes even good words to be evil when they come out of sinful lips!

Luke 5:12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face and implored Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* There was not much faith there, but faith even as a grain of mustard seed will serve and, therefore, Christ did not refuse the poor leper's plea.

13-15. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 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: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* Oh, that sinners would come to Christ in this spirit now—"to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities"! Some of you have come to hear, but have you come to Christ to be healed? Have you really come for that purpose? Alas, some even come to God's House only to see, or to be seen! How can such people expect to receive a blessing? Yet my Master is so gracious that, often, He is found of them that sought Him not! So may it be with any careless ones who are with us now!

16, 17. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed. 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 Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* These were the least hopeful patients that the Great Physician ever had, for to heal these doctors of divinity and to bring these proud learned Pharisees down to accept the Gospel needed an Omnipotent display of Divine Power. Penitent sinners are readily brought to Christ, but often the self-righteous—who think they are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing—are not to be persuaded to accept the fine gold which Christ presents to all who ask Him for it. The Lord grant that if any such people are here, the power of the Lord may be here to heal them!

—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, JULY 21, 1904.

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"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself:
it is not in man who walks to direct his steps."
Jeremiah 10:23.

THIS declaration follows after Jeremiah's lamentation over the Lord's ancient people who were about to be carried away captive into Babylon. The Prophet speaks of a fact that was well known to him. It is always well, Brothers and Sisters, to know the Truth of God and to know it so certainly that you are able to remember it just when you most need it. There are some people who are very much like that foolish captain of whom we have heard who had a good anchor, but he left it at home when he went to sea, so it was of no use to him. So, these people know what would comfort them, but they do not remember it in the time of their distress. Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know," and he utilizes his knowledge as a source of comfort in his hour of need.

What Jeremiah knew was this—that the affairs of this world are not under the control of men, however much they may imagine that they are. There is a Supreme Authority to theirs and a power which rules, overrules and works according to its own beneficent will—whatever men may desire or determine to do. Nebuchadnezzar was about to carry the Jews away from the land which flowed with milk and honey to his own far distant country, but the Prophet consoled himself with the reflection that whatever Nebuchadnezzar meant to do, he was only the instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. He proposed, but God disposed. The tyrant of Babylon thought that he was working out his own will, yet he was really carrying out the will of God in chastising the idolatrous and rebellious nation! This was Jeremiah's consolation, "I do not know what Nebuchadnezzar may do, but I do know that 'the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.' I know that, in God's eternal purposes, every step of Judah's way is mapped out and in the end He will make it all work for His own Glory and the good of His chosen people."

Child of God, will you, for a moment, reflect upon the overruling power of God even in the case of the most mighty and wicked of men? They sin grossly and what they do is done of their own free will—and the responsibility for it lies at their own door. That we can never forget, for the free-

agency of man is a self-evident Truth of God. But, at the same time, God is Omnipotent and He is still working out His wise designs, as He did of old, in the whirlwind of human wrath, in the tempest of human sin and even in the dark mines of human ambition and tyranny—all the while displaying His Sovereign Will among men even as the potter forms the vessels on the wheel according to his own will!

This Truth of God ought to be remembered by us because it tends to take from us all fear of man. Why should you, O Believer, be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man who is but a worm? You are, as a child of God, under Divine Protection, so who is he that shall harm you while you are a follower of that which is good? Remember that ancient promise, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." The most powerful enemy of the Church can do nothing without God's permission! God can put a bit into the mouth of leviathan and do with him as He pleases. The Almighty God is Master and Lord even over the men who imagine that all power is in their hands!

And while this Truth should banish our fear of man, it should also ensure our submission to the will of God. Suppose that the Lord allows Nebuchadnezzar to devastate the land that He gave to His people by Covenant? It is God who permits it, therefore do not think so much of the instrument employed by Him as of the hand in which that instrument is held! Are you afflicted, poor Soul, by some hard unkind spirits? Remember that God permits you to be so tried, so be not angry with that which is only the second cause of your trouble, but believe that the Lord permits this to happen to you for your good and, therefore, submit yourself to Him! A dog, when he is struck with a stick, usually bites the stick. If he had more sense, he would try to bite the man who holds the stick. So your contention must not be against the instrument of your affliction. If there is any contention, it is really against God—and you would not, I trust, think of contending with your Maker! Rather, say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him." Let your back be bared to the rod and look up into your Heavenly Father's face and say, "Show me why You contend with me."

This Truth ought to also strengthen our faith. When fear goes, faith comes in. It is an easy matter to trust God when everything goes smoothly, but genuine faith trusts God in a storm. When the land of Judah was hedged about by God's Providence and no enemy ventured to set foot upon the sacred soil, it was easy for a Prophet to praise the Lord. But it was quite another matter to trust God when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the villages, besieged the cities and, by-and-by, took them and gave them up to utter destruction and carried away their inhabitants into captivity. To trust in God *then*, was not so easy, yet that was the time for the display of real faith. Faith in the storm is true faith! Faith in a calm may be, or may not be, genuine faith. Summer-weather faith may be true, or may not be true, but winter faith that can bring forth fruit when the snows are deep and the North Wind blows, is the faith of God's elect! It proves

that it has Divine vitality in it because it can master the circumstances which would have utterly crushed the faith which appertains only to flesh and blood!

It is a severe trial to a child of God when he is mocked at home—when someone who ought to be kind to him, is quite the opposite—when the ties of nature seem only to intensify the hatred that is felt against the heir of Grace—when Ishmael mocks Isaac and continually grieves him. That is a severe trial, but it affords the opportunity for the tried one to recall this Truth of God, that God has all things in His hands and that this trial is only permitted, in His wisdom and love, for some good purpose towards His own child. It is still true that, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" and that, "no good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly." If your enemy triumphs over you for a time, you should say to him, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise." May the Holy Spirit help you to do so! The way of the persecutor is, after all, not left absolutely to his own will, but there is another and a higher will that overrules all!

We will not, however, tarry longer over the consideration of the context so far as it applies to Nebuchadnezzar and other adversaries of the people of God, but we will endeavor to learn the lesson that is taught us in the latter clause of the text—"It is not in man who walks to direct his steps." And, first, I will try to prove to you that these words are true. And secondly, that these words are instructive.

I. First, then, THESE WORDS ARE TRUE—"It is not in man who walks to direct his steps."

For, first, although man is an active individual, so that he can walk, he cannot direct his steps *because there may be some obstacle in his way which he cannot surmount* and which will change the whole course of his life. He may have determined, in his own mind, that he will do this or that and that he will go here or there—but he cannot foresee every circumstance that may happen to him and there may be circumstances that will entirely alter the direction of his life. There may be unexpected difficulties, or what many call, "accidents," which are really Providences, which will prevent us from doing what we have resolved to do.

Take the case of a young man who is just beginning business life—though he is active and strong, is it in him to direct his steps? I know it was not in me to direct *my* steps! I had certain plans concerning my life course, but they have not been fulfilled. No doubt the highest desire I ever cherished has been granted to me, but my first plans and purposes were not realized. I am not, today, where I hoped to have been. There were difficulties in the way which made it impossible for me to get there. I expect others have had a similar experience. A young man may try to choose his path in life, but we all know how seldom, if ever, he can get exactly what he wants. Perhaps he goes into a certain house of business and he says, "I shall work my way up till I get to the top." Yet how frequently it happens that something occurs which jerks him off the line of rails which he had laid down for himself and he has to go in quite a dif-

ferent direction. The path he had chosen was apparently a very proper one for him to choose—perhaps he spent a good deal of earnest thought upon the matter and, possibly, also a good deal of prayer—yet he finds, as many others have found, that "it is not in man who walks to direct his steps."

It is possible that the young man prospers so that he is able to go into business on his own account, but the same lesson has to be learned under different circumstances! He could not foresee what was going to happen so he had purchased certain goods, relying upon an expected rise in the market—but there was a sudden fall, instead of a rise—and he became a loser, not a gainer. Going into business is often like going to sea—one may be much tossed about and possibly may be wrecked before reaching the desired haven. Many a man has found that he cannot get what he most confidently reckons upon.

Another man fails in health. He might have prospered, but, just when the full vigor of his physical strength was needed and the greatest clearness of his mental vision was required, he was laid aside. As he sickened, he also became depressed in spirit as he realized that his path must be that of an invalid and, perhaps, of a poor man. Yet he thought his career would have been that of a strong man who would soon have reached a competence. I am sure that I must be addressing many who know very well, from their own experience, that it is not of the slightest use for a man to say, "I will do this," or, "I will do that," because something or other may occur which will altogether prevent you from doing that which seems simple enough now. The mariner reckons on reaching port at a certain day or hour, but the wind may shift, or many things may happen to delay him. The mariner, however, can reckon even better than you can, for he has his chart and he can find his way! He knows where the shoals are and the quicksands, and the rocks and where the deep channels run—but you do not know anything about your future life—you are sailing over a sea that no ship's keel has ever sailed before! God knows all about it—everything is present to his all-seeing eyes, but it is not present to your eyes. It is not possible for a man to absolutely direct his own way, for he has not the power to do it—let him strive and struggle as he may, he must often be made to feel this!

Perhaps some of you are just now in this condition. Your affairs have got into a tangle and you do not at all know how to unravel it. You are like a man in a maze or a labyrinth. You wish to take the course which is according to the will of God, but, whether you should turn to the right hand or to the left, you do not know.

Now you have begun to realize what was always true, but what you did not perceive before—that is, "it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." You cannot direct your own way! You are quite perplexed as to which of two courses you should take. If this one is taken, it involves one form of trouble, and if the other course is chosen, that involves another kind of difficulty. What are you to do? Well, you know that the wisest thing for you to do is to take the matter to the Lord and ask Him to direct you. That is what you ought to do in every case! That ought to be the

constant habit of your soul—to look for the fiery-cloudy pillar which alone can guide you safely over the trackless wastes of life!

In the second place, man ought not to direct his way according to his own will because *his will is naturally evil*. Ungodly men think that they can direct their own way. Ah, Sirs, if you do that, you will direct your way down to the deeps of destruction! He who is his own guide is guided by a fool. He that trusts to his own understanding proves that he has no understanding. If you will be your own director, you will be directed to the place where you will have bitter cause to rue it forever and ever. If a man, starting out in life says, "I shall follow my own will. I will say to my passions, 'You shall be indulged.' And to my desires, 'Eat, drink and be merry.' And to my soul, 'Trouble not yourself with solemn and serious things—leave eternity till it comes and make the best you can of time!' I will direct my own way as pleasure shall guide me, or as self-interest shall guide me." If you, Sir, talk like that, I pray you remember that "it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." And it ought not to be, for man is quite incompetent to perform such a task as that because he has a natural bias towards that which is evil—an inclination towards that which will be injurious to him and to others, also—and which will make him miss the chief end of his being which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever!

I should like, before proceeding further with my subject, to urge everyone who has hitherto depended upon himself, to pause and lift up his heart to Heaven and say, "Gracious Spirit, You shall be my Guide from this time and forever." For, young man, young woman, you will surely run upon the rocks before long if you take the tiller of your life's vessel into your own hands! With such a heart as yours, you cannot expect to go right without the Grace of God. The Doctrine of the Depravity of the Human Race is not merely an article in the creed—it is a matter of everyday experience! There is in you, by nature, a tendency to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to put darkness for light and light for darkness! And though you may think that you have a preference for good—and it is possible that you have a preference for some forms of good—yet there are critical points where self seeks to rule, where the weakness of your natural disposition will be discovered sooner or later and where the evil that lurks within your flesh will prove to be your ruin! I charge you, sons and daughters of Adam, to remember that since your father, Adam, even in his state of innocence, could not direct his own way aright, but lost Paradise for us all, there is no hope that in your fallen state you can find your way back to Paradise! No, but you will keep on wandering further and further and further from the way of peace and holiness, for, "it is not in man who walks to direct his steps."

Let me give another meaning to the text and still seek to prove it at the same time. It is not and it ought not to be in man who walks to direct his steps because not only is he naturally inclined to evil, but *even when Grace has renewed his nature, his judgment is so fallible that it is a great mistake for him to attempt to direct his own way*. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the stony heart of unbelief has been removed from you

and you have had a new heart and a right spirit put within you. And now the living and incorruptible Seed that is in you makes you seek after that which is good and right—but if you, even now, shall trust to your own judgment, you will find yourself brought into a thousand sorrows! Ah, my Brother, you are an experienced Christian and others look up to you and ask direction from you. But if you are really experienced, you will often say to them, "God helping me, I can direct you, but, as for myself, I feel that I have need of a director quite as much as the youngest babe in the family of God."

Does not every man who is truly wise feel himself to be increasingly a fool apart from Divine Guidance? And is it not a token of growth in wisdom and Grace when a man's self-confidence continues to grow less and less? Distrust yourself, dear Friend, for you accurately gauge your own judgment when you do that! It is about little matters that wise men generally make their grossest mistakes. In what he considers a difficult matter, the wise Christian always has resort to God in prayer—but when he gets what he regards as a very simple thing, which is perfectly clear and which he thinks he can himself decide—then his folly is speedily discovered! He is like the Israelites were with the Gibeonites. They said, in effect, if not in words, "We do not need to pray about this matter. We must not make treaties with the Canaanites, but these men are not Canaanites, that is quite clear. We heard them say that they had come from a far country—and when we looked at their shoes we knew that they spoke the truth. They told us that they were quite new when they put them on, yet now they are old and dried—they must have come a great many miles, you may depend upon it. And their bread—did you notice that? It has the blue mold all over it—we would not like to eat a mouthful of it—yet they told us that it was quite fresh when they started. There is no doubt that they are distinguished foreigners who have come from a far country, so let us strike hands with them and make a covenant with them."

And so they did, for the case seemed so clear to them that they asked no counsel of God. And therein Israel made a great mistake. So, Brothers and Sisters, whenever any case appears to be very clear to you, be sure to say, "Let us pray about it." You know the old proverb, "When it is fine weather, carry an umbrella. When it is wet, you can do as you like." So, when any case seems to be quite clear, pray over it. When it is more difficult, I dare not say that you may do as you like about praying, then, unless I say it in the spirit of the proverb which would imply that you would be sure to pray. When you feel certain that you cannot go wrong, you certainly will go wrong unless you ask counsel of God about the matter. That was a good plan of the old Scotchman who, when anything was in dispute, used to say, "Reach down yon Bible"—and when that was brought down and the Scripture read, and prayer offered—the good man felt that he could see his way and could go with firm step along the path to which the Lord had directed him. "It is not in man who walks to direct his steps," for his judgment is fallible!

I think there is another meaning to be given to the text, for the gracious man feels that he must not direct his own steps *because he cannot take even a step in the right way apart from Divine help.* How can he talk about directing his own steps when he is absolutely dependent upon the Grace of God for every step he takes? O Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord were to help us, by His Grace, until we got up to the doors of Heaven, we would never be able to get in unless He gave us the Grace to take the last step! You cannot direct your own steps for you are a cripple and cannot take even one step except as strength is given you from on high! You are like a ship upon the sea—you can make no progress except as the breath of the Divine Spirit fills the sails of your boat. How can you direct your own way when you have no power to go in it and are dependent upon God for everything? I pray you to confess your dependence and not to talk of directing your own steps!

I must give you just one more thought under this head. *He that walks need not think of directing his own steps, for there is One who will direct them for him.* What if sin inclines us to take the wrong path and if a feeble judgment makes us err through inadvertence? There is no need for us to choose our own lot—but we may bow before the Lord and say, "You shall choose our inheritance for us." The choice is difficult for you, my Brother. Then do not choose your own way, but leave it to Him who sees the end from the beginning and who is sure to make a wise choice! The burden of life is heavy, my Sister, then do not try to carry it, but "cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you." "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Let it not be your choice, but let it be God's choice! That was a wise answer of a good old Christian woman when she was asked whether she would choose to live or die. She said that she had no choice in the matter, but that she left it with the Lord. "But," said one, "suppose the Lord put it to your choice—which would you select?" "Neither," she replied, "I would ask Him not to let me choose, but to choose for me so that it should be as He willed, not as I willed." Oh, if we could but once abandon our own choosing and say to the Lord, "Not as I will, but as You will," how much more happy we might be! We would not be troubled by the thought that we could not direct our own steps, but we would be glad of it, because our very weakness would entitle us to cry unto the Lord, "Now that I cannot direct my own way, what I know not, You teach me."

II. Time fails me and therefore I will close my discourse by briefly mentioning the practical lessons of the text in order to prove to you that THESE WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIVE. It seems to me that they are instructive if we use them thus.

First, *avoid all positive resolutions about what you mean to do*, remembering that, "it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." Do not forget what the Apostle James says about this matter, "Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow." If you do make any plans, always make them in pencil and have your eraser handy so that you can rub them out quickly.

Much mischief comes of making them in ink and regarding them as permanent—and saying, "This is what I am sure I shall do." Cast iron breaks easily, so do not have any cast iron regulations for your life! Do not say, "that is my plan and I shall keep to it whatever happens." Be ready to alter your plan as God's Providence indicates that alteration would be right. I have known people who have been very much given to change—I cannot commend them, for I remember that Solomon said, "As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." So, do not be in a hurry to wander! On the other hand, I have known some persons who have resolved that they will never move at all. Do not make such a resolution as that, but remember that although "a rolling stone gathers no moss," it is equally true that "a sitting hen gets no barley"—and believe that there may come a time when it will be right for you to move. Do not make up your mind that you will move, or that you will not move, but wait for guidance from God as to what He would have you do.

The next thing is *never be too positive in your expectations*. I suppose we must have expectations—that old-fashioned benediction, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed," is very difficult to gain. Expect that if God has promised you anything, He will be true to His Word—but, beyond that, do not expect anything beneath the moon, for, if you do, you will be sure to be disappointed sooner or later. It is of the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, that it is said, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings." But if his heart had been fixed merely on the attainment of certain worldly ends, he would have been overwhelmed when the evil tidings came! As to anything in this world, let this be the rule by which you are governed—"having food and raiment, be therewith content"—and never cherish too optimistic expectations.

Next, *avoid all security as to the present*. If you have anything that you prize very highly, hold it very loosely, for you may easily lose it. Read the word, "mortal," plainly imprinted on the brows of all your children. Look into the dear eyes that are to you like wells in the desert and remember that they may be closed in less than an hour and the light of life be gone from them! Your beloved one and you are, alike, mortal—and either of you may soon be taken from the other. Have you property? Remember that wealth has wings and that it flies away like a bird upon swift pinions. Have you health? Then think what a marvelous mercy it is that—

"A harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long"—

and remember that, very soon, those strings may be all jarring and some of them may be broken. Hold everything earthly with a loose, hand, but grasp eternal things with a death-like grip! Grasp Christ in the power of the Spirit! Grasp God, who is your everlasting Portion and your unfailing Joy. As for other things, hold them as though you held them not, even as Paul says, "it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none...and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away." Of everything below, it is wise for us to say, "This is not my abiding portion." It is very necessary to say this and

to realize that it is true, for everything here is covered with bird-lime—and the birds of paradise get stuck to it unless they are very watchful. Mind what you are doing, you prosperous people, you who have nice homes, you who are investing your money in the funds—mind that you do not get bird-limed! There is nothing permanent for you here! Your home is in Heaven—your home is not here—and if you find your treasure here, your heart will also be here—but it must not be so. You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart and let Christ be your Treasure—and let Him have your heart.

The next observation I would make is this—*Bow before the Divine Will in everything*. "It is not in man who walks to direct his steps." Why should it be? O Lord, You are Master, You are King! Then why should we wish to have our own way? Is it right that the servant should take the master's place? There are some of you who are in trouble and probably your chief trouble arises from the fact that you will not absolutely submit to the Lord's will. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to do so, for trouble loses all its sting when the troubled one yields to God! If you had directed your own way and this trouble had come upon you because of the choice that you made, you might have cause to be distressed. But as the Lord has so directed and arranged your affairs, why should you be cast down? My dear Friend, you know—or, at any rate, you ought to know—that you cannot be supreme. You must be content to be second. You must say to the Lord, "Your will, not mine, be done." You will have to say it sooner or later! And if you are a child of God, you ought to have said it long ago, so say it at once!

I heard one who I thought was a Christian, say, "I cannot think that God was right in taking away my dear mother from me." I replied, "My Sister, you must not talk like that." Perhaps someone else says, "I did feel that it was hard when my dear child was taken from me." Yes, my dear Friend, you may have felt that it was hard, but you ought to have felt that it was right. God must be free to do as He pleases and He always does what is right—therefore you must submit to His will—whatever He pleases to do.

My last observation is—*Pray about everything*. Remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Pray about everything! I make no exception to this. Pray about waking in the morning and pray about falling asleep at night. Pray about any great event in your life, but pray equally about what you call the minor events. Pray as Jacob did when he crossed the brook Jabbok, but do not forget to pray when there is no angry Esau near and no special danger to fear. The simplest thing that is not prayed over may have more evil in it than what appears to be the direst evil when once it has been brought to God in prayer. I pray that all of you who love the Lord may commit yourselves afresh to Christ this very hour. I wish to do so myself, saying, "My Master, here I am. Take me and do as You will with me. Use me for Your Glory in any way that You please. Deprive me of every comfort if so I shall the more be able to honor You. Let my choic-

est treasures be surrendered if Your Sovereign Will shall so ordain." Let every child of God make a complete surrender, here and now, and ask for Grace to stand to it. Your greatest sorrow will come when you begin to be untrue to your full surrender to the Lord—so may you never prove untrue to it!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 10.

Verses 1, 2. *Hear you the word which the Lord speaks unto you, O house of Israel: Thus says the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of Heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.* Among the heathen, if certain stars were in conjunction, it was considered unlucky. And certain days of the week were also regarded as unlucky, just as to this day there are people who think that it is very unfortunate to commence anything on a Friday. There are a great many foolish superstitions floating about this silly world, but you Christian people should never allow such follies to have any influence upon you. Neither the fiends of Hell, nor the stars of Heaven can ever injure those who put their trust in God!

3, 4. *For the customs of the people are vain: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.* Those ancient Prophets seemed to take delight in heaping scorn upon the god-making of the heathen. Even the heathen poets made sport of the god-making! One of them very wisely said that it would be more reasonable to worship the workmen who made the god than to worship the god which the workmen had made!

5. *They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must need be borne, because they cannot go.* Pretty gods they must be! They cannot move and cannot even stand till they are nailed up! They cannot stir unless they are carried from place to place.

5-8. *Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto You, O LORD; You are great, and Your name is great in might. Who would not fear You, O King of nations? For to You does it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nation, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.* To teach people to worship mere stocks and stones may well be called, "a Doctrine of vanities."

9. *Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.* Step into any Roman Catholic shrine in England, or on the Continent, or for that matter, into any *Anglican* shrine, for they are all very much alike, and you will see that the modern "gods" are no better than those upon which the Prophets of old poured scorn! And I think it is our duty to pour

scorn upon these saints, Madonnas and bambinos and I know not what besides!

10-13. *But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures.* To what a height of sacred imagery does Jeremiah mount! He seems to shake off his usual melancholy spirit when he comes to sing the praises of the Lord! He uses very similar language to that of Job, his fellow-sufferer.

14. *Every man is brutish in his knowledge.* Every idolater proves that he knows no more than a brute beast when he worships a stock or a stone.

14, 15. *Every founder is confounded by the engraved image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.* The next verse brings out very vividly the contrast between these false gods and the one living and true God—

16. *The Portion of Jacob is not like they: for He is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of His inheritance: The LORD of Hosts is His name.* What a blessed name that is for God—"The Portion of Jacob"! And the other side of the Truth is equally blessed—"Israel is the rod of His inheritance." God belongs to His people and they belong to Him! If we can but realize that these blessings are ours, we are building on the solid foundation of the richest possible happiness! The form of the prophecy now changes, for God was about to send His people, because of their sin, into a long and sad captivity. So the Prophet says, in the name of the Lord—

17, 18. *Gather up your wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus says the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.* They had fled to their fortresses for shelter, for the Babylonians were coming up against them. But no hope of deliverance was held out to them and they were told to pack up their little bundles, to put their small stores as closely together as they could, for they had to go away into a far distant country as captives of the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar. God compares their captivity to the forcible ejection of stones from a sling—"I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at once." How severely God chastened His people in Jeremiah's day! Yet, when we think of their innumerable provocations and of how they revolted again and again against the Lord, we are not surprised that at last the Lord sent them into captivity. Now listen to Jeremiah's lamentation over the people whom he looks upon as already in captivity. He speaks in the name of the nation and says—

19. *Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief and I must bear it.* Ah, child of God, you also must learn to say that! There are some trials and troubles which come upon you against which you may not contend, but you must say, "Truly this is a grief and I must bear it."

20. *My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains.* Alas, poor Israel! She was like a tent removed with none to set her up again. There are some churches in the present day that are in this sad condition—the faithful fail from among them, there are no new converts and no earnest spirit, so that the church has to say—"My tent is spoiled and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains." Yes, poor afflicted church, that may be all true, yet your God can visit you and make the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children! And you who have lost your dearest one and seem to have no stamina left—your children are all taken from you—but your God can build you up! Is He not better to you than ten sons? And has He not said to you, "Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name"?

21, 22. *For the pastors have become brutish and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come.* "Bruit" is an old Norman word—one wonders how it got in here. It might be rendered, "The noise of the *tumult* is come."

22-24. *And a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.* What a suitable prayer this is for a sick man, for a tried Believer, for the child of God in deep despondency of soul! I scarcely know any better words that any of us could use. The suppliant does not ask to go unchastised, but he says, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in Your anger; lest You bring me to nothing."

25. *Pour out Your fury upon the heathen that know You not, and upon the families that call not on Your name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.* So he asks God to, instead of smiting His own children, to smite His enemies. And knowing what we do about the Babylonians, we do not wonder that Jeremiah put up such a prayer as that.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—215, 208.

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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 28, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"Now therefore come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians: if they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." 2 Kings 7:4.

OUTSIDE the gates of Samaria, at the time mentioned in our text, you might have seen four miserable beings, gaunt and thin, with that sharpness of eye and visage which is always the effect of protracted hunger. They were lepers, suffering from a loathsome disease and emaciated by starvation. They held, as it were, a miniature council of war, and the result of their deliberations was that they said to one another, "Why do we stay here to die? If we go into the city, even should we be permitted to remain there, famine is so rife that we would soon die. And if we continue to sit here, it is quite certain that we must pine away and perish. Let us go to the camp of the Syrians—here is a little hope in that direction, though it may be a very slender one. The Syrians may put us to death and so end our miseries. Perhaps death by the sword is preferable to death by famine—at any rate, we can but die in any case. Let us choose the desperate alternative—let us take that course which, although it requires the greatest boldness, holds out some slight hope of success."

You know the result of their decision. They went to the Syrian camp, found that the host had fled, feasted themselves to the fullest and, possibly, began to appropriate some of the plunder that abounded all around them. Then, suddenly, the thought struck them, "Here we have bread and corn in abundance, yet the people in Samaria are starving. This is a time of common distress so, though they did throw us out of the city, it would be a deed unworthy even of lepers if we left our fellow creatures without news of our discovery. Let us go back and tell the good news to the people in the city, that their suffering may be relieved as our own has been." They did so and soon the famished crowds poured out of Samaria and fed to the fullest!

You are familiar with the narrative, so I will base upon it an argument which may prove useful to any enquiring ones who may be here. There are probably with us some who have before them an alternative somewhat similar to the one mentioned in our text. If so, I hope they will imitate these poor lepers in their actions and, afterwards, count it their joy-

ful privilege to deliver to others a message as cheering as the one which these lepers carried to the famine-stricken people of Samaria!

I. First, then, THERE ARE SOME OF YOU WHO HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE PRESENTED TO YOUR CONSCIENCES.

There was a time when you were careless about eternal things, but that time has passed. You can look back, possibly only a few weeks, to the time when the Sabbath was to you a day of revelry, when the House of God was entirely neglected by you, when the Bible was a Book which you would not have read unless you had been flogged to read it and when prayer was a duty and privilege that you utterly despised. But now your conscience has been somewhat awakened and though not thoroughly as yet, still partially you have begun to perceive that what is written in Scripture is true, that we have gone astray like lost sheep, that our iniquities have prevailed against us and that our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags. You have heard the Gospel preached. It matters not where—whether in the cathedral, or in the theater, or anywhere else. But now that you have listened to the Word, Satan has interposed and has said to you, "Christ will not receive such sinners as *you* are! The Grace of God was never intended for men who have degraded themselves as you have. There may be hope for other men, but there is none for *you*—the gate of Mercy is fast closed against you and it has been said of you, "'He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he has disobeyed his God, let him receive the penalty for that disobedience.'"

Now you perceive that there are just two courses open to you. You can sit still, but then you know that you must perish. Or you can go to Christ, but your fear is that you will still perish. Yet you can but die if you go to Him and He rejects you—but if you do not go to Him, you will surely perish. Even should you believe in Him, you fear that you may be lost—but if you do not believe in Him, there is no hope at all for you. Should you go to Him in prayer? Your fears tell you that He may repel you and say to you, "Get out! What right have you, who once cursed Me, to expect any favor from Me? You, who have scorned My Grace a hundred times and defied My Law, what do you mean by falling upon your knees and entreating My mercy? Go away, ungrateful wretch, and perish in your sins!" Yet still this Truth of God is present to your mind—that if you do perish there, you do but perish, and it is quite certain that you will perish if you remain where you are! Let me try and work out this question for you, sitting down by your side, as one of the leprous men may have sat down by his fellow. You know, my Friend and Brother, that should you die as you now are, it is absolutely certain that you will perish. Do not listen to Satan's lie—"You shall not surely perish." You all know that the Bible is the Book of God. I can hardly believe any man who tells me that he doubts whether the Bible is the Word of God. The Truth of Scripture is being so perpetually confirmed by all the discoveries of those who travel in the land where it was written that I can scarcely credit the doubts concerning its authenticity as being honest.

But even if you reject the Word of God, you must believe that God is just. If there is a God, He must punish men for sinning against Him. How

can any moral government exist if sin goes unpunished, if virtue and vice lead to the same end? Conscience, fallen though it is, and no longer like God's candle in the soul, still has sufficient Light of God left to assure men that God must punish sin! Supposing that you do accept the Word of God as true—you know that the unregenerate can never see the face of God with acceptance, that those who have not been cleansed from sin can never stand before the thrice-holy Jehovah, for there can by no means enter Heaven, anything that defiles! As to your ultimate fate, if you continue as you now are, there can be no question the fire of Hell must be your everlasting portion! Now turn to the other alternative—there is for you at least some hope there. Even your poor trembling heart admits that there is at least some hope that if you seek mercy, you shall find it. I can assure you that there is not only hope, but that there is certainty that you will obtain it! Jesus casts out none that come to Him and He freely receives the vilest of the vile!

But I put the matter now as your unbelief puts it—it is not an absolute certainly to you that Christ will reject you, is it? You are not quite sure that if you pray to Him, He will reject your petition, or that if the tears of penitence shall steal down your cheek, God will refuse to pardon you. I am only stating the question as you yourself state it. If I were speaking according to my own convictions, I would, on the authority of God's Word, affirm again and again that if you come to Him through Jesus Christ, His Son, God will certainly receive you! But even putting it in your way, is it not the wisest course for you to say—

"If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there"?

Let us look at the matter in another light. It is certain that if you perish as you now are, you will perish without pity and without mercy. The Law of God, by which you are already condemned, knows nothing about forgiveness—and the Law provides no sacrifice for sin. If you perish without seeking mercy at the hands of Christ, there can be no mercy for you—rigorous, unabated, undiluted Justice must be your portion! But now, do you not feel that even if you could perish after coming to God through Christ, yet you would not perish without having some ray of pity thrown upon you? Would there not be at least this consolation for you—"I did what God commanded me to do. I did come to Him and seek forgiveness. I did plead the precious blood of Christ, yet He rejected me"? Do you not think that this would be balm to your spirit? But if you perish as you now are, you will have this thought ringing in your ears forever—"You heard of Christ but you believed not on Him. You lived where the Light of the Gospel was clearly shining, yet you shut your eyes to it. Christ was preached close to you, yet you refused to trust Him. You would have none of His warnings—you put your fingers in your ears and ran on to destruction." But should you perish after having sought mercy through Christ, you would be able to say, "I did seek it. I did knock, I did pray, I did trust, I did yield my heart to God, yet I perished." If such perishing were possible—though we know that it is not—it would be far preferable to perishing without having sought the Savior in His own ap-

pointed way! For your own sake, then, I urge you to choose this alternative and I ask you to let me take you by the hand and lead you to Him who, with arms outstretched, waits to welcome you that He may give pardon to the guilty, life to the dead and salvation to the lost!

Yet further, you ought to remember that all those who have continued in a state of nature have, without exception, perished. Not one, however high in station, however excellent in morality, however profound in learning, however lofty in fame has ever been able to pass the threshold of Heaven except through the blood and merit of the Lord Jesus Christ! In the black list of the unregenerate, there is no exception to their condemnation. But take the other side and at least we can assure you, from our own case, that even supposing that some perish though they trust in Christ—which is not true—yet there are some who do not! Certainly there are some who, in this life, receive the pardon of their sins and know that they have received it and who, in death, are cheered with the prospect of a glorious immortality! Saul of Tarsus was led to repent of sin, though he said that he was the chief of sinners. Others in his day who had no more right to mercy than you have, sought and found it! And there are hundreds, yes, I might say thousands in this Tabernacle right now who could rise, if this were the proper season to do so, and each one say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his troubles." Well, then, if God has, to your knowledge, saved some who have come to Him—I say that He saves all who come to Him through Christ! But I am dealing with the question from your standpoint—then it would be wise and right for you, also, to say—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer,
But if I perish, I will pray
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go!
I am resolved to try,
For if stay away,
I know I must forever die."

But you can go on to say, in the words of the same gracious writer—

"But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought)!
As sinner never died."

No, not one ever died thus! You would be the first who thus perished—so take this alternative and, as the Holy Spirit has quickened you to make you feel your need of a Savior, I pray that the same Holy Spirit may lead you, this very hour, to plunge into the stream—sink or swim—that whether you perish or are saved, you may say, "Your wounds, O Jesus, shall be my hiding place! Your blood shall cleanse me from all sin! Your righteousness shall be my clothing! You, and You alone, shall be my All-in-All."

II. Now I pass on to observe that THE DISCUSSIONS OF THESE LEPERS ENDED IN ACTION.

I wish this could be said of all of you. How many holy resolutions have been strangled in this House of Prayer? How many good thoughts have been murdered in those pews? See if you cannot find their blood upon your own clothes. Many a time the tear which betokened the first rising emotion has been wiped away—and the emotion has gone with it. May it not be so now, but may God grant that, like the lepers, we may put into action what we think over and what, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we resolve to do!

And, first, let me remind you that *the action of these lepers was bold*. Cowardice would have sat still and said, "It is true that we shall perish if we remain here, but we will not go just yet to the Syrian camp. We are very hungry, but we may be able to go without food for another hour or so." And thus only the extreme pinch of starvation would have driven them out. The fear of a sword-thrust might have kept them still, but it did not. They said, "We will risk it. We know that it is a desperate experiment, but, for better or for worse, for life or for death, we will go to the camp of the Syrians." So they said and so they did! And you will be wise if you act in the same fashion. It may seem a very bold thing for you, my unknown but trembling Hearer, to think of going to Christ by faith. "Why," you say, "I have not the presumption to do so after what I have been!" Perhaps some of you could tell of immoral conduct. Others could speak of the Gospel despised and of privileges neglected which make your guilt even more heinous and you say, "No, we do not have the face to go to Christ. We are too black, too guilty, too diseased. We cannot cover our sores, we cannot hide the leprosy which gleams in deadly whiteness from our brow. We cannot go, we dare not go!" But do you not recollect those lines of Hart's that we so often sing—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good"?

Oh, yes, do venture on Him! Though it seems impossible that God would receive you, He can do what would be impossible to all others. O you blackest of the black and vilest of the vile, trust Him to pardon you, for He can do it! It surpasses your faith, does it? But it is God who has promised to pardon, so judge Him not by yourself! Measure not His ability by your rules! Fathom not the depths of His Grace with your short-lined plummet! Honor Him by believing that even such a sinner as you are may find Grace and pardon—and find them now!

I recollect that John Bunyan, in his "*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*," says that there were times when he felt that his sins were so great and his horror at them was so terrible that he must go to Christ at all costs. He said, "Though I sometimes used to think of Christ as of One who stood with a pike in His hand to push me back, yet my dire necessities came upon me with such force that I would have run upon the very pike sooner than continue to endure my sin." Sinner, venture to run upon the pike and you will find that there is no sword or pike in Christ's

hands! And when you think that you are about to run upon the sword, He will clasp you in His arms, press you to His bosom and say to you, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you."

O Sinner, if you think that my Master is a hard Master. If you think it would be too bold an action on your part to come to Him, you do not really know Him! I once thought Him to be such an One as myself. For five long years I thus slandered Him till my heart was driven almost to despair and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life! I said it could not be that Christ could ever forgive such a sinner as I was. I wrote bitter things against Him, as well as against myself, till at last, when I could stand it no longer, I came into His Presence with the rope around my neck, prepared to hear my sentence—but I ventured to give one look at Him and oh, what a change that look brought to me! My soul, at this hour, renews its transports at the remembrance of the change that came over my spirit the moment I learned to believe in Jesus! The burden of my sin was gone in an instant! My five years of agony were soon forgotten in the joy of being able to say, "I'm forgiven! I'm forgiven!" Then I could have shouted for joy because the love of God was shed abroad in my heart. Oh, that I could be the means of bringing even one of you to trust my Master as I then trusted Him! I am sure, if you would do so, that you would find Him so good and gracious that you would say, "The half has never been told." I have never been able to tell the thousandth part of His love! I have tried to tell of His mercy, but how little of it have I been able to set forth! I have made but a poor daub where there ought to have been a fine picture of a Prince with every virtue shining in His face and love streaming from His eyes of compassion!

Poor troubled Soul, come and trust Him, even though it may seem to you to be a bold thing to do. Like the woman who stole a cure, so do you come behind Him and touch the hem of His garment. As the dog under the table, without leave or license, eats the crumbs that fall, do you the same. Though you think it is against law and against reason, still dare to believe in Jesus! He will be better to you than all your fears—better even than your faith—and you shall find that you did not trust Him without a reason!

But while these lepers did a bold thing, I note that *they did it unanimously*. It is not said that three of them went to the Syrian camp, but that the fourth said, "No, I will not go now." It is not recorded that two of them said, "When we have a more convenient season, we will go." It was a mercy for them that they were all hungry, for, if they had not been, they would not have gone where food was so abundant. It was also a mercy for them that they were all lepers—or else they might not have dared to go. What a mercy it is for you, Sinner, if you know that you are a sinner! What a blessing it is that you have not yet reached that state of mortification which is the prelude of eternal death! You feel as if you were shut out as these lepers were. I thank God for it, because now that you seem to be shut out of Israel, it may be that you will begin to go to Israel's God and find mercy, help and hope in Him! You will not all go to Him tonight,

but oh that you would! There will come under our notice—our faith is in God that it shall be so—perhaps a dozen, or a score, each of whom will say, "I will venture to trust Christ." "But what are they among so many?" While we bless God that we have so many seals to our ministry, what a sorrowful reflection it is that so many thousands come into this place and go away unsaved!

There are many of you who can say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved." Is it because the Gospel is not preached here? No, that cannot be the reason, for we know that the Truth of God is fully and faithfully preached here, yet we sow much and reap little compared with what our hearts desire! Is there anyone here who resolves to sit down and die? If you do so resolve, do it deliberately, but I pray the Lord to cause you to make the right decision. You will not decide aright unless He chooses for you—but if you will make the wrong choice, do it deliberately and do it solemnly. I wish you would say it if you really mean it, for then I hope you would soon reverse it—"I intend to choose the pleasures of this world and, from this time forward, to live without God and without Christ." If you talk like that, you may as well add, "and I mean to die and be damned," for that must follow if you continue in your present course. In that pew where you are, let your damnation warrant be signed and sealed. "No," you say, "not so!" But, Sirs, you had better make that league with death and that covenant with Hell rather than remain as some of you are—indifferent and careless! This is the great fault of our church-goers and chapel-goers. When we once get worldlings in to hear a sermon, they listen with attention and if they are impressed by what they hear, it often happens that the impression is a saving one. But with you who are used to hearing sermons, it is often merely going from one place to another to listen to this preacher or that—as though the preaching of the Gospel was only intended to amuse you.

How often you come to hear us, just as you go to see a popular actor, that you may spend an evening and be able, when you are asked, "Have you heard So- and-So?" to say, "Oh, yes! I heard him on such-and-such a night." Sirs, do you think we preach merely for this? If you think so, it proves that you do not know us! Is it such a fine thing to make a display of ourselves before you? Is it such a grand thing to have all your eyes fixed upon us? God knows that I would sooner break stones on the road than be a minister if it were not for the hope of winning souls! I know of no life that has more trouble in it. I know of no occupation that brings more awful despondency of spirit upon a man's mind than my ministry brings upon me. So, if God does not enable me to win souls by it, I pray Him to deliver me from it! I would renounce my charge for all it ever brings me in, or all the honor it ever gives me if it were not that sinners were saved, backsliders reclaimed and God glorified! I do pray you, Sirs, to shake off your indifference. Be honest even with the devil. If you mean to serve him, be prepared to take his pay. If you enjoy the pleasures of sin, be honest enough to let Satan have a reversionary interest in your soul—and look forward to making your bed in Hell—be prepared to lie down in everlasting torments! Or else, I evoke you, by the love of God be-

fore whom I stand—embrace that other alternative and fly to Him who will in no wise caste you out!

Bear with me while I again remind you *that the action of the lepers was also instantaneous*. They said, "We will go to the camp of the Syrians," and at once they went. Too many are like that son who said, "I go, Sir," and went not. All of us who are now Believers can recollect times, before our conversion, when we were impressed under solemn sermons, yet the impression soon passed off. Some of you can also remember how you made haste home from the service and hurried upstairs for quiet meditation and prayer. But the idle conversation of the afternoon dissipated the impression that had been made. Many there are who have felt serious searching of heart under a sermon and who have said, "Please, God, spare us another day and we will think over these things." But what do they say concerning them now? There is a gray-headed man over yonder—let him go back in thought to his early days. When he was a little boy, his mother had bright hopes concerning him. And when he was a lad, everybody looked upon him as a young Timothy. But now he is more like Demas and his silvery hair is a reminder of the silver and gold which he obtained by forsaking God and loving this present evil world! And, all the while, the root of the matter was not in him. Gray-headed man, recall that early vow of yours which was registered in Heaven, but which you have broken!

There are men here, in the high tide of business, who, when they were much younger, resolved and re-resolved that they would serve the Lord—yet they are still as far from doing so as they ever were. If you wrote down your resolves in your pocketbook, I wish you would read them over again and read them with repentance as you say, "These vows were made in the power of the flesh and, therefore, they were broken—but the sin of breaking them remains upon my soul. The lepers went instantly to the Syrian camp and so were saved from starvation. And we should go to Christ, not by long-protracted resolving, but by instantaneous submission as justification by faith is an instantaneous gift! The faith that saves is, doubtless, an instantaneous act! Believe in Christ, trust Christ and do it now, for, as soon as you have done that, you are saved.

We will leave this part of the subject when I have just remarked that *these lepers were all well rewarded for what they did*. Not one of them perished of famine—they were all saved. Not one came back empty-handed, but all were greatly enriched. And not one of you, seeking mercy through Christ, shall be refused, but all who are led by the Spirit to trust Christ shall be blessed, saved and adopted into the family of God!

III. I have no time for the last point except just briefly to refer to the fact that THE LEPERS NO SOONER FOUND WHAT WAS GOOD FOR THEMSELVES THAN THEY WENT TO TELL IT TO OTHERS. And if you have found Christ, after you have rejoiced in Him and fed upon Him and enriched yourself with Him as your choicest Treasure, then go and tell others all you can about Him.

"Oh, but I cannot preach!" says one. Try, Brother! "But I cannot preach," you say again, "for I have tried to do so, but failed." Then write a letter, Brother, or speak a word for Jesus—

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,
That you are saved from death and Hell."

I cannot make out how some people keep this secret! I cannot keep any secrets and I am sure that I could not keep this one. No sooner does this secret get into the soul of a man than it tries to burn its way out! You recollect that when John Bunyan was converted, he said that he wanted to tell the very crows on the plowed land all about it! And I think it will be the same with you when you find the Lord. If you have learned this great secret, you will want to tell it to your fellow workmen. Perhaps you are employed behind the counter, so when the shop is shut in the evening, you will be telling this secret to those who are with you in the common room. If you are a husband, you will never be content until you have told it to your wife. Or if you are a mother, I am sure you will want to be a preacher to your children. It is a great and holy fire which will burn and not smolder!

There was a spark once got into the stubble and the Angel of Discretion said to it, "Lie still, Spark, lie still! If you begin to burn, the next stalk will catch fire and then the next, and the next until the whole field will be ablaze—and then the homestead and then the village itself will be burned down." But preach as he might, the fire would burn and the Angel of Discretion well-near had his wings burned before he turned to flee. There are, in some of our churches, certain friends who are very angels of prudence. They say, "Young men, do not try to speak for Christ too soon. Do not attempt to do it before you are fully qualified for the task." My dear Sirs, if God has told any man this secret, he cannot help telling it to sinners! If the Lord has touched a man's lips with the live coal from the heavenly altar, his lips will burn as well as the coal! If the New Life has been given to him, it must find a way out so as to convey the blessing to others!

What a mass of men there is constantly attending this place! I suppose that two-thirds of my usual congregation consists of men. What a noble band of men we would have if all were converted to Christ and then went forth as messengers for Christ to the Church and to the world! Sirs, do you really know Christ and yet you have not witnessed for Him to others? Take care that before the Great Tribunal of God you are not held responsible, through your neglect, for the ruin of your fellow men! You young men of ability, educated in our grammar schools and trained in our colleges—it is a lamentable fact that all too often, if you join the church, you feel as if you had only to give it your name and not your whole self! If a man joins a rifle corps, he attends drill and throws himself into the whole affair with heart and soul, endeavoring to promote the interests of the corps in every way that he can! But if he joins a church, it is as much as you can do to get him to drill once a year—and he seems to have nothing to do but to stand at ease.

"O Sirs, when you join the Church, I hope you will give up your whole selves to it! If not, I pray you to withhold your names. Up, up, in the name of God and tell t starving London what the lepers told starving Samaria—that there is bread to be had! Do you say, "I am myself a sinner"? Your once leprous lips will not spoil the message if you have been to Christ and have trusted in Him as your Savior. Do you say, "I am unworthy"? Ah, but He who took away your unworthiness, took away the disability which that unworthiness gives! You are not worthy to be called God's son by nature, but by Grace you may be worthy to be His ambassador!

My poor Friend over there, you often weep because you cannot do more for Christ. Be of good courage and do all that you can for Him. If you cannot speak to thousands, be content to speak to one. And if you cannot bring hundreds to the Savior, be glad if, now and then, you can bring one mourning soul to Him to be comforted. My dear Hearers and especially you who are the members of this Church, if you have obtained mercy, I beseech you by the compassionate heart of your dying Redeemer, by that hope you have that He will shortly come again, be instant in season and out of season, preach and teach the Truth of God, knowing that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Oh, that in the day of Christ's appearing, it may be seen that many sheaves have been brought into the heavenly garner through your being stirred up to labor by the ministry in this House of Prayer!

To you, unpardoned Soul, I have spoken at length, and God knows how truly from my heart. Let me speak just this word once more before you go home. I am told that just under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral there is the mark of a workman's hammer, where it is said that a man who was at work on the roof, fell down and there met with his death. I do not know where it is, but there may be the spot, in this House of Prayer, where a soul will be lost forever. This may be the moment when the wax upon that soul's death-warrant shall grow cold because its owner deliberately says, "I will have none of these things," and when God shall say, "You shall have none of them. I will leave you alone. Your conscience shall never be troubled again, but you shall go through life in peace, you shall go to your death without any care and only in Hell shall you open your eyes to your true condition." God grant that it may not be so with any of you! Yet I feel as if it would be so with you unless Sovereign and Irresistible Grace shall prevent it and in that case, there will be a spot in this House of Prayer where a soul will be born to God! What man will give his heart to Christ? Are there none of you who will do so? Must I go back to my Master with no joyful tidings? Is there no one here who will say—

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Has like a mountain rose.
I know His courts, I'll enter in
Whatever may oppose"?

Are there none who will do so? Great God, are all hearts hard? O Spirit of God, come now, in this solemn moment, and break the hearts of stone with the mighty hammer of the Word of God! Cut and wound with Your

two-edged sword and then heal with Your wondrous ointment even now! I say no more, but leave it with Him. May it be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 84.

May the Spirit of God bless to us every syllable of this familiar Psalm as we read it!

Verses 1, 2. *How amiable are Your tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.* Perhaps the Psalmist would never have said, "How amiable are Your tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" if he had not been detained from them so long that he could truly say, "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord." It is very sad, yet it is all too true, that we often need to be deprived of a mercy in order to be made to value it aright. Would it not be wiser on our part if we prized our privileges while they were yet spared to us? Still it is a good thing to have our love to the assemblies of God's House increased by temporary absence from them. See how fervent was the Psalmist's desire. His longing turned even to fainting at the very thought that, perhaps, he would never go there again—"My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord." And his very "flesh" also joined in the intense longing of his soul. You cannot often get your flesh to do anything that is good, or to desire anything that is right, yet, sometimes, even our very body seems to be so swayed by the Holy Spirit that it is compelled to go in the right way!

3. *Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God.* The Psalmist envies even the birds that twitter around the sanctuary and wishes that he, too, had wings that he might fly to God's altar with them—and there take up his permanent abode.

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in Your house.* The Psalmist meant those priests who lived in the Temple and, in a spiritual sense, his words apply to those who dwell in God wherever they are and who can truly sing—

"Wherever we dwell, we dwell in Thee,
On the land or on the sea."

"Blessed are they that dwell in Your house"

4. *They will still be praising You. Selah.* Constant communion leads to constant adoration.

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You.* Who throws his whole soul into the worship—not such as come up to the House of God and leave their hearts at home! "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You."

5, 6. *In whose heart are the ways of them. (Or, better, "are Your ways"). Who passing through the valley of Baca (or, "Weeping") make it a well.* Finding solace in their suffering, sanctification and in their affliction.

6, 7. *The rain also fills the pools. They go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appears before God.* Blessed are the pilgrims who

are journeying to the upper Zion, the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of all the saints! The margin renders it, "They go from company to company." Or it may mean, "They go from strength of faith to greater strength." And so they pass on—

"Till each appears in Heaven at length."

8. *O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.* "You are a prayer-hearing God. Did You not hear Jacob at the brook Jabbok? Then, O God of Jacob, also give ear to me! If I have not yet come to be like prevailing Israel, I am like wrestling Jacob, so, give ear to me as You did to Jacob."

9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.* We hold up Christ before His Father and say to Him—

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

10. *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.* He means, of course, better than a thousand spent anywhere else!

10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* "I had rather dust the mats in Your house than sit on Satan's throne. I had rather wash the feet of Your saints, or perform any menial duties for them, than rule over all the hosts in the realms of darkness."

11, 12. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.* He will never walk uprightly unless he trusts in the Lord, neither will he receive the fullness of the blessing except as he learns to trust to the fullest, for the Master still says, "According to your faith, be it unto 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.

A BLESSED GOSPEL CHAIN
NO. 2895

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1876.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."
John 14:23.

THIS is a blessed chain of Gospel experience. Our text is not meant for the men of the world who have their portion in this life, but for the chosen, called and faithful who are brought into the inner circle of Christ's disciples and taught to understand the mysteries of His Kingdom. It was in answer to the question of Judas ("not Iscariot") as to how Christ would manifest Himself to His own and not to the world, that these words were spoken. Christ explained that it would be manifest who were His own people by certain marks and signs. They would be those who love Him and keep His commandments and so win the confidence of the Father—and the Father and the Son would come to these loving and obedient disciples and make Their abode with them. God grant that all of us may be able to take each of the steps here mentioned so that our Lord may manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world!

The subject upon which I am about to speak to you is one which the preacher cannot handle without the people. I must have God's people with me in spirit to help me while I am dealing with such a topic as this. You know that in the Church of England service there are certain places where the clergyman says, "saying after me," so that it is not simply the minister uttering the prayer or the confession, but he is a sort of preceptor leading the rest of the congregation. In a similar style, I want you people of God, as the Holy Spirit shall enable you, to bend all your thoughts and energies in this direction and step by step climb with me to these distinct spiritual platforms—ascending from the one to the other by the Spirit's gracious aid—that your fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

I. Our text begins with the first link in this golden chain, namely, LOVE TO CHRIST—"If a man loves Me."

This, "if," seems to me to stand at the portals of our text like a sentinel at the gate of a palace, to prevent anybody from entering who ought not to enter. It is an, "if," that may be passed around the present assembly, for I fear that all in this house do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. If you

cannot answer in the affirmative the question asked by the lips of Jesus, Himself, "Do you love Me?" you have nothing to do with the rest of this verse. Indeed, what have you to do with *any* of the privileges revealed in the Bible, or with any of the blessings promised there, as long as you are without love to Christ? Let that, "if," stand, then, as with a drawn sword—like the cherubim at the gate of the Garden of Eden—to keep you from daring to intrude where you have no right to go if you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ! "If a man loves Me."

Are you a lover of the Lord, dear Hearer? Put not that question aside, but answer it honestly, in His sight, for *there are some who only pretend to love Him*, but really do not—some who make a loud profession, but their language is hypocritical, for their conduct is not consistent with their profession. Do you love the Lord Jesus with your whole heart? He is well worthy of your love, so let the question go round the whole assembly and not miss any one of us, "Do you love Me?"

For there are some, too, who are *Christ's disciples only by profession.* All they give Him is a cold-hearted assent to His teaching. Their head is convinced and, in a measure, their life is not altogether inconsistent with their profession, but their heart is dead. Or, if it is at all alive, it is like that of the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm—and that is a state which Christ abhors! He must occupy the throne of our hearts and be the best loved of all, or else we lack that which is essential to true Christianity!

"If a man loves Me," says Christ. So, do you love Him? I do not ask whether you love His offices, though I hope you do. You love the Prophet, the Priest, the King, the Shepherd, the Savior and whatever other title He assumes. Each of these names is music to your ears—but do you love Christ, Himself? I will not ask whether you love His work, especially the great Redemption which comprehends such innumerable blessings. I hope you do, but it is a *personal love to Christ* that is spoken of here. Jesus says, "If any man loves *Me*." Have you realized Christ, personally, as still alive, gone into Heaven and soon to come again in all the glory of His Father and of the holy angels? Say, Brother, Sister, do *you* love Him? "If," says Christ, "*if* a man loves Me"—so it is right and wise for each one of us to put that question to ourselves, even though we know that we can answer it satisfactorily and say—

"Yes, I love You, and adore—
Oh, for Grace to love You more!"

And if there should be any doubt about the matter, we ought to put the question, pointedly, again and again and again and let not ourselves escape till there is a definite answer given, one way or another! Heart of mine, do you really love the Savior? Brothers and Sisters, put this question to yourselves—and if you do love Him, let your love well up like a mighty geyser—the hot spring that leaps up to a great height! So let the hot spring of your love to Jesus leap up now—and let each one of you say to Him—

"My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine,
For You all the follies of sin I resign.
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior are You,

If ever I loved You, my Jesus 'tis now."

If you can do so, then you may add—

"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Remember that *if you do love Him, He must have loved you first.* Think of His ancient love—the love that was fixed upon you before the earth was—when He saw you in the glass of futurity and beheld all that you would be in the ruinous fall of Adam and by your own personal transgression—and yet loved you, notwithstanding all that! Think of Him when the fullness of time was come, stripping Himself of all His Glory and descending from the Throne of Infinite Majesty to the manger of humiliation and, being there, as a Baby, swaddled in His weakness! Will you not love Him who became God Incarnate for you? Think of Him all through His life—a life of poverty, for He had nowhere to lay His head—a life of rejection, for, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not"—a life of pain, for He bore our sicknesses—a life of dishonor, for He was despised and rejected of men! Will you further think of Him in the Garden of Gethsemane? Will not your love be stirred as you watch the bloody sweat and hear His groans and mark His tears as He pleads with God until He prevails? Follow Him to the judgment seat and hear Him there charged with sedition and with blasphemy—if you can bear it!

Then see the soldiers as they spit in His face and mock Him while they thrust a reed into His hand for a scepter and put on His brow a crown of thorns as His only diadem! See Him tied up to be scourged till the cruel thongs lacerate and tear His precious flesh and He suffers indescribable agonies! And when you have followed Him that far, go still further and stand at the foot of the Cross and mark the crimson stream that flows from His hands, feet and side! Stand and watch Him when the soldier's spear has pierced His heart and made the blood and water flow forth for your pardon and cleansing. Did He suffer all this for you and do you not love Him in return? May I not tell that, "if," to get out of the way and let you pass, that you may take the next step? Track Him as He rises from the grave for you—as He ascends to Heaven for you and obtains great gifts for you! Up there, before His Father's face, He pleads for you and governs all things as King of kings and Lord of lords—and governs all for *you*! Up there He prepares many mansions for His own people and gets ready to come to earth the second time that He may receive His people unto Himself, that where He is they may be forever and forevermore!

As you think of all this, love the Lord, you who are His saints, you who have been washed in His blood, love Him! You who are wearing the spotless robe of His righteousness—love Him! You who call Him, "Husband," love Him—you who are married to Him—united in bonds that can never be severed!

II. If this is true of you, let us pass on to the next point—that of KEEPING CHRIST'S WORDS. "If any man loves Me, says Christ, "he will keep My words. "Let us see how far we have kept His words.

I trust that, first, we keep His words *by treasuring them and prizing them*. Brothers and Sisters, I hope that we venerate every word that Christ has ever uttered. I trust that we desire to treasure up every syllable that He has ever spoken. There is not a word of His, recorded in the Gospels, or in any other of the Inspired pages of Revelation, by which we do not set more store than for much fine gold.

I trust that we keep Christ's words, next, by trying to *know* them. Are you all diligent students of the Word of God? Do you search the Scriptures? Do you live upon the Truths of God that the Lord has spoken? You should, for every word that comes out of His mouth is the true food of your souls! I must ask you whether you are doing these two things. Are you keeping Christ's words by prizing them and by seeking to be so familiar with them that you know what His words are?

Then, next, do you endeavor to lift the latch and *to find your way into the inner meaning of His words?* Do you pierce the shell to get at the kernel? Does the Spirit of God lead you into all Truth, or are you content with the rudiments of the faith? This is the way to keep Christ's words, namely, by endeavoring, to your very utmost, to understand what the meaning of those words may be!

Then, when you know the meaning of them, *do you seek to keep them in your hearts?* Do you love what Christ has spoken so that you delight to know what it is and love it because it is His Doctrine? Will you sit at His feet and receive the instruction that He is willing to impart? Have you attained to that stage that you even love His rebukes? If His words come home to you and sharply reprove you, do you love them even then, and lay bare your heart before Him that you may feel more and more the faithful wounds of this, your beloved Friend? Do you also love His precepts? Are they as sweet to you as His promises, or, if you could do as you wish, would you cut them out of the Bible and get rid of them? O Brothers and Sisters, it is a blessed proof that Divine Grace has been largely given to us when even the smallest word uttered by Jesus Christ is more precious to us than all the diamonds in the world and we feel that we only want to know what He has said and to love whatever He has spoken!

"If a man loves Me, he will keep My words." This declaration of our Lord suggests this question—*Do we keep His words practically?* That is a most important point, for you will not be able to get any further if you stumble here. Do you endeavor, in a practical way, to keep all His moral precepts? Are you trying to be in your lives, as far as you can, like He—or are you selfish, unkind, worldly? Are you endeavoring to be like He who has left you an example that you should follow in His steps? Come, answer honestly! Is this the objective of your life? Are you seeking to be molded by the Holy Spirit in that way? And are you practically keeping Christ's words as to the precepts of the Gospel? Have you believed on Him? Believing on Him, have you been baptized according to His command? Being baptized, do you come to His Table according to His bidding, "This do in remembrance of Me"? Or do you turn on your heels and say that these are nonessential things?

Beloved, if your heart is right with God, you will want to know all His words and to put them into practice! What care I about the words of any earthly church? They are only the words of men! But search and find the words of Christ—and wherever they lead you, even though you are the only one who has ever been led in that way—follow wherever He leads. You cannot take the next step mentioned in my text unless you can deliberately say, "Yes, Lord, 'Your words were found and I did eat them; and Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts,' and I long to walk in all Your statutes and ordinances, blamelessly, even to the end of my days." You may err, you may make mistakes—you may even sin—but the intent of your heart must be that having loved the Lord, you will keep His words in those various senses that I have mentioned.

III. If you have been enabled to pass through these two gates, you may now come to the next one which tells us of A HIGH PRIVILEGE AND GREAT JOY—"He will keep My words; and *My Father will love him*."

What wonderful words these are—"My Father will love him"! It is quite certain that He will do so, for when a man loves Jesus, he is in sympathy with the Eternal Father, Himself. You know, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Father's love is fixed upon His only-begotten Son. One with Himself in His essential Deity, He has loved Him from eternity! But since Jesus has been obedient unto death, "even the death of the Cross," we cannot imagine what must be the Father's complacency in the blessed Person of our risen and ascended Lord! This is a deep subject and there is no human mind that can ever fathom the depths of it and tell how truly and how wonderfully the Father loves His everlasting Son! So, you see, Brothers and Sisters, that if we love Jesus Christ, our heart meets the heart of God, for the Father also loves Him! Have you never felt, when you have been trying to praise Jesus, that you are doing, in your feeble way, just what God has always been doing in His own Infinite way? The ever-blessed Spirit is continually glorifying Jesus—and when you are doing the same, God and you—though with very unequal footsteps—are treading the same path and are in sympathy, one with the other!

Then, besides the fact that you are in sympathy with the Father in having one Object of love, you are also in sympathy with Him as to character. Jesus said, "If a man loves Me, he will keep My words." Well, when you are keeping Christ's words—when the Divine Spirit is making you obedient to Jesus and like Jesus—you are treading the path where your Heavenly Father would have you walk and, therefore, He loves *you*!

Let me make a clear distinction here. I am not now speaking about the general love of God towards all mankind—that love of benevolence and beneficence which is displayed even towards the thankless and the evil. Neither am I speaking, just now, concerning the essential love of God towards His own elect whom He loves irrespectively of their character because of His own Sovereign choice of them from eternity. I am speaking of that complacent love which God, as a Father, has towards His own children. You know that you often say to your child, "If you do this or that, your father will love you," yet you know that a father will love his

child, as his child, and always must do so even if his character is not all that the father desires it to be. But what a love that is which a father has to a good, dutiful, obedient child! It is a love of which he talks to him again and again, a love which he manifests to him in many sweet and kindly words, a love which he displays to him in many actions which he would not otherwise have done, bestowing upon him many favors which it would not have been safe to bestow upon him if he had been a naughty, disobedient child.

Never forget that our Heavenly Father exercises wise discipline in His house. He has rods for His children who disobey Him and He has smiles for His children who keep His commands. If we walk contrary to Him, He has told us that He will walk contrary to us. But if our ways please Him, there are many choice favors which He bestows upon us. This teaching is not suggestive of legal bondage, for we are not under Law, but under Grace. But this is the Law of God's House under the rule of Grace—for instance, if a man keeps the Lord's commandments, He will have power with God in prayer. But when a man lives habitually in sin, or even occasionally falls into sin, he cannot pray so as to prevail, he cannot win the ear of God as he used to do. You know right well that if you have offended the Lord in any way, you cannot enjoy the Gospel as you did before you so sinned. The Bible, instead of smiling upon you, seems to threaten you in every text and every line—it seems to rise up, as in letters of fire, and burn its way into your conscience!

It is certainly true that the Lord deals differently with His own children according to their condition and character. So, when a man is brought into such a state of heart that he keeps Christ's words, then his character is of such a kind that God can take a complacent delight in him and, in this sense can love him. It is in such a case as this that the Father will let us know that He loves us, that He will assure us of that love and shed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He will give us special blessings, perhaps in Providence, but certainly in Grace. He will give us special joy and rejoicing—our horn shall be exalted and our feet shall stand upon the high places of the earth. All things—even His trials—shall be blessed to the man who walks aright with God—and the way to do that is to love Christ and to keep His words! Of such a man, Jesus says, "My Father will love him."

IV. If you have passed through these three gates, you come to another which bears this inscription, "WE WILL COME UNTO HIM."

This is a singular use of the plural pronoun—"*We* will come unto him." It is a proof of the distinct Personality of the Father and of the Son. Jesus says, "If a man loves Me," (do not forget the previous links in this blessed Gospel chain), "he will keep My words; and *My Father will love him.*" And then follows this gracious assurance—"We will come unto him." Does not this mean, first, *distance removed?* There is no longer a gap between such a man's soul and his God. He feels heavy in heart, perhaps, and thinks, "I cannot get near to God," but he hears this comforting message, "We will come unto him" and, soon, over all the mountains of division that there may have been in the past, like a roe, or a young hart, the

Well-Beloved comes and the Great Father, when He sees, in the distance, His child returning to Him, runs to meet Him and holds him to His heart! What a wondrous Divine coming this is! Christ and His Father, by the Holy Spirit, come to pay the Believer a most gracious visit! Yes, Beloved, if you are living in love to Christ and keeping His words, there will not be any distance separating you from the Father and the Son, but the text will be blessedly fulfilled in your experience—"We will come unto him."

And while it means distance removed, it also means *honor conferred*. Many a great nobleman has beggared himself that he might receive a prince or a king into his house. The entertainment of royalty has meant the mortgaging of his estates! That is a poor return for the honor of receiving a visit from his sovereign. But, behold, my Brothers and Sisters, how different it is with us! The obedient lover of the Lord Jesus Christ has the Father and the Son to visit him and he is greatly enriched by their coming! He may be very poor, but Jesus says, "We will come unto him." He may be obscure and illiterate, but Jesus says, "We will come unto him." Do you all, dear Friends, know what this coming means? Did you ever know the Son to come to you with His precious blood applied to your conscience till you realized that every one of your sins was forgiven? Have you taken Jesus up in your arms, spiritually, as old Simeon did literally, and said with him, "Lord, now let you Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation"? Has Jesus seemed, to your faith, to be as near to you as one who sat on the same chair with you and talked with you in most familiar conversation? It has been so with some of us—and it has often been so.

This also has meant *knowledge increased*. Jesus has revealed Himself to us by coming to us even as He came to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Then, in addition, have you not known the Father come to you in His Divine relationship, yet making you feel yourself His child and causing you to realize that He loved you as truly as you love your own children, only much more deeply and fervently than human love can ever be? Have you not received at His hands such tokens for good and such benedictions as only He could give—so that you felt the Divine Fatherhood to be something coming very near to you and the Spirit of God, operating within you, has made you cry, "Abba, Father," with an unstammering tongue? "We will come unto him." The Savior will come and the Father will come—and the blessed Spirit will represent Them both in the Believer's heart!

So, "We will come unto him," means distance removed, honor conferred and knowledge increased. And it also means *assistance brought,* for, if the Father and the Son come to us, what more can we need? With Their gracious Presence in our souls we have Omnipotence and Omniscience, Infinity and All-Sufficiency on our side—and Grace to help us in every time of need!

V. The last clause of the text, and the sweetest of all, is, "AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM."

Can you catch the full meaning of that phrase? Jesus says that the Father and the Son will visit us—they will come to us as the three

blessed ones came to Abraham when he was at the tent door and he entertained the Lord and His attendant angels—but they did not make Their abode with him. They went on their way and Abraham was left in the plains of Mamre. God often visited Abraham and spoke familiarly with him, but our Savior's promise goes beyond that. He says, "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." To make your abode with a person is for that person and yourself to have the same house and home—and to live together. In this case, it means that the Lord will make His people to be His Temple wherein He will dwell continually. "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." I have turned that thought over and over again until I have got the sweetness of it into my own heart, but I cannot communicate it to your minds and hearts—only the Holy Spirit can do that.

See what this expression means. *What knowledge of one another is implied here!* Do you want to know a person? You must live with him—you do not really know someone, however much you may think you know him, until you have done so. But, oh, if the Father and the Son come and live with us, we shall know Them—know the Father and the Son! This is not the portion of carnal minds—neither is it for professing Christians who have not fulfilled the conditions laid down by our Lord. It is for those who love Christ and keep His words—those who consciously live in the enjoyment of the Father's complacency and who have fellowship with the Father and with the Son by the Spirit! To these privileged individuals, God reveals Himself in His Triune Personality—and to them He will make known all that is in His Covenant of love and mercy!

This expression also implies *a sacred friendship,* for, when God comes to dwell with men, He does not thus dwell with His enemies, but only with those who love Him and between whom and Himself there is mutual sympathy. O Beloved, if God the Father and God the Son shall indeed come to dwell with us, it will be to us a proof of wondrous love, dear familiarity and intense friendship! If you go to live with an earthly friend, it is quite possible for you to stay too long and to outstay your welcome. But God knows all about the man with whom He comes to live and Jesus says, "We will make Our abode with him," because He knows that His Spirit has purified and sanctified that heart and made it ready to receive Himself and His Father, too! You remember how Jeremiah pleaded with the Lord not merely to be as a sojourner? "O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?" But this is not the way that the Father and the Son deal with us, for Jesus says that They will make Their abode with us! Does not this imply a very sacred friendship, indeed, between God and our soul?

It also reveals *the complete acceptance of the man before God,* for, when anyone comes to stay with you, it is taken for granted that you exercise hospitality towards him. He eats and drinks in your house and, for the time, he makes himself at home with you. "But," you ask, "is it possible that God should accept the hospitality of *man*?" Yes, it is. Listen to the words of Christ, Himself—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if

any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Oh, the blessedness of thus entertaining the King of kings! Then will He drink of my milk and my wine and eat the pleasant fruits that are grown in the garden of my soul. Will that which I present to Him be acceptable to Him? It must be, or else He would not live in my house! And when the Father and the Son come to dwell in the soul of the Believer, then all that he does will be accepted. If he is, himself, accepted, his thoughts and his words, his prayers and his praises, his almsgiving and his labors for Christ will be accepted by both the Father and the Son!

What a blessed state for anyone to reach! For then it shall come to pass that this reception on God's part, from us, shall be followed by a sevenfold reception on our part, from Him. You do not imagine, I hope, that, when God the Father and God the Son make Their abode in a man that the man will continue to be just as he was when they came to him? No, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord pays well for His lodging! Where He stays, He turns everything that He touches into gold. When He comes into a human heart, it may be dark, but He floods it with the Light of Heaven. It may have been cold before, but He warms it with the glow of His Almighty Love. A man without the indwelling of God is like the bush in Horeb when it was only a bush—but when the Father and the Son come to him, then it is with him as when the bush burned with fire yet was not consumed! The Lord brings Heaven to you when He comes to you—and you are rich beyond the intents of bliss. All things are yours, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's, and Christ and God have come to make Their abode with you!

Now, according to our Lord's promise, "We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him," it is implied that *there they mean to stay*. Let me take your thoughts back, for a minute, to the earlier links in this blessed Gospel chain and remind you that it is only, "*if a man loves Me*," and it is only, "*if he keep My words,"* that the Savior's promise applies. "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Have the Father and the Son come to your heart? Then I charge you, do nothing that might cause them to depart from you even for a moment. If you ever get into conscious enjoyment of the Divine Indwelling, be jealous of your heart lest it should ever depart from your Lord, or drive Him from you. Say, with the spouse, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, until He pleases."

"But," perhaps you ask, "can we keep Him? Can we always keep Him?" I believe you can. By the blessed help of the Divine Spirit who has taught you to love Him and to keep His words, you may have near and dear fellowship with your Lord by the month and by the year together! I am sure that we have too low a standard of the possibilities of Christian fellowship, Christian enjoyment and Christian living. Aim at the highest conceivable degree of holiness and though you will not be perfect, never excuse yourselves because you are not! Always aim at something higher and yet still higher than you have already reached. Ask the Lord to come and abide with you forever. You will be happy Christians if you attain to

this privilege and stay in that condition. And we shall be a blessed Church if the most or all of us should attain to it. I mean to go in for this blessing, by God's gracious help—will not you, my Brother, my Sister? Can any of you be content to live a lower life than is possible to you? I hope you will not be, but that you will reach all of these steps that I have pointed out to you and ask God in prayer to help you to surmount them. "Lord, help me to love Jesus. Set my soul on fire with love to Him. Lord, enable me to keep all His words and never to trifle with His Truth in anything. And then, Father, look upon me with complacency. Make me such that You can take delight in me. See the resemblance to Your Son in me, because you have made me to be like He and then, Father, and Savior, come and abide with me forever and ever. Amen." Such a prayer as that, truly presented, will be answered and the Lord shall get glory from it!

But, alas, many of you have nothing to do with this text because you do not love Christ! And the first thing you have to do is not to think about loving Him, but about trusting Him, for you know that the only way of salvation is by trusting Christ. So, if you do not trust Him, you are not in the way of salvation. Have you ever thought of what is involved in being an unbeliever? The Apostle John says, "He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." Do you really mean to make God out to be a liar? Surely you cannot! The very thought is too horrible to be entertained for a moment! Well, then, believe His record concerning His Son. That record declares that He is the Propitiation for our sins. Then if you rely upon that Propitiation and trust to Him who made it, you are saved!

I often have the remark made to me by an anxious soul, "But, Sir, I cannot believe. I wish I could." This is the answer which I generally give to the person who says that—"What? You cannot believe? Come, now, let us have that matter out. You cannot believe God? Could you believe me?" Of course, the answer is, "Oh, yes, Sir, I can believe you!" I reply—"Yes, I suppose that is because you have confidence in my character and believe that I would not tell you a lie. Then, in the name of everything that is good and reasonable, how is it that you dare say that you cannot believe God? Is He a liar? Has He ever given you any cause to say to Him, 'I cannot believe You'? What do you mean? Give me some reason why you cannot believe God! What has He done that you cannot believe Him?"

Well, they do not quite see it in that light but, still, they return to that sentence, "I cannot believe." Well now, Sinner, if Jesus Christ were present and He were to say to you, "Trust Me and I will save you. Believe My promise and you shall enter into eternal life." Would you look Him in the face and say, "I cannot believe You"? And if He asked you the question, "Why can you not believe Me?" What would be your reply? Surely a man can believe what is true. There have been times, with me, since I have known the Savior, when it seemed to me as if I could not doubt my Lord—as if I could not find a reason, even if I ransacked Heaven, earth and Hell, why I should doubt Him. I proclaim that I do not know any reason why I should not trust Christ! I cannot conceive of any. Well, will

men continue this monstrous, unjust, ungenerous conduct? Alas, they will.

"But," says someone, "if I do trust my soul to Christ, will He save me?" Try Him and see. You have His own promise that He will cast out none who come to Him. So, if you believes in the Lord Jesus Christ this very moment—this very moment you are saved! What more need I say? May the Blessed Spirit cause you to cease, by your unbelief, from practically making God a liar and may you now come and trust in Jesus, the Substitute and Surety for His people! So shall you rest your weary hearts upon His loving bosom and it shall be well with you forever and ever. May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:15-31.

Verses 15, 16. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.* Is it not very sweet to think that the Spirit of God is given to the Church in answer to the prayer of Christ? Prayer is a holy exercise, for Jesus prayed. And what a powerful influence prayer has, for His prayer has brought to us "another Comforter."

17. *Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him.* This poor world will not receive anything which it cannot see. It is ruled by its senses—it is carnal and fleshly—and minds not the things that are unseen. It cannot discern them.

17, 18. *But you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* That expression, "I will not leave you comfortless," might be rendered, "I will not leave you orphans."

19. *Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* What a wealth of meaning these words contain! The sentences are very simple, but they are also sublime. The gorgeous language in which some orators indulge is, when the meaning of it is condensed, like great clouds of steam which produce but a few drops of water! But here you have vast Truths of God pressed into a small compass and those that seem most plain are really the most deep. "Because I live, you shall live also." As surely as Christ lives, so must His people! They cannot die, for He lives to die no more—and they live in Him.

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* Mysterious triple union—Christ in the Father, we in Christ and Christ in us. This is a complete riddle to all who have never been taught by the Spirit of God.

21, 22. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot)said unto Him, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?* He really did answer the question, though perhaps not directly.

This is the process by which He manifests Himself unto His people and not unto the world—

23, 24. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, He will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me.* There is Divine Authority at the back of every word uttered by the Man, Christ Jesus. His message comes not from Himself, alone, but from the Eternal Father as well.

20-28. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.* And truly so He was, for Christ had, for a while, laid aside His own greatness and taken the position of a Servant.

29, 30. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me.* His words must come to an end, for He was going to perform His mightiest deeds. He could converse no longer, for He was going from converse to conflict. He must meet His great enemy now and leave His dearest friends.

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.* And so He went to the Garden of Gethsemane—a brave, gentle, confident, victorious spirit "straitened" till He had accomplished the great work of our redemption!

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

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[A peculiar and even unique interest attaches to the present Sermon, as it was the first of Mr. Spurgeon's discourses that was ever printed. Although it has appeared in another form, the publishers thought that it ought to be included in the regular weekly series, so it is now reprinted exactly 50 years after it was delivered. When cholera was desolating London and the wicked war in the Crimea was still being waged, the young pastor sounded a cheerful note to comfort the Christians of that day while he also warned others of the consequences of continuance in evildoing. The message spoken half a century ago is by no means out of date even now.—Pub.]

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
AUGUST 11, 1854.

"Is today not the wheat harvest?"
1 Samuel 12:17.

I SHALL not notice the connection, but I shall simply take these words as a slogan and my sermon will be founded upon a harvest field. I shall rather use the harvest for my text than any passage that I find here. "Is today not the wheat harvest?" I suppose the dwellers in cities think less of times and seasons than dwellers in the country. Men who were born, trained up, nourished and nurtured among cornfields, harvests, sowing and reaping, are more likely to notice such things than you who are always engaged in mercantile pursuits and think less of these things than rustics do. But I suppose if it is almost necessary that you should regard the harvest less than others, it ought not to be carried to too great an extreme. Let us not be forgetful of times and seasons. There is much to be learned from them and I would refresh your memories by a harvest field.

What a wondrous temple this world is, for in truth it is a temple of God's building wherein men ought to worship Him. What a wondrous temple it is to a mind spiritually enlightened which can bring to bear upon it the resources of intellect and the illuminations of God's Holy Spirit! There is not a single flower in it that does not teach us a lesson. There is not a single wave, or blast of thunder that has not some lesson to teach us, the sons of men. This world is a great temple and as if you walk in an Egyptian temple, you know that every mark and every figure in the temple has a meaning—so when you walk this world, everything about you has a meaning! It is no fanciful idea that there are "sermons in stones," for there really are sermons in stones and this world is intended

to teach us by everything that we see. Happy is the man who not only has the mind, but has the spirit to get these lessons from Nature! Flowers, what are they? They are but the thoughts of God solidified—God's beautiful thoughts put into shape. Storms, what are they? They are God's terrible thoughts written out that we may read them. Thunders, what are they? They are God's powerful emotions just opened that men may hear them. The world is the materializing of God's thoughts, for the world is a thought in God's eyes. He made it first from a thought that came from His own mighty mind and everything in the majestic temple that He has made has a meaning!

In this temple there are four evangelists. As we have four great evangelists in the Bible, so there are four evangelists in Nature—and these are the four evangelists of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter.

First comes spring and what does it say? We look and we behold that by the magic touch of spring, insects which seemed to be dead begin to awaken and seeds that were buried in the dust begin to lift up their radiant forms. What does spring say? It utters its voice, it says to man, "Though you sleep, you shall rise again. There is a world in which, in a more glorious state, you shall exist. You are but a seed, now, and you shall be buried in the dust and in a little while you shall arise." Spring utters that part of its evangel. Then comes summer. Summer says to man, "Behold the goodness of a merciful Creator—'He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good'—He sprinkles the earth with flowers, He adorns it with those gems of creation, He makes it blossom like Eden and bring forth like the Garden of the Lord." Summer utters that. Then comes autumn. We shall hear its message. It passes and winter comes forth crowned with a coronal of ice and it tells us that there are times of trouble for man. It points to the fruits that we have stored up in autumn, and it says to us, "Man, take heed that you store up something for yourself—something against the day of wrath. Lay up for yourself the fruits of autumn, that you may be able to feed on them in winter." And when the old year expires, its death knell tells us that man must die. And when the year has finished its evangelistic mission, there comes another to preach the same lesson again.

We are about to let autumn preach. One of these four evangelists comes forth and it says, "Is today not the wheat harvest?" We are about to take the harvest into consideration in order to learn something from it. May God's most blessed Spirit help His feeble dust and ashes to preach the unsearchable riches of God to your souls' profit!

We shall talk of three joyful harvests and of three sorrowful harvests.

I. First, we shall speak of THREE JOYFUL HARVESTS that there will be.

The first joyful harvest that I will mention is *the harvest of the field* which Samuel alluded to when he said, "Is today not the wheat harvest?" We cannot forget the harvest of the field. It is not right that these things should be forgotten. We ought not to let the fields be covered with corn, have their treasures stored away in the barns and all the while to remain forgetful of God's mercy. Ingratitude, that worst of evils, is one of the vi-

pers which make their nest in the heart of man—and the creature cannot be slain until Divine Grace comes and sprinkles the blood of the Cross upon man's heart. Such vipers die when the blood of Christ is upon them. Let me just lead you for a moment to a harvest field. You shall see there a most luxuriant harvest, the heavy ears bending down almost to touch the ground, as much as to say, "From the ground I came. I owe myself to the ground—to that I bow my head"—just as the good Christian does when he is full of years. He holds his head down the more fruit he has upon him. You see the stalks with their heads hanging down because they are ripe. And it is goodly and precious to see these things!

Now just suppose the opposite. If this year the ears had been blighted and withered. If they had been like the second ears that Pharaoh saw—very lean and very scanty—what would have become of us? In peace, we might have depended on large supplies from Russia to make up the deficiency. Now, in times of war, referring to the war in the Crimea, when nothing can come, what would become of us? We may conjecture, we may imagine, but I do not know that we are able to come to the truth. We can only say, "Blessed be God, we have not yet to reckon on what *would* have been. But He, seeing one door closed, has opened another." Seeing that we might not get supplies from those rich fields in the South of Russia, He has opened another door in our own land. "You are My own favored island," He says, "I have loved you, England, with a special love. You are My favored one and the enemy shall not crush you. And lest you should starve because provisions are cut off, I will give you full barns at home and your fields shall be covered, that you may laugh your enemy to scorn and say to him, 'You thought you could starve us and make us perish, but He who feeds the ravens has fed His people and has not deserted His favored land.'"

There is not one person who is uninterested in this matter! Some say the poor ought to be thankful that there is abundance of bread. So ought the rich! There is nothing which happens to one member of society which does not affect all. The ranks lean upon one another—if there is scarcity in the lower ranks, it falls upon the next and the next—and even the Queen upon her throne feels in some degree the scarcity when God is pleased to send it. It affects all men. Let none say, "Whatever the price of corn may be, I can live," but rather bless God who has given you more than enough! Your prayer ought to be, "Give us this day our daily bread," and remember that whatever wealth you have, you must attribute your daily mercies as much to God as if you lived from hand to mouth. And sometimes that is a blessed way of living—when God gives His children the hand-basket portion instead of sending it in a mass. Bless God that He has sent an abundant harvest! O fearful ones, lift up your heads! And you discontented ones, be you abashed and let your discontent no more be known! The Jews used to observe the feast of tabernacles when the harvest time came. In the country they always have a "harvest home" and why should not we? I want you all to have one. Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice! For the harvest is come—"Is today not the wheat harvest?"Poor desponding Soul, let all your doubts and fears be gone. "Your bread shall be given you and your waters shall be sure." That is one joyful harvest!

Now, the second joyful harvest is *the harvest of every Christian*. In one sense, the Christian is a seed. In another, he is a sower. In one sense, he is a seed sown by God which is to grow, ripen and germinate till the great harvest time. In another sense every Christian is a sower sent into the world to sow good seed and to sow good seed only. I do not say that Christian men never sow any other seed than good seed. Sometimes, in unguarded moments, they take garlic into their hands instead of wheat—and we may sow tares instead of corn. Christians sometimes make mistakes and God sometimes allows His people to fall so that they sow sins—but the Christian never reaps his sins—Christ reaps them for him. He often has to have a concoction made of the bitter leaves of sin, but he never reaps the fruit of it. Christ has borne the punishment! Yet bear in mind, if you and I sin against God, God will take our sin and He will get an essence from it that will be bitter to our taste! Though He does not make us eat the fruits, yet He will still make us grieve and sorrow over our sins. But the Christian, as I have said, should be employed in sowing good seed and, doing so, he shall have a glorious harvest!

In some sense or other, the Christian must be sowing seed. If God calls him to the ministry, he is a seed sower. If God calls him to the Sabbath school, he is a seed sower. Whatever his office, he is a sower of seed. I sow seed broadcast all over this immense field—I cannot tell where my seed goes. Some are like barren ground and they refuse to receive the seed that I sow. I cannot help it if any man should do so. I am only responsible to God, whose servant I am. There are others and my seed falls upon them and brings forth a little fruit, but, by-and-by, when the sun is up, because of persecution, they wither away and they die. But I hope there are many who are like the good ground that God has prepared—and when I scatter the seed abroad, it falls on good ground and brings forth fruit to an abundant harvest! Ah, the minister has a joyful harvest, even in this world, when he sees souls converted! I have had a harvest time when I have led the sheep down to the washing of Baptism, when I have seen God's people coming out from the mass of the world and telling what the Lord has done for their souls! When God's children are edified and built up, it is worth living for and worth dying ten thousand deaths for to be the means of saving one soul! What a joyful harvest it is when God gives us converted ones by tens and hundreds—and adds to His Church abundantly such as shall be saved!

Now I am like a farmer just at this season of the year. I have got a good deal of wheat down and I want to get it into the barn for fear the rain comes and spoils it. I believe I have got a great many, but they will persist in standing out in the field. I want to get them into the barns. They are good people, but they do not like to make a profession and join the Church. I want to get them into my Master's granary and to see Christians added to the Church. I see some holding down their heads and saying, "He means us." So I do. You ought to have joined Christ's Church before this and unless you are fit to be gathered into Christ's little garner here on earth, you have no right to anticipate being gathered into that great garner which is in Heaven!

Every Christian has his harvest. The Sabbath school teacher has his harvest. He goes and toils and often he plows very stony ground, but he shall have his harvest. Oh, poor laboring Sabbath school teacher, have you seen no fruit yet? Do you say, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Cheer up, you do labor in a good cause—there must be some to do your work. Have you seen no children converted? Fear not—

"Though seed lies buried long in dust,
It shan't deceive your hope.
The precious grain can never be lost,
For God insures the crop."

Go on sowing and you shall have a harvest when you shall see children converted! I have known some Sabbath school teachers who could count a dozen, or twenty, or thirty children who have, one after another, come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to join the Church. But if you should not live to see it on earth, remember, you are only accountable for your labor—not for your success! Sow still, toil on! "Cast your bread upon the waters: for you shall find it after many days." God will not allow His Word to be wasted—it shall not return to Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases. There may be a poor mother who has often been sad. She has a son and a daughter and she has been praying that God might convert their souls. Mother, your son is still an ungainly boy. He grieves your heart. The hot tears still scald your cheeks on account of him. And you, Father, you have reproved him often. He is a wayward son and he is still running the downward road. Cease not to pray! O my Brothers and Sisters who are parents, you shall have a harvest!

There was a boy once, a very sinful child who listened not to the counsel of his parents. But his mother prayed for him and now he stands to preach to this congregation every Sabbath. And when his mother thinks of her first-born preaching the Gospel, she reaps a glorious harvest that makes her a glad woman! Now, Fathers and Mothers, such may be your case. However bad your children are at present, still press toward the Throne of Grace and you shall have a harvest. What do you think, Mother, would you not rejoice to see your son a minister of the Gospel, your daughter teaching and assisting in the cause of God? God will not allow you to pray and your prayers be unheeded!

Young man, your mother has been wrestling for you a long time and she has not won your soul yet. What do you think? You cheat your mother of her harvest! If she had a little patch of ground, hard by her cottage, where she had sown some wheat, would you go and burn it? If she had a choice flower in her garden would you go and trample it under foot? But by going on in the ways of the reprobate, you are cheating your father and your mother of their harvest! Perhaps there are some parents who are weeping over their sons and daughters who are hardened and unconverted. O God, turn their hearts! Bitter is the doom of that man who goes to Hell over the road that is washed by his mother's tears, stumbles over his father's reproofs and tramples on those things which God has put in his way—his mother's prayers and his father's sighs! God help that man who dares to do such a thing as that! And it is wondrous Grace if He does help him.

You shall have a harvest, whatever you are doing. I trust you are all doing *something*. If I cannot mention what your peculiar engagement is, I trust you are all serving God in some way—and you shall assuredly have a harvest wherever you are scattering your seed. But suppose the worst—if you should never live to see the harvest in this world, you shall have a harvest when you get to Heaven! If you live and die a disappointed man in this world, you shall not be disappointed in the next! I think how surprised some of God's people will be when they get to Heaven. They will see their Master and He will give them a crown, "Lord, what is that crown for?" "That crown is because you gave a cup of cold water to one of My disciples." "What? A crown for a cup of cold water?" "Yes," says the Master, "that is how I pay My servants. First I give them Grace to give the cup of water and then, having given them Grace, I give them a crown." "Wonders of Grace belong to God!" He that sows liberally shall reap liberally and he that sows grudgingly shall reap sparingly.

Ah, if there could be grief in Heaven, I think it would be the grief of some Christians who had sown so very little. After all, how little the most of us ever sow! I know I sow but very little compared with what I might. How little any of you sow! Just add up how much you give to God in the year. I am afraid it would not come to a farthing per cent. Remember, you reap according to what you sow. O my Friends, what surprise some of you will feel when God pays you for sowing one single grain! The soil of Heaven is rich in the extreme. If a farmer had such ground as there is in Heaven, he would say, "I must sow a great many acres of land." And so let us strive, for the more we sow, the more shall we reap in Heaven. Yet remember it is all of Grace and not of debt!

Now, Beloved, I must very hastily mention the third joyful harvest. We have had the harvest of the field and the harvest of the Christian. We are now to have another—and that is *the harvest of Christ.*

Christ had His sowing times. What bitter sowing times they were! Christ was One who went out bearing precious seed. Oh, I picture Christ sowing the world! He sowed it with tears. He sowed it with drops of blood. He sowed it with sighs. He sowed it with agony of heart and, at last He sowed *Himself* in the ground, to be the seed of a glorious crop! What a sowing time His was! He sowed in tears, in poverty, in sympathy, in grief, in agony, in woes, in suffering and in death. He shall have a harvest, too. Blessings on His name, Jehovah swears it! The everlasting predestination of the Almighty has settled that Christ shall have a harvest! He has sown and He shall reap! He has scattered and He shall gather in. "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands." My Friends, Christ has begun to reap His harvest! Yes, every soul that is converted is part of His reward! Everyone who comes to the Lord is a part of it. Every soul that is brought out of the miry clay and set on the King's Highway is a part of Christ's crop. But He is going to reap more! There is another harvest coming, in the latter day, when He shall reap armfuls at a time and gather the sheaves into His garner. Now men come to Christ in ones and twos and threes—but then they shall come in flocks, so that the Church shall say, "Who are these that come in as doves to their windows?"

There shall be a greater harvest when time shall be no more. Turn to the 14th Chapter of Revelation, and the 13th verse—"And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." They do *not go before* them and *win* them Heaven. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." That was Christ's harvest. Observe but one particular. When Christ comes to reap His field, He comes with a crown on His head. There are the nations gathered together before that crowned Reaper!—

"They come, they come—the exiled bands!
Wherever they rest or roam
They heard His voice in distant lands,
And hastened to their home."

There they stand, one great army before God. Then comes the crowned Reaper from His Throne. He takes His sharp sickle—see Him reap sheaf after sheaf—and He carries them up to the heavenly garner. Let us ask the question of ourselves, whether we shall be among the reaped ones—the wheat of the Lord?

Notice again, that there was first a harvest, and then a vintage. The harvest is the righteous—the vintage is the wicked. When the wicked are gathered, an angel gathers them. But Christ will not trust an angel to reap the righteous. "He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle." O my Soul, when you come to die, Christ will, Himself, come for you—when you are to be cut down, He that sits upon the Throne will cut you down with a very sharp sickle in order that He may do it as easily as possible. He will be the Reaper, Himself—no reaper will be allowed to gather Christ's saints in, but Christ, the King of saints! Oh, will it not be a joyful harvest when all the chosen race, every one of them, shall be gathered in? There is a little shriveled grain of wheat that has been growing somewhere on the headland and that will be there. There are a great many who have been hanging down their heads, heavy with grain, and they will be there, too. They will all be gathered in—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep!
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep!"

II. But now we are obliged to turn to THE THREE SAD HARVESTS. Alas! Alas! The world was once like an Eolian harp—every wind that blew upon it gave forth melody. Now the strings are all unstrung and they are full of discord so that when we have a strain of joy, we must have the deep bass of grief to come after it.

The first sad harvest is *the harvest of death*. We are all living, and what for? For the grave. I have sometimes sat down and had a reverie like this. I have thought—Man, what is he? He grows and grows till he

comes to his prime. And when he is forty-five, if God spares him, perhaps he has then gained the prime of life. What does he do then? He continues where he is a little while and then he goes down the hill. And if he keeps on living, what is it for? To die. But there are many chances to one, as the world has it, that he will not live to be seventy. He may die very early. Do we not all live to die? But none shall die till they are ripe. Death never reaps his corn green, he never cuts his corn till it is ripe. The wicked die, but they are always ripe for Hell when they die. The righteous die, but they are always ripe for Heaven when they die. That poor thief there, who had not believed in Jesus—perhaps an hour before he died he was as ripe as a 70 years saint. The saint is always ready for glory whenever Death, the reaper, comes, and the wicked are always ripe for Hell whenever God pleases to send for them.

Oh, that great reaper! He sweeps through the earth and mows his hundreds and thousands down! It is all still—Death makes no noise about his movements and he treads with velvet footsteps over the earth. That ceaseless mower, none can resist him! He is irresistible and he mows, and mows, and cuts them down! Sometimes he stops and whets his scythe—he dips his scythe in blood and then he mows us down with war. Then he takes his whetstone of cholera and mows down more than ever. Still he cries, "More! More! More!" Ceaselessly that work keeps on! Wondrous mower! Wondrous reaper! Oh, when you come to reap me, I cannot resist you, for I must fall like others—when you come, I shall have nothing to say to you. Like a blade of corn I must stand motionless and you must cut me down! But, oh, may I be prepared for your scythe! May the Lord stand by me and comfort me and cheer me—and may I find that Death is an angel of life—that death is the portal of Heaven, the vestibule of Glory!

There is a second sad harvest and that is *the harvest that the wicked man has to reap*. Thus says the voice of Inspiration, "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Now there is a harvest that every wicked man has to reap in this world. No man ever sins against *his body* without reaping a harvest for it. The young man says, "I have sinned with impunity." Stop, young man! Go to that hospital and see sufferers writhing in their agony. See that staggering, bloated wretch and I tell you, stop your sinning lest you become like he! Wisdom bids you stop, for your steps lead down to Hell. If you enter into the house of the strange woman, you shall reap a harvest. There is a harvest that every man reaps if he sins against *his fellows*. The man who sins against his fellow creature shall reap a harvest. Some men walk through the world like knights with spurs on their heels and think they may tread on whom they please—but they shall find their mistake. He who sins against others, sins against himself—that is Nature. It is a law in Nature that a man cannot hurt his fellows without hurting himself.

Now, you who cause grief to others minds, do not think the grief will end there. You will have to reap a harvest even here. Again, a man cannot sin against his estate without reaping the effects of it. The miserly wretch who hoards up his gold, sins against his gold. It becomes cankered and from those golden sovereigns he will have to reap a harvest.

Yes, that miserly wretch, sitting up at night and straining his weary eyes to count his gold—that man reaps his harvest. And so does the young spendthrift. He will reap his harvest when all his treasure is exhausted. It is said of the prodigal, that "no man gave to him"—none of those that he used to entertain—and so the prodigal shall find it. No man shall give anything to him. Ah, but the worst harvest will be that of those who sin against *the Church of Christ*. I would not that a man should sin against *his body*. I would not that a man should sin against *his estate.* I would not that a man should sin against *his fellows,* but, most of all, I would not have him touch Christ's Church! He that touches one of God's people, touches the apple of His eye.

When I have read of some people finding fault with the servants of the Lord, I have thought within myself, "I would not do so." It is the greatest insult to a man to speak ill of his children. You speak ill of *God's* children and you will be rewarded for it in everlasting punishment! There is not a single one of God's family whom God does not love—and if you touch one of them, He will have vengeance on you. Nothing puts a man on his mettle like touching his children and if you touch God's Church, you will have the direst vengeance of all! The hottest flames of Hell are for those who touch God's children! Go on, Sinner, laugh at religion if you please, but know that it is the blackest sin in the whole catalog of crime. God will forgive anything sooner than that—and though that is not unpardonable, yet, if not repented of, it will meet the greatest punishment. God cannot bear that His elect should be touched. And if you do so, it is the greatest crime you can commit.

The third sad harvest is *the harvest of almighty wrath*, when the wicked at last are gathered in. In the 14th Chapter of Revelation, you will see that the vine of the earth was cast into the winepress of the wrath of God and, after that, the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood came out up to the horses' bridles—an amazing figure to express the wrath of God! Suppose, then, some great winepress in which our bodies are put like grapes. And suppose some mighty giant comes and treads us all under foot? That is the idea—that the wicked shall be cast together and be trodden underfoot until the blood runs out up to the horses' bridles! May God grant, of His Sovereign Mercy, that you and I may never be reaped in that fearful harvest—but that rather we may be written among the saints of the Lord!

You shall have a harvest in due season if you faint not. Sow on, Brother! Sow on, Sister! And in due time you shall reap an abundant harvest. Let me tell you one thing if the seed you have sown a long while, has never come up. I was told once, "When you sow seeds in your garden, put them in a little water overnight—they will grow all the better for it." So, if you have been sowing your seed, put it into tears and it will make your seed germinate better. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Steep your seed in tears and then put it into the ground—and you shall reap in joy. No bird can devour that seed! No bird can hold it in its mouth! No worm can eat it, for worms never eat seeds that are sown in tears.

Go your way and when you weep most, then it is that you sow best. When most cast down, you are doing best. If you come to the Prayer Meeting and have not a word to say, keep on praying! Do not give it up, for you often pray best when you think you pray worst. Go on, and in due season, by God's mighty Grace, you shall reap if you faint not.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 SAMUEL 12.

In Samuel's old age the people desired to have a king. And though it went much against the grain, yet, by the Lord's advice, Samuel consented to it. Here he makes his last protest.

Verse 1. *And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that you said unto me, and have made a king over you.* "I have not stood in your way. I have not sought my own honor. I have at once frankly resigned my office among you."

2. *And now, behold, the king walks before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and behold, my sons are with you and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.* "My sons come here today, not as my successors, but as fellow subjects with you of your newly-chosen king; they are not in opposition to him anymore than I am." Like an old servant who is about to be dismissed, Samuel asks them to bear witness to his character—and this he does partly as a lesson to the king who had taken his place and partly as a clearance of himself in rendering up his charge.

3. *Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before His anointed—whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Or whom I have oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? And I will restore it to you.* It is so usual a thing, among Oriental judges and rulers, to expect bribes that you cannot, in those countries, take a single step in a court of law without bribery. It was therefore a very unusual circumstance that Samuel should be able to challenge anybody to say that he had ever wrongfully taken so much as a single farthing. And the great rulers in those countries are accustomed to enrich themselves by levying heavy taxes upon the people. But Samuel affirmed that his services had been perfectly gratuitous, so that all he had done for the people had cost them nothing. If they had any fault to find with his government, it could only be because it had been so just and also so cheap—his yoke had indeed been easy to their necks! What a fine sight it is to see an old man thus able to challenge all who had known him throughout a long life to testify that he had not led a selfish life, or profited from his own interests even in the least degree!

4, 5. *And they said, You have not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither have you taken anything of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.* In the most solemn way, they cleared him. When he rendered to them the account of his stewardship, they all bore witness that every-

thing had been done, not merely according to strict rectitude, but in the most generous spirit of self-consecration. May all of us be enabled to live as that, so when our sun goes down, it shall be as cloudless a sunset as was that of Samuel!

6-8. *And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which He did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.* A remembrance of past mercies is very profitable to us. National mercies ought not to be forgotten and personal favors should always be fresh in our memory. Alas, the old proverb is only too true, "Bread that is eaten is soon forgotten." So is it even with the bread which God gives us—we eat it, yet soon forget the hand that fed us. Let it not be so with us.

9-11. *And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the King of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, we have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelled safely.* They often transgressed and were as often afflicted. But whenever they returned to the Lord with their confession of sin and again sought His mercy, He was always quick to deliver them. Let us profit by their experience. Have we brought ourselves into trouble through sin? Have we wandered and backslidden and are our hearts, therefore, heavy? Let us return unto the Lord and confess our sin, for He has not cast us away, He will turn again at the voice of our cry! He will forgive us and graciously receive us unto Himself again.

12, 13. *And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, No, but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore behold the king whom you have chosen, and whom you have desired! And, behold, the LORD has set a king over you.* "He has consented to your request, though it was a foolish one." Remember, Brothers and Sisters, it is not every answer to prayer that is a token of God's favor. If our prayers are very foolish and even if there is sin in them, God may sometimes give us what we ask in order to show us our folly and make us smart for having offered such a prayer. Though, under God's government, they had been most highly privileged, they felt they must have a king like the nations which were not so favored. "So now," says Samuel, "God has given you this king, so do your best with him." Samuel had a hopeful spirit and he hoped that though the circumstances were not as he would have wished them to be, yet that the people might do well, after all.

14-17. *If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and obey His voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both you*

and also the king that reigns over you continue following the LORD your God. But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers. Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call unto the LORD, and He shall send thunder and rain; that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for a king. This was to be a token to them that Samuel was God's Prophet. On a previous occasion, in answer to his prayer, God had thundered against the Philistines. But this time His thunder was His voice against Israel! In reading the Bible we must always remember that it was not written in England but in Palestine. Wheat harvest there takes place about the month of May—when the weather is usually settled and such things as thunder and rain are almost unknown. It was extraordinary, therefore, as when we speak of "a bolt out of the blue."

18, 19. *So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for your servants unto the LORD your God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask for a king.* That thunderstorm was a powerful preacher to them and the rain drops that fell so copiously brought the teardrops in their eyes. The phenomena of Nature frequently impress men with a sense of God's power and prostrates them before Him.

20-22. *And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: you have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart, and turn you not aside: for then should you go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people.* How gently the old Prophet speaks! What a change from the pealing thunder to this gracious voice! It seems like the clear shining after rain.

23-25. *Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He has done for you. But if you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed—both you and your king.*

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

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"The woman said unto him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"
John 4:11.

THIS was a sensible and very important question. May the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to answer it aright! Our Lord's great objective in His talk with this woman at the well was not to convince her of His oratorical power, for He spoke to her as simply as one would speak to a child. Many sermons are far too elaborate in their construction—they are evidently intended to display the preacher's own powers. But if we would imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Prince of Preachers, we would not strain after effect—and we would get a better effect without any straining—by taking the living Truth of God and telling out, as simply as possible, the story of salvation.

Jesus Christ's sole objective in talking with this woman was to bring her to salvation. That is also my objective with regard to my hearers and readers and, my dear unconverted Friends, if you shall agree with me in that objective and shall breathe the prayer, "Lord, help the preacher to speak to my soul that I may find Christ," there will be joy among the angels of Heaven over sinners repenting and returning to the Lord!

Our Savior, in seeking to win this woman to Himself, was completely successful. He hit the mark He aimed at. His shot struck the very center of the target. Only one sermon was preached to her—no, it was hardly a sermon—just a brief talk with her and the woman received the Living Word! Alas, there are some of you who have had a great many affectionate talks from godly mothers and fathers, or from earnest ministers, teachers, or other Christian friends—but, so far, they have not been as successful as Jesus of Nazareth was on this occasion! You have heard many sermons—you cannot tell how many you have heard—and some of them have produced some effect upon you, but, up to the present, you have not been slain by the sword of the Spirit, nor quickened by Jesus Christ the Life-Giver. I hope the Lord is about to do what has not been done before! And, with the accumulated responsibility upon you of having heard the Gospel so often in vain, I think you should the more earnestly breathe the prayer to God, "O Lord, let this be the effectual time of speaking to me! Call me as You did the Samaritan woman. While the

preacher is speaking and I am listening to Your Word as it shall be proclaimed, graciously grant that Jesus may be revealed to my soul and that He may say to me, 'I that speak unto you am He.'" If you are brought to pray that prayer from your heart, I believe that it will be answered and so, as I have already said, there will be joy in the Presence of the angels of God over you! Our Lord aimed at this woman's conversion by simply instructing her and bringing the truth home to her conscience. Let us see whether if we do the same thing, trusting in the same Spirit that anointed our Master, similar results will follow here as followed at the well of Sychar.

First, then, I am going *to expound the teaching which preceded the woman's question and suggested it.* Then, secondly, I will *answer the question.* And thirdly, I will *draw some inferences from it.*

I. First, then, WHAT WAS IT THAT LED THIS WOMAN TO ASK OUR SAVIOR THE QUESTION, "Where then do You get that living water?"

Jesus Christ had told her that had she known Him, she would have asked of Him and He would have given her Living Water. There was Jacob's well. They were, both of them, close to it and they could look down into it. There was some water in it, but the well of Sychar was not a well of "living water." You probably know that the expression which is translated, "living water," refers to water that springs up from a fountain. But the well of Sychar is not a well of that kind. The water in it is surface water—the gathering of the neighboring hills—land water, not spring water. Jesus Christ seemed to draw His illustration from that fact—"The water in that well runs into it and is drawn out from it. But if you had asked Me, I would have given you water that bubbles up—water that is full of life, very different from this well water—water from the great deep that 'couches beneath.'" You know the difference between those two sorts of water. I have illustrated it before by the two wells which are in the courtyard of the Doge's palace at Venice. One of them has its copper or bronze margin worn with holes cut by the string by which little cans are let down to fetch up the water that wells up from the spring. It is so precious because it springs up from a living fountain. The other well, which looks very much like the one I have mentioned, is not worn at all. Very few people care to draw from it—and the reason is because it is simply filled with water brought into the city. It is flat, dead water, not "living water" at all. So Jesus Christ had used this illustration in speaking with the woman—"You have come here to draw this water out of the well—the mere rain water that runs into Jacob's well. But if you had asked of Me, I would have given you water of a far better sort—water with life in it—water which would be life to you—water which would be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The woman caught the figure, though she did not at first understand its *spiritual* meaning. Its spiritual meaning is this—that *Jesus Christ has Grace in Himself—Grace to give to sinners—Grace to give to those who ask Him for it,* for He said to the woman, "You would have asked of Him and He would have given you Living Water." In the Lord Jesus Christ, then, there is a deep fountain of Grace always springing up within Himself. "It

pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." And it does dwell in Him! To Him, the Spirit has been given without measure! There is no meager supply of Grace in Christ. He has an abundance and I might almost say a redundance forever springing up within Himself. And this He has on purpose to give away! He has it not for Himself, for He needs it not. Almighty and ever-blessed as He is by Nature, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, He needs no Grace for Himself—what He has is all to give away! He came into this world to open up channels by which He might distribute all His Grace to thirsty souls!

And He gives it all away far the asking—Almighty Grace to be had for the asking! No human merit can demand it and no performance of any earthly ceremony is required in order to obtain it. Here it is in a nutshell—"*You* would have *asked* and *He* would have *given*." "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God." And if any man lacks pardon, let him do the same. If any man lacks *anything* that is essential to his purity, to his happiness, to his present life, or to his future life, it is stored up in Christ and it can be had from Him for the asking! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

The teaching of the text to you unconverted people is this—if ever you are saved, it must be by the Grace of God. That Grace is in Jesus Christ. It has been put into Jesus Christ not because He needs it Himself, but that He may distribute it—and He does distribute it—whoever asks it of Him receives it from Him. "For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." And when you receive this Grace, it will remain in you. It will not be like ordinary water which you drink and which then is done with, but it will live in you. It shall turn into a well of Living Water! Inside your soul there shall be an ever-springing Well of Life which never shall cease to flow, either in summer or in winter and which, in Glory, shall enable you to understand what that eternal life was which Jesus gave to you and of which He said to His Father, "This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."

II. Now, secondly, I am going TO ANSWER THE QUESTION THAT THIS WOMAN PUT TO CHRIST.

Her question was, "'Where then do You get that living water?' How did You come to have it? If You have living water, how is it that You have it? It is not in that well. And even if it were there, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep: 'Where then do You get that living water?'" What an important question this is to put in a spiritual sense! Lord Jesus, we hear that You have an abundance of Grace treasured up in You which You freely distribute among those who ask You for it, but where did You get it? How is it that You have this Grace? In what way did it come to be stored up in You? 'Where then do You get that living water?'"

While I am asking this question, I pray every unconverted one who desires to find peace with God to say to himself or herself, "I am now to hear how it is that Christ can save. I am now to learn why it is that He is the Giver of Grace to the guilty." Perhaps, dear Friends, while you are lis-

tening you may see something in Christ which you never saw before and faith may spring up in your soul almost insensibly to yourself—and before you go out of this place, you may be able to say, "I cannot fully explain this great mystery, but I know enough of the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in Him. I cannot but believe in Him, now that I see how it is that He is so mighty to save!"

The first answer to the question, "Where then do You get that living water?" is this—*He has it in His very Nature*. Jesus Christ is able to save because He is Divine. "With God, all things are possible" and Jesus Christ is God, so all things are possible with Him! "God is Love" and Jesus Christ is God, so He, too, is Love! God possesses all things and Christ is God, so He has all things freely to distribute among the sons of men! Jesus of Nazareth, as He sat on the well at Sychar, seemed to that woman, at first, to be only an ordinary Jew and she wondered that He, being a Jew, should even *speak* to her, a woman of Samaria. But veiled under the form of that Son of Mary, there was God, Himself, made flesh and dwelling among men! Oh, it is glorious to think that He who has come to redeem you is no mere man, but over all God blessed forever!

If a man were to tell me that he was going to take the world upon his shoulders, I would distrust his power to bear such a burden, even though he were as strong as Samson! But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cannot only bear up this world, but the entire universe in His *hand*, for all fullness of power dwells in Him! If any man were to say that he would take upon himself the sins of the whole world, I would be even more diffident than if he proposed to play the part of Atlas and to bear the world upon his shoulders. But when Jesus, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, takes upon Himself the form of a Servant and yet has the iniquity of us all laid upon Him, I can understand how He can bear the tremendous load, for He bears the earth's huge pillars and spreads the heavens abroad! When we think of Jesus as Divine, nothing seems to be impossible to Him! The strength of sin, which is the Law, is not too great for Him who made the Law and kept it, too! The sting of death, which is sin, shall certainly not be able to destroy, or even to resist the Almighty Power of Him who has the keys of death and of Hell!

If you commit your soul, my dear Friends, to the keeping of a man, or of an angel, you will have made a fatal mistake! If all the angels in Heaven were to band themselves together to save a soul and were to ask me to be the soul that they would seek to save, I would have nothing to do with them! Nobody who is less than Deity can save sinners! But Jesus is "mighty to save" because He is God as well as Man! This is a basis upon which the soul's hope may well be founded and established forever. If the interposing Mediator is, indeed, "very God of very God"—and He is—we see from where He has this Living Water and we can come to Him with the utmost confidence, knowing that He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him!

Another answer to the Samaritan woman's question is that Christ has this Living Water *by the Divine Purpose and Appointment*. It was the Divine Plan that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in

Unity, should be appointed to be the Treasury of Grace for all His elect ones. In the council chamber of eternity it was ordained that the Son of God should, in due time, come into this world and take upon Himself our nature and also our sin. And He was set apart, in the eternal purpose, to do so and, in the proclamation of the Gospel, that decree of the Lord is published to the sons of men! The Lord God has set forth His Son Jesus as the one Propitiation for the sins of men! He is authorized by God to be a Savior and He comes here, by Divine appointment, to bestow upon us the blessings of His Grace. When an ambassador comes to this land from another country, he brings credentials to prove that he is duly accredited by the authority that he represents—and our Lord Jesus Christ comes to men with credentials which prove that He was appointed by God to this service before all worlds were made—and that He will be Divinely sustained in that Appointment till time shall be no more! And then, having completed His mediatorial work, He will surrender the Kingdom to His Father—and God shall be All-in-All. So now, as Mediator, He stands, appointed by the Most High to distribute the blessings of His Grace which is the Living Water of which our text speaks!

To me, this Truth of God is inconceivably sweet, for, when I trust in Jesus Christ to save me, I rejoice to know that He is no amateur Savior who has come on His own authority and at His own bidding. But, behold, the Father Himself has sent Him! He is the Messiah, the Sent One, the Anointed, the Christ of God! God must accept His Son, for He sent Him into the world for this very purpose. If I bring to God the blood of Jesus as the Atonement for my sin, He must accept it, for He Himself ordained it as the medium of reconciliation! My blessed Savior, if I hide in You, I cannot be either dragged or driven from You, for God has set You apart to be the City of Refuge to which my poor soul may flee for protection and shelter! God has appointed Jesus "to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It seems to me that these are two grand answers to the question of the Samaritan woman, "Where then do You get that living water?"—first, from His own natural and essential Deity and, secondly, as the Mediator appointed and sustained by the eternal Father!

But, thirdly, the Lord Jesus could give a further answer to the woman's question by referring to *the anointing which He had received from the Holy Spirit*. On the day of His Baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and sat upon Him. He could truly say, "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, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work of distributing the Living Water to the sons and daughters of men. He was God's CHRISTOS—God's "Anointed." Those are two very precious titles which are often put together, Jesus Christ—the Anointed Savior—they describe both His office and His qualification for that office. Well, then, behold Jesus Christ, with the fullness of the Spirit abiding upon Him, coming into the world

endowed with all those Divine gifts which, as Mediator, He needed, that He might be able to carry out the work which the Lord had of old appointed Him to do! The Spirit of God is still with Him and He gives the Spirit to those who seek Him. This, then, is the third answer to the woman's question, "Where then do You get that living water?" He has it because the Spirit of God is upon Him.

There is another answer which may convince some who have not been comforted or enlightened by the previous ones. It could not have been given to the woman, at the time she put the question, except by way of anticipation. But say that Christ has this Living Water *because His redeeming work is finished*. He had it, virtually, during His life on earth, in foresight of the work which He had undertaken to finish. Hence it was that multitudes of souls went to Heaven long before Christ had paid the ransom for them. His pledge and promise being a guarantee that the great deed would surely be accomplished. Think of this—that the Son of God whom the holy angels worshipped without ceasing, should have come here in the form of a Baby who nestled in a woman's arms that He might save us! Oh, let the joy-bells ring as we think of God in human flesh! Does not the thought of Christ's Incarnation bring hope to the lost? May not sinners see, in it, how the Living Water finds a channel in which it can flow down to them in the Person of the Incarnate God—"Emmanuel, God With Us"? "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." He lived for 30 years in this world, a quiet, humble life, working out a righteousness for all His people, fulfilling all the relationships of life into which He was brought and so, when He came to be baptized, He openly revealed the work that He was doing all His life, namely, fulfilling all righteousness! Throughout the whole of His earthly career He was living for us and working for us—and the merit of His unique life stands to the credit of all who believe in Him.

At last the time came for Him to die, for, "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." The Living Water could not come to us unless Christ's heart was opened to let it out. He must give His life a ransom for many or else there could never be any ransomed souls. You know the sad, sad story. Jesus goes forth from the place where He had instituted the memorial supper. He enters Gethsemane's garden, utters a series of agonizing prayers in the course of which a shower of His precious blood falls upon the earth where He kneels. He rises from the ground, meets His betrayer and receives the cruel traitor kiss. He thrusts aside the sword with which His too eager disciple would have defended Him and He is led like a lamb to the slaughter. And like a sheep dumb before her shearers, He opens not His mouth to answer His accusers. He gives His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck out the hair. He hides not His face from shame and spitting. Yes, though He is Lord of All, He voluntarily yields Himself up to a felon's death and gives up His immaculate body, which had never been stained by sin, to be

pierced with the nails and every bone to be dislocated by the jar as the Cross is first lifted up and then hurled down into its place!

He hangs in the burning sun, parched with fever. He has no friend or comforter, for even God has forsaken Him while He is bearing His people's sin! His enemies mock and laugh at His agonies. He yields up His soul unto death without a murmuring word. He knew that the price of pardon was His blood, but His pity never withdrew and, until He could say, "It is finished," He held on to life. When it was finished, He submitted Himself to death—and the Lord of Glory was laid in the new tomb in the garden. Now, if you ask me, from where, then, has Jesus of Nazareth, God Incarnate, got that Living Water, I answer in three words—"Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha." Put these three together—the place where He sweat great drops of blood, the place where He was scourged and the place where He died—and you can comprehend why He has this Living Water!

Another answer to the woman's question, "Where then do You get that living water," is that He has it in *the reward which His Father promised to Him for His mediatorial work.* "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son is to receive a full reward for all that He endured—and all that He has so far received of His Father is not for Himself—for He needs nothing—but He has received it that He may distribute it among the rebellious children of men! The Psalmist truly sang, "You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And this is where He got that Living Water! Poor Soul, groping in the dark and trying to believe in Jesus, ought not this to enable you to believe in Him? Christ has lived, loved, bled, died and now there is a reward due to Him which can only be met by the salvation of all for whom He died! See, then, how He has the Living Water and come and trust Him to give it to you freely!

There is one other answer to the woman's question, "Where then do You get that living water?" It is this. *Because of His intercession at His Father's right hand in Glory.* Jesus, the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, ever lives to make intercession for us. "Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Look at Him, my Brothers and Sisters! The risen Christ at God's right hand! If you can, see Him standing there in His robes of glory and beauty, for He is no longer a sacrificing Priest, for His one Sacrifice in which He offered up Himself is finished forever! Now He has put on the royal robes of the High Priest, for He is both a Prince and a Priest—and there He stands with our names engraved upon His breastplate—each glittering jewel dear to the eyes of God. Wherever He moves, the bells and the pomegranates upon His glorious garments pour forth sweet music in the ear of the Most High, for Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of His Father and He is always dear to the heart of His Father.

There He stands as the great Representative Man, fully acceptable to God—no, more—dearly beloved of God and, for His sake, God looks upon all who are in Him with Infinite Love and Divine Complacency! Some of you may know what it is to have a beloved son away in America or Australia for many years. By-and-by he comes home and he brings his wife. You have never seen her, but you love her for his sake. Possibly he also brings home a dozen children. Well, that is a large addition to your family, but you welcome them all for your boy's sake, do you not? I am sure you do! And you seem to see his image in them all! All who belong to him are dear to you for his sake. So, the ever-blessed God looks with unspeakable love upon the whole family of Christ because of the love which He bears to their Covenant Head, Lord and Surety. This eternal life that is in Him—this boundless love that God gives to Him—this intercessory power that He has with the Father and that He uses on our behalf—this is from where He got that Living Water!

III. Now may God the Holy Spirit especially aid us while we briefly notice, in the third place, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS TRUTH OF GOD. If this is from where Christ got this Living Water, then *He is still able to bless the children of men.*

If He had received Divine Grace from some temporary source of supply, it would have been exhausted long ago. But, since He received it from His own Divine Nature, from the purpose and plan of God, from the anointing of the Holy Spirit, from His own finished work and from His ever-living power and infinite merit—since all these fountains of Grace are as full today as they ever were and since they always will be just as full—the stream of Grace will continue to flow from the same Source! If the deeps from which a well draws its water are always the same, then depend upon it, the supply in the well will always be the same! If, therefore, the great deeps from which Christ draws the Living Water cannot be supposed to be lessened, the Living Water is in Him, at this moment, as much as it was 1800 years ago!

The remembrance of this Truth should bring consolation to the soul of anyone who may have said, "I wish that I had lived long ago when Christ was upon this earth in visible form." You should not speak so, for you may as readily receive Grace from Christ as did the woman of Samaria. The very words which Jesus spoke to that poor fallen creature, He also addresses to you, "If you knew the gift of God...you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you Living Water." Ask and you shall have, even as she asked and received! It is abundantly clear that there is an ample supply of Grace stored up in Christ Jesus for all who trust Him.

It is equally clear that *He needs nothing from us*. If He had drawn the living water out of the well at Sychar, He would have wanted to borrow the woman's water pot. He would have said, "Now, Mistress, you must lend Me your rope and your water pot, for, otherwise, I cannot get at the water in the well." But, as the Living Water comes only from Himself, He needs nobody's water pot or rope! This is a very important matter, because you, Sinners, will persist in bringing your water pots and your

ropes to help Christ. You want to aid the Lord Jesus Christ, in some way or other, in His work of saving you. "Ah," you say, "I know that He is a Savior, but then I must…" Well, what "must" you do? "Oh," says one, "I must do this," and another says, "I must do that." I will tell you all, the "must" there is about your case—you must be willing to *be nothing* and let Christ be everything! You must be the emptiness and He must be the fullness. You must be the poverty and He must be the riches. You must be the poor miserable beggar and He must be your great Enricher, your All-in-all. That is all that is needed.

Then, once more, since this Living Water comes to Christ from His essential Deity and all the other grand things of which I have spoken, *it is not exhausted at this present time.* There is an abiding fullness in Christ since the Living Water comes thus to Him. Millions of happy spirits are now in Heaven who have drunk of this Living Water, but Christ is just as able to save millions upon millions more! Your sins cannot exhaust Christ's fullness! I remember when the thirst of my soul was so strong, by reason of my acute sense of sin, that I compared myself to behemoth, of whom the Lord said to Job, "He trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." Well, now, if your soul's thirst is so great that it will take more than Jordan to satisfy you—and the rivers of Abana and Pharpar after that and Kishon after that. And the Mediterranean Sea after that and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans after all those—if you could drink up all that is good in the whole universe and still thirst for more—if you will receive Grace from Christ, He will fill you to the full, yet He will still be just as full of Grace as He ever was!

There was a sailor, who, if I remember the story rightly, once called at Lubbock's Bank to cash his pay notes. I think he was to draw £50, so he said to the clerk, "I don't like to be hard on anybody. As you have to pay out all this money, I will take ten pounds now and I will call again another day for some more, as I don't want to break you up." Of course, you may imagine how they smiled at the simplicity of the man who thought that he might break the bank by drawing out such an enormous sum of money as fifty pounds all at once! You smile at the illustration, yet that is just exactly how many sinners treat the Lord Jesus Christ. They seem to think it is too much to expect to receive from Him the full and free forgiveness of all their sins. They imagine that it is too much for Christ to give all at once, but they do not know that the Lord Jesus Christ has already pardoned enough sinners to make Heaven as bright with redeemed spirits as the sky is with stars! And yet He has as much pardoning mercy left as He ever had! After you draw from a perennial fountain as much water as you need, it still springs up as copiously as ever and so is it with the Living Water which is stored up in Christ! And you may have it, poor thirsty Soul—as much as you need. I will not underestimate the greatness of your sin. It is, indeed, enormous. But since Christ has borne it in His own body on the tree, He knows its weight and all about it. And as soon as you trust in Him, you will realize that He has put it all away forever!

So I think that the final inference to be drawn is that *we should all take of this Living Water which Christ so freely gives*. "Ah," says one, "I bless God that I drank of it years ago." Never mind, Brother. Never mind, Sister. Come and drink of it again! Keep on receiving Jesus Christ again and again, continually looking unto Him as the Author and Finisher of your faith. Let us all go to Him—saints and sinners, saved and unsaved—this very moment. May the Holy Spirit draw us and may we all, as one man, say, "I give myself up to You, O Savior, to save me; and I trust You to cleanse me from all my sin and to present me at last, faultless, before the Presence of Your Glory with exceeding joy. I am nothing, and I have nothing that I can bring to You to merit Your esteem. I am nothing but a mass of sin and misery—not even feeling my sin as I ought to feel it. Look upon me, O Savior, in love and mercy, and give me the Grace to drink of the Living Water this very hour, if I never drank of it before. And if I did drink of it long ago, let it spring up within me just now, and may I be conscious of its power to my own comfort and to Your praise and Glory!"

If this is your prayer, my Brothers and Sisters, God will bless you! And we shall meet in Heaven, by His Grace, still to drink of the Living Water forever and ever! And to His blessed name we will ascribe all the praise and glory for our salvation, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-34.

Verses 1-4. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And He needed to go through Samaria.* And, surely, not only because it was the more convenient way, but because He had designs of love for some souls there that His Father had given Him. There are many needs in Divine Providence because of the needs of Divine Grace!

5, 6. *Then He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.* Wearied and needing rest, yet there was no rest for Him except that He found His sweetest rest in winning immortal souls unto Himself!

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, Give me a drink.* That is practically what Jesus still says to the sons and daughters of men—"Give me a drink." He asks for your love, for your trust, for your confidence. It is His food and drink to bless your soul and to give you the blessing that you need—and it is a refreshment to His spirit when you give Him the opportunity of thus blessing you.

8. (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy food). It was a great mercy that the disciples were out of the way just then. Had they been there, they might have tried to keep this poor woman from speaking

to the Savior and, sometimes, Brothers and Sisters, it may be well for us to be laid aside. God may do more good without our presence than with it. Who can tell?

9, 10. *Then the woman of Samaria said unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, asks a drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* See, then, the evil of spiritual ignorance! And also see how the chain of Grace works, "If you knew…you would have sought…and He would have given." When God gives the knowledge of Christ to the soul, then there comes the spirit of prayer—and then consequent blessings!

11, 12. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* She took the Savior's figure literally—and there are still many who cannot see the spiritual meaning of God's Word and run their heads against the hard stern letter which kills—instead of seeking and finding the inner living spirit which gives life. These are the people who build their hopes of salvation upon outward ordinances and who impute saving power to "sacraments." Would God that they knew better!

13-15. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* She was still unable to see the inner meaning of the Savior's words! The outward sense still held her fast. She needed to have her conscience aroused, for that would prove to be the way into her heart. Christ has different doors for entering into different people's souls. Into some He enters by the understanding. Into many, by the affections. To some, He comes by the way of fear. To another, by that of hope—and to this woman He came by way of her conscience.

16-19. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he who you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly. The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet.* Something had come home to her conscience through what the Savior said to her, so she began to speak about what He was, not about what *she* was! This often happens when the preacher is enabled, by Divine Grace, to come home to the conscience. The result is that the hearer says, "What a wonderful preacher he is!" But that will do no good—that is not the point at which we are aiming. "The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet," and off she goes, on a tangent, to enquire about various forms of religious observance! Evil as she was, she was still a person who wished to be regarded as a religious woman! And it is strange how often

a certain religiousness will flourish even in the most depraved heart—not true godliness, however. So she propounded this difficulty to the Savior—

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* "There are so many sects, can You tell me which is the right one?" That is the question which men often put to us when we begin to touch their consciences.

21. *Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* This question is of very temporary interest. The hour comes when neither of these places, nor yet any other, shall be considered sacred!

22-24. *You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* No longer is any consecrated building necessary to true worship! Indeed, no building can be consecrated. No longer are we to be confined to canonical hours. No longer is God to be sought with the sensuousness of sweet music or of fragrant incense—He is to be sought with the heart, soul and spirit!

25, 26. *The woman said unto Him. I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* This great Truth of God burst upon her with all the forge of a Divine Revelation—and faith came with the information! The words that had gone before had prepared her to expect this manifestation of Christ to her soul.

27-34. *And at this point His disciples came and marvelled that He talked with a woman: yet no man said, What do You seek? Or, Why do You talk with her? The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him. In the meanwhile His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have food to eat that you know not of. Therefore said the disciples, one to another, Has any man brought Him something to eat? Jesus said unto them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.*

—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 SEARCH WARRANT
NO. 2898

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

"But there are some of you that believe not."
John 6:64.

ARE there really? Yes. He that searches the hearts says so. Then it is high time for us to enquire, "What is it to believe in Christ? What is it to believe to the saving of the soul?" It is not merely to consider the Gospel to be true. It is not simply to endorse the Doctrine that Christ is God. Those who hold a sound creed may be destitute of precious faith and those who are able to defend the Divinity of Christ with admirable scholarship may, nevertheless, be without God in the world. To believe in Christ includes much more than a religious profession. It is so to believe the Gospel as to forsake all other beliefs for the possession of its blessed hope! It is to imbibe the spirit of the Word of God while you accept the letter of its pure teaching! Or, in other words, it is to come to Jesus and to prove, in your own souls, His power to save.

Just as the faith of Abraham led him to leave his kindred and his father's house under the guardian care of Jehovah, so saving faith leads a man to leave his self-sufficiency with all the carnal pursuits and ambitions that encircled, like a farmstead, his natural and primitive home and to go forth, led by Jesus Christ, not knowing where he goes. Just as faith led the harlot Rahab to anticipate the doom of Jericho—to hang the scarlet line in her window and then to rest securely in her house though the town walls upon which it was built, were shaking—so, by faith, the sinner comes to the blood of sprinkling, hangs the promise of Redemption in the window of his soul and though he feels himself to be, naturally, no better than others, yet he rests secure because that scarlet line is there and he is safe! Or, to use another figure, just as the Hebrew householder slew the lamb, dipped the bunch of hyssop in its blood, sprinkled it upon the lintel and the two side posts of his house and then calmly ate the Passover supper, though he knew that the destroying angel was flying through the land of Egypt and though, perhaps, he could even hear the shrieks of the dying and the wailing of the bereaved—yet he remained quietly in his house knowing that though he might be the guiltiest of men, the blood secured his safety according to the promise of God!

To believe in Jesus, then, is to trust our soul's salvation to what Jesus has done for us, to prove what He is doing in us and to rely entirely upon His promise to save us even to the end. It is to drop from the giddy elevation where we stand on the rotten timbers of self-righteousness and to fall into the Omnipotent arms of Him who stands ready to receive us. It is to tear off the rags of our own spinning that we may be clothed with the righteousness which is from Heaven. Faith is the reverse of sight! It is to believe that we are saved when sin tells us that we are lost. It is to believe that Christ has cleansed us when we still feel defilement within. It is to believe that we shall see His face in Glory when clouds and darkness enshroud our path and doubts and fears distress our heart. This is the faith which saves the soul!

We are not saved by faith, itself, as a meritorious work. There is no merit in believing in God and even if there were, it could not save us, since salvation by merit has been once and for all solemnly excluded. Nor does faith save us as an efficient cause. Faith is the channel of salvation, not the fountain and source of it. Hence faith, though it saves, never boasts. He that boasts has not faith and he that has faith can say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the poor man who was bitten by the fiery serpent looked to the bronze serpent upon the pole, it was his eyes that saved him—yet it was not the merit of looking, nor was it his eyes that were the efficient cause of his cure—all the glory of it was to be given to God who had ordained that the bronze serpent would be the means of healing to all who looked to it. So, faith is the eye with which we look to Christ, yet it has neither merit nor efficacy in itself—all the merit and efficacy lie in the precious blood of Him to whom we look.

Again, faith is an empty hand. Yes, it is the filthy hand of the leprous sinner and Christ puts His mercy into that black hand. Is there any merit in the hand? God forbid! Is there any efficiency to save in the hand? Oh, no, my Brothers and Sisters—the hand which *gives* must have the glory, not the hand which takes! He who bestows the blessing must have the honor of it, not the faith by which we receive the blessing from Him. Now, having thus spoken upon what faith is, and having tried to show you its peculiar position in the work of salvation, I am solemnly reminded, by our text, that "there are some of you that believe not." The context shows that these words were spoken by Christ to His disciples. They were gathered around Him and He was addressing them. Some of them had murmured because what He said to them was too "hard" for them to receive and the Lord Jesus, being able to read their hearts, could say to them, "There are some of you that believe not." And the Inspired Evangelist adds, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who would not believe, and who would betray Him."

I am going to speak first about *those whose unbelief is secret.* And *secondly, about those who are known to us to be unbelievers.*

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WHOSE UNBELIEF IS SECRET—it is known only to Christ.

If you had looked upon those disciples of Christ, you would have judged that they had received the gift of eternal life. You would have said, "God forbid that I should condemn any of those men who have come out from an ungodly generation and have professed to be followers of the Prophet of Nazareth!" Although it would be wrong for us to judge our fellow creatures, Jesus judged His disciples and judged them rightly, for He can penetrate even to the heart. He can discern the secret thoughts, intents and motives of all men. And the day is coming when He will finally judge the whole race of mankind. His eyes even now pierce through the hypocrite's disguise, but His hands shall tear it away when He shall say to those who cry to Him, "Lord! Lord!"—"Verily I say unto you, I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." We know not the hollowness of their pretense, but Christ knows all about it. And if the Holy Spirit shall help us, we may be enabled to show it to them. Oh, that it may be so, even now, that they may stand with their souls revealed, and their consciences convicted—and that they may now seek faith—seeing that they have it not!

What reason for alarm and for heart-searching there is here, for it is to be feared that *even in the ministry there are some who have not faith!* Yes, Brothers, there have been in all ages men who have worn the robes of God's ambassadors, but who have not been at peace with Him. It is a solemn and dreadful fact that there have been men who have broken the bread at the Lord's Table and who have been leaders in God's Israel, yet who, notwithstanding that, have had neither part nor lot in the matter! Brothers in the ministry and young men who occasionally go out to preach the Word and who are hoping, by-and-by, to have a settled pastorate, let us ask ourselves this question—Is it not possible that we, although preachers of the Word, may yet be without faith? Are we seeking to teach others what we have not ourselves learned? Are we only like scaffolds, used in the building of Christ's Church, yet not part of the spiritual structure, or like Noah's laborers who helped to build the ark, yet were drowned by the great deluge? Are we like Elijah's ravens which brought him bread and meat from Ahab's table, yet remained unclean birds of evil omen? Let us seriously question ourselves, for God has sometimes done good works by bad men—yet this has not saved the men—even as it was with Judas who worked miracles as the other Apostles did, preached as they did, yet who, nevertheless, was "a son of perdition" who went to "his own place" among the lost!

Further, is it not possible that *there are some in the other offices of the church who have not faith?* Men and Brothers, let me speak to you who are the fathers in Israel. Though but young, myself, yet, as God's servant delivering His message, I speak to you with authority. Is it not possible that you may serve tables, as deacons of the Church, and yet that you may be an intruder at Christ's Table? You may be an elder and an overseer of others and yet have to say, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept." It is solemn work to be made a watcher over the souls of men! But what must be our position if, after watching over others, our own soul should still be in the gall of bit-

terness and the bonds of iniquity? "I speak as unto wise men; judge you what I say"—office-bearing and the choice of the Church cannot guarantee your salvation!

And as this is true of some ministers and of some Church officers, *it may be true of others who are engaged in various works of piety*. I thank God that we have here many Sabbath school teachers, tract distributors, street preachers—in fact, I hope that there are very few persons in this Church who are *not* regularly engaged in doing good in one way or other. If there are among them any who do not believe, I am happy to say that I do not know them. Yet is it possible, dear Friend, that you are teaching a Sunday school class although you need to become as a little child before you can enter the Kingdom of Heaven? May you not be distributing messages of mercy to others, in the streets, or from door to door and yet be, yourself, in need of that mercy? If that is your sad case, you are like a man with a leprous hand dealing out medicine to the sick! Take care, Christian workers, that in this day of activity, when there is so much to do, you do not neglect the personal act of faith which unites your soul to Christ. See to this vital and all-important matter. Make the outside of the cup and platter clean, as far as you can, but see that the inside is not full of hypocrisy. However active you are in the Lord's service, I pray that your exclusive self-examination may be as earnest as your expansive zeal! May you be as much concerned to be saved as to proclaim salvation to others!

Now I speak to the Church members in general. I thank God that He is adding to this Church every day. Sometimes I hear a whisper from one side that those of us whose business it is to examine candidates for Church fellowship are too severe in our judgment of them. And, on the other side, there are some who say that we are not searching enough! Brothers and Sisters, it is enough for me and my fellow laborers in Christ, when we can say with singleness of spirit—and not with eye-service, as men-pleasers—"We have sought to serve God in this matter. I do verily believe that for the most part, what we have bound on earth has been bound in Heaven—and what we have loosed on earth has been loosed in Heaven. At any rate, if we have erred in any case it has been neither by favor nor by prejudice, but we have sought, after lifting up our hearts to Heaven, to give a righteous judgment in every instance. Yet, with all the care that may be exercised, there is not, beneath Heaven, a single church that is perfect!

Some of you are members of this Church and some are members of other churches, yet it is almost certain that there are some of you who believe not. I do not profess to be able to separate the tares from the wheat, but Jesus can do it—He knows those among you who have no faith! You may talk about faith and yet not really have it yourselves. You may have a great gift in prayer and yet not have faith. You may be an acceptable preacher and yet not have faith. You may walk uprightly before your fellow men and yet not have faith. You may be a generous subscriber to every holy work and yet not have faith. How nearly a man may be a Christian and yet be lost! The counterfeit may be made to look so like the

genuine that men may look at it again, and again, and again and yet may pronounce the real to be counterfeit and the false to be genuine! The Lord grant that if there are, in this congregation, any who have a name to live and yet are dead, they may be awakened to a sense of their true condition before God before it is too late—and that Christ may give them life!

Brothers and Sisters, I do not know that at the present moment if I have any doubt of my own personal interest in Christ. Yet I do know that it is a very solemn thing to be so sure and that it is a damnable thing to be presumptuous concerning such a matter. There will be times, with all of us, when it will do us good to sit down and seriously ask, "Are these things so, or are they not?" Let us dig down to the very foundations of our faith and see what it is upon which we are building for eternity! There will be times when all our past experience will be blown to shreds, like the sail of the mariner in a great gale. There will be times when our strongest evidence will snap like a mast broken by the fury of the storm. There will be times when all our comforts and joys will go like hencoops washed overboard from a laboring ship. Oh, what a blessed thing it is, at such a time as that, to cast our great bower anchor into the sea and to calmly sing—

"In every high and stormy gale
My Anchor holds within the veil."

When anyone can say—

"His oath, His covenant and His blood,
Support me in the sinking flood"—

he may feel that he is everlastingly secure and that Jesus is, indeed, his Savior! May the Holy Spirit enable you to judge—for we cannot—whether you have this saving faith or not!

II. Now, in the second place, I am to speak about THOSE WHO ARE KNOWN TO US AS UNBELIEVERS.

First, there is a very pleasing class of persons here who say, "*We have no faith, but we are very anxious to have it.*" I bless God for you, dear Friends, and I wish that we had thousands like you! You feel your need of Christ, you long to be saved, you hate sin, you hate self-righteousness—yet you have no faith. There are certain questions that each of you often puts to us. First, "May I believe in Christ?" I answer—Of course you may, because Christ bids you do so and what He bids you do, you may do. "But am I fit to believe in Him?" No fitness is required. "But am I the person who may believe in Jesus?" There is no special person indicated, for the Gospel runs on this wise and it is to be preached to every creature under Heaven, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." As to the question whether you may believe in Jesus, whoever you are, I say—Yes, certainly—come and welcome, for Christ has said, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Your next question probably is, "Can I believe ?" I do not know, but I should think that you can. I will put a few questions to you—Can you believe that Christ is God? "Yes." Can you believe anything that God says? "Yes." You can believe, then, for Christ said it and Christ is God—that He came to seek and to save that which is lost, and you know that you are lost. God says, through His servant, the Apostle Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners." And you know that you are a sinner, therefore He came into the world to save you! Surely you can believe that! I know many persons who say that they cannot believe, when in truth they can, yet they do not know that they can! How is it, then, that there are still so many who believe not?

The chief reason is because they *will not believe*—they are too proud—they love their own righteousness too much, they think themselves too wise to submit to the righteousness of Christ. But you ask, "Can *I* believe in Jesus?" I say rather—Can *you*? I ask you the question! You who are as evil as Hell—can you believe that Christ can save you? "Yes, Sir," you say, "I can believe that." Can you believe that He is willing to save you—good and gracious Christ that He is—hanging on the Cross and bidding you trust Him? "Oh, Sir!" you say, "I cannot help believing that." Well, then, you have proved that you can believe, for you have done it already! I used to think that believing in Christ was some mysterious thing and I could not make out what it was—but when I heard that it was just this—"Look unto Me, and be you saved," I found that the only reason why it was so hard was that it was so easy! If it had been a more difficult matter, then my proud spirit would have tried to accomplish it! But being so easy, my proud spirit would not do it.

You remember why Naaman could not wash in the Jordan as the Prophet bade him? It was because he would not—his proud spirit would not let him. "I thought," he said—that was where the mischief lay, for what right had he to think? "I thought he will surely come out to me and stand, and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" That is why he could not wash in the Jordan, because he would not, but persisted in asking questions, needing to be wiser than God.

O tried Heart, you may believe and I think I may say that you can believe! God is true—you know that—and it cannot be hard to believe when you know that. Christ is able to save—you know He is—so it cannot be difficult to believe in Him. Christ is willing to save—you know He is—then is it hard for you to believe in Him? So I say that you can believe. May God bless you and make you willing to believe, for, if He makes you willing, He will be sure to show you that you are able to believe!

The next class without faith is not one over which we can rejoice so much as over those who are anxious to have faith—I mean *the despairing ones*. There are some souls that feel their sin to be very heavy. They have the Gospel faithfully preached to them, but they are so proud that they will have it that Christ is not willing to save them, so they will not go to Him. There is such a thing as proud humility—when a person feels a sort of self-conception of being base. "No," he says, "I cannot take the medicine. I am too sick." Now that man is as much a suicide, spiritually, as though he took poison, or stabbed himself to death! God says that He is able to save you, but you say that He is not. You are lying in the very teeth of His promise and charging Him to be a liar! The Apostle Paul,

writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says that Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him—yet you, in effect, say, "No, He is not." Why, you are imitating Satan—setting up your wisdom in the place of God's—instead of accepting God's Word as true!

I know that when I first heard that Christ could save such a sinner as I was, I thought the news was too good to be true, but the Holy Spirit led me to trust in Him and then I proved that it was true. If you are a poor miserable beggar and some good man here should say to you, "Come home with me and I will give you a good situation. No, more, I will take you into my home and you shall be my son and heir." You would say, "Well, I can hardly believe it, but I will go and see if it is true." I hope you will say to God, who has promised you far more than that, "Lord, I am as evil a sinner as there is out of Hell, but if You will, You can make me clean. Lord, do it! I give myself to You." And if, poor despairing Soul, you can say, "It is God with whom I have to deal and He can do anything. It is a dying Savior with whom I have to deal and He must be willing to forgive. It is the risen Redeemer of whom I have to think—He can speak peace to my soul and He will do it!" If you can thus trust yourself with Him, you will honor God and you will be saved!

But there is still a larger class in perhaps greater danger. I mean, *the careless and thoughtless*. How many of you have come in here out of a curiosity which may never bring you here again? For you, death is a dream, Heaven a fiction and Hell a bugbear. You know that the Word of God is true, yet you never trouble yourself about its warnings and threats. You say, "Let us eat and drink, and enjoy ourselves," but as for your immortal soul, you have left that to take care of itself as the ostrich leaves its eggs in the wilderness. Permit me, for a minute or two, to show you that I care for your soul even if you do not care for it yourself. You who are indifferent to your spiritual welfare, remember that you belong to the most hopeless class under Heaven! The profane are frequently converted, but the indifferent not so often. I have noticed that those who get into the habit of going first to one place of worship, and then to another, are very rarely saved—yet that is not because they oppose the Truth of God. No, if they would do that, there might be some hope concerning them! When you are at home, take up a flint and an India rubber ball of the same size. Then take a hammer and strike both of them with it. Every time you smite the ball, you make an impression upon it, but it quickly returns to its original shape. When you hit the flint with the hammer, you may produce no impression for a time, but, by-and-by, after one of your blows, it is shivered to atoms. Many of you are like that India rubber ball. Under the preaching of the Gospel, you are interested, moved, affected—but the impression is never very deep and you soon return to your original form—you are shallow with regard to heavenly things. We cannot get at your conscience, we cannot reach your heart—would God that we could!

I pray you to remember, however, that there is a time coming when Death will preach far more effectually to you than I can! I recollect a

narrative of a young woman, a fair and lovely lady, whose mother was very proud of her. She had introduced her into all the fashionable circles of the city. Her dresses were always becoming, but also expensive and even extravagant. She lived only to go to one party and another, and to one amusement and another. Her mother had not observed—for mothers do not like to notice such things—that there had been a great paleness on her daughter's cheeks. A rapid decline set in and, at last, to the mother's terror and the daughter's dismay, the doctor thought it his duty to say that it was impossible that she could live many weeks. Neither mother nor daughter had ever cared for ministers. Religion would have stood in the way of their chosen pursuits, so they avoided it—but now the minister was sent for. He was an earnest, faithful servant of Christ, so, instead of striving to bolster her up with false hopes, he began to talk of death, judgment, eternity and the wrath of God. The young woman deeply felt the force and the truth of his words—and said to her mother, "I cannot think what you have been doing with me. You have led me to believe that these fine dresses and those parties and amusements were all I had to live for! Why did you not tell me I must die? Why did you not bid me prepare for eternity? O my Mother, would that you had told me that I must soon leave this world and enter the eternal state!" She begged them to bring out her last fineries and she said, "Mother, I feel it is too late now, for I shall die, but hang those things up and look at them, and never bring up another child as you have brought me up! And as for yourself, I charge you to think how soon you, too, must die."

So I say to all careless ones here—Think of the grave to which you must go sooner or later. Think of your last hours and of the only true preparation for them. While it is true of you now that you have no faith, may it not be true very long—but may you even now seek and find faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! For, remember that *not* to believe in Christ is to be already exposed to the wrath of God! *Not* to believe in Christ is to be without salvation and already under condemnation! There are many who do not know what it is to have a present salvation, but I bless God that there are also many who do know what a present salvation is! Do you know what it is? Not long ago I was asked this question, "Is it possible for a man to be saved *now*?""Possible? Possible? If it is not possible for him to be saved now, it is not possible for him to he saved at all! But the Apostle Paul assures us that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And no man should give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids until he feels and knows that this present salvation is really his!

Oh, what peace it gives to know that you are now forgiven, now blessed, now saved! Oh, how sweet it is to be able to say that God is my Father, that I am His child and that He will keep me in perfect safety and bring me to be forever where He is! Oh, the delights of this present salvation! It is better than a king's throne—it is better than a prince's riches. Present salvation—it is Heaven on earth! It is the antepast of the peace of immortality! Heaven on earth can only be known by those who are saved and who know that they are saved. May that be your case and mine, Be-

loved! Christ's own words are, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." May God bless us all with the true belief which is eternal life to all who possess it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:1-32.

The teaching of our Lord in this chapter has very much to do with Christianity in connection with this present life, its cares and troubles. God has nowhere promised us exemption from affliction and trial. Indeed, it has been said, with much truth, that the Old Testament promise was one of prosperity, but that the New Testament promise is one of tribulation. You may rest assured that if it had been best for us to be taken directly to Heaven when we were converted, the Lord would have done it! But as He has not done so, there are wise reasons why He keeps His people here for a while. The gold must go through the fire before it has its place in the king's crown—and the wheat must be exposed to the winnowing fan before it can be taken into the heavenly garner.

Verse 1. *In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trampled one another, He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* Hypocrisy, however, of a kind that was calculated to spread like leaven. If you know that a man is a hypocrite, you do not feel inclined to imitate him. But the Pharisees were such well-made hypocrites—such excellent counterfeits—that many people *were* tempted to imitate them! Our Lord teaches us, however, that it is no use being a hypocrite.

2. *For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.* For many a day, the hypocrite's true character may not be discovered but there is a day coming that will reveal all secrets—and woe unto the man whose sin is laid bare in that day!

3. *Therefore whatever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.* It would be well if we all lived in such a fashion that we would not be ashamed to have everything we did placarded in the sky. I have heard of one who said that he would like to have a window in his heart so that everybody might see what was going on. I think that if I had such a window in my heart, I would like to have shutters—and I question whether any man would really wish to have his heart open to the gaze of all mankind! But at least let our lives be such that we should not be ashamed for the Universal Eye to be fixed upon them. If you are ashamed to have any one of your actions known, be ashamed to do it! If you would be ashamed to hear again what you were about to say, do not say it! Check your tongue. Be cautious and careful. Live always as one who realizes God's Omniscience. While one of the ancient orators was speaking on one occasion, all his hearers went away with the exception of Plato—but he continued to speak as eloquently as

ever, for he said that Plato was a sufficient audience for any man. So, if there are none but the eyes of God looking upon you, be just as careful as if you were in the street surrounded by your fellow creatures. No, be more careful because you are in the Presence of your Creator!

4, 5. *And I say unto you My Friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him who after He has killed has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.* And how wise and brave we shall be if we fear God! It is well put in that Psalm which we sometimes sing—

"Fear Him, you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear."

This great filial fear will chase out all the little, mean, cowardly fears, for he who, in the Scriptural sense, fears God, can never be a coward in dealing with men.

6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows.* God does not forget the sparrows, but He regards you with far greater interest and care, for He counts the very hairs of your head. He not only knows that there is such a person, but He knows the minutest details of your life and being. It is always a great comfort to remember that our Heavenly Father knows us. A dying man who had been for many years a Believer had a minister at his bedside who asked him, "Don't you know Jesus?" "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I do, but the ground of my comfort is that He knows me." And surely there is a great force in that Truth of God! Your Heavenly Father knows you so completely that He has counted the hairs of your head! "Fear not therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

8, 9. *Also I say unto you, Whoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.* What courage this ought to give us! In company where the very name of Christ is kicked about like a football—where everything is respected except true religion—it is not always an easy thing to come forward and say, "I, also, am His disciple." But if you will do this, you have Christ's pledge that He will acknowledge you before the angels of God. If you do not do so, but practically deny Him by a shameful silence, you may reasonably expect that He, also, will deny you before the angels.

10. *And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemes against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.* This is one of the very difficult texts of Holy Scripture. We are told, in 1 John 5:16 that "there is a sin unto death," and I would have you very cautious of ever daring to trifle with the Spirit of God since sin against Him is guarded with such special warnings! The flaming sword of Divine Vengeance seems to hang before the very name of the Holy Spirit, so, whatever you do, never trample upon His royal dignity, or blaspheme Him in heart or by lips.

11. *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers.* That is to say, the persecutors—"when they bring you there, to be tried for your lives, as many have been in past ages and some still are."

11, 12. *Take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say.* I have often been amazed and delighted with the remarkable answers which were given to bishops and priests by poor humble men and women who were on trial for their lives. Perhaps you remember that Anne Askew was asked, in order to entangle her in her speech, "What would become of a mouse if it ate the bread of the holy sacrament?" She said that was too deep a question for a poor woman like her to answer and she begged the learned bishop on the bench to tell her what would become of the mouse—to which his lordship answered that it would be damned! Now, what reply could be given to that but the one Anne Askew gave, "Alack, poor mouse!"? I do not know that anything better could have been said! And on other occasions there have been answers which have been deeply theological. And there have been some which have been wisely evasive and also some full of weight. And others full of Grace and the Truth of God, for the Holy Spirit has helped His saints, in time of persecution, to answer well those who have accused them.

13-17. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divides the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you? And He said unto them, Take heed, beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses. And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* There were empty cupboards in the houses of the poor and there were hungry children to be fed—so this man need not have lacked room where he could bestow his fruits!

18-20. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool!* Which was the last thing he thought—he imagined that he was a very wise man! "But God said unto him, You fool!"

20, 21. *This night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.* Here our Savior shows us the frail nature of the tenure upon which we hold all earthly goods and how it is not worthwhile to make these the chief things of our life, for, while they may leave us, we are quite sure, by-and-by, to have to leave them!

22. *And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought.* No undue, anxious thought, for such is the meaning of the word used here. "Take no thought."

22-30. *For your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than food, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you by worrying can add to his stature one cubit? If you then are not able to do that thing which is the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not, and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of a doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* So that, with the knowledge of His guarantees to you that you shall always have enough, why do you need to be care-worn and anxious? I have often looked at birds in a cage and thought of the happiness and carelessness of heart which they seem to exhibit. And yet, if you were to forget to give them water, or if you were to fail to give them seed, how soon they would die! Perhaps the little creature has not enough to last it more than one day, but it goes on singing its tune and leaves all anxiety about tomorrow to those whose business it is to care for it. You would be ashamed to let your bird starve—and will your Heavenly Father let you, who are not His birds, but His children, starve? Oh, no! "Your Father knows that you have need of these things."

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* He does not give you all that you would like to have, but He is going "to give you the Kingdom." He gives the lesser gifts to others, but He is saving up the Kingdom for you! Luther once said, "All the empires of the earth are only so much meal for God's swine—but the treasure is for His children. They may have less meal, but they shall have the Eternal Kingdom." Oh, how blessed are we if, by faith, we know that this is true concerning us! "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"!

—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.

"TO YOU"
NO. 2899

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 9, 1876.

"To you is the word of this salvation sent."
Acts 13:26.

MY text must be read in the light of the 46th verse, or else I may be thought to be guilty of wresting it from its true meaning. Paul originally said to the Jews and proselytes in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, "To *you* is the word of this salvation sent." But they rejected the message and, therefore, the Apostle said to them, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." So, if Paul were now here, he might, in addressing you, use the very same words which he used in addressing Israel of old and say, "To *you* is the word of this salvation sent."

This fact furnishes us with a warning. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the Gospel was first sent to Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, confined His personal ministry almost entirely within the bounds of Palestine and He bade His disciples begin the preaching of the Gospel at Jerusalem—and such was the narrowness which naturally appertained to their nationality that it took a very long time to bring most of the Apostles to preach to any people beside the Jews. In this way the Jews had a full opportunity of knowing the Truth of God, but, because they were blinded by prejudice and sin, they could not see Christ. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, so Paul and the rest of the Apostles turned to the Gentiles. I would solemnly remind you who now have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel that if any nation shall be privileged to have the Gospel sent to it and yet shall continue to reject it, God may turn from that nation as readily as He turned from the Jews—perhaps even more readily than He turned from His ancient and peculiarly favored people, Israel.

If, in this country, men and women continue to go after the idolatrous calves of Ritualism, or turn aside to the modern Sadduceeism of skepticism, it may be that the Lord will remove the candlestick out of its place and that the Word of the Gospel will no longer be sent to us. At present there are many nations to which the Gospel has scarcely been sent by the way of preaching it in their own tongue. They have not yet heard it,

but they must do so, sooner or later. There are other countries that were, at one time, the home of saints to whom Christ's name was known—yet they are now left in the darkness of Popery, or else Mohammedanism has brought the lies of the crescent to take the place of the Truth of the Cross. Go to the ruins of the seven churches of Asia and ask how it is that, as churches, we know nothing of them now—and learn from their doom not to trifle with the Truth of God when it comes to you, nor to judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life lest, perhaps, the messengers of peace should be sent to other lands and the Light of the Gospel should no longer shine upon our highly favored island!

And you, dear Friend—speaking personally to you as an individual rather than to the nation in general—I pray you to take heed that while you are able to hear the Gospel, you also receive it, for it may be that very soon you will be unable to come to the House of Prayer, or your lot may be cast where the Gospel is not faithfully preached and you may have to rue these blessed days in which the Kingdom of God came so near to you, yet you did not enter in! Yes, you may lie a-dying and you may have to lament the Sabbaths that you have wasted and which never will come back to you. And oh, in the next world, with what regret you will have to look back upon the desecrated Sabbaths, the neglected means of Grace and the despised invitations of God's ministers! And you will mourn that you judged yourself unworthy of everlasting life and, therefore, have passed away into that place of woe where Gospel invitations can never reach your ears! I am preaching with the hope that at least some of you may be saved from such a terrible doom as that and that, this very hour, the Gospel which is sent to you may be accepted by you!

There was a little boy whom his mother noticed as always wonderfully attentive to the Word. He would frequently put his hand to his ear so as to catch every word from the preacher. She said to him, "John, why do you do that, my Dear?" He replied, "Did you not hear the minister say, the other Sunday, that if there was any part of the sermon that would be sure to do us good, the devil would try to cause a disturbance just then, so that we might not hear it? So I am determined that if there is anything that is likely to do me good, I will hear it." Any man, or woman, or child who will hear like that, will not hear in vain—that is impossible!

I. My talk will be very simple and not very long. And, first of all, I am going to answer the question, WHAT IS THIS WORD OF SALVATION WHICH IS SENT TO US?

If you read the passage through, as we did just now, you will see that the word of salvation, which is sent to us, is *the testimony that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior*. Paul showed that He was of the seed of David, the Messiah whom God had promised to His people by the Prophets. Jesus of Nazareth was the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the old serpent's head, the One of whom the ancient seers spoke so sweetly and for whom the 12 tribes, watching night and day, waited so long. This is the Messiah, the world's only Hope, the one Redeemer—rightly called the King of the Jews—yet also the Savior of all who believe in Him!

What has this Truth of God to do with you? Why, it has this to do with you—that *through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin!* That same Jesus who was the Son of God, took upon Himself our human nature, lived in this world and worked righteousness. And when the due time came, He took upon Himself the sins of all His people. The Lord laid them upon Him and He carried them up to the Cross and there, upon the tree, He bore the full penalty for all the transgressions of His people. The penalty for sin was death, so Jesus died. And Paul writes, by Inspiration, "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now, because Christ died in the place of the ungodly, the forgiveness of sins is being preached, at this moment, in tens of thousands of places all over the world! Whoever believes in Jesus Christ—that is, simply trust in Him—shall receive at once the forgiveness of all his sins—a complete and irreversible forgiveness by which the whole of his sin is blotted out as when a man strikes his pen through the record of a debt or writes below it, "Settled." All his sin is removed, as when the North wind drives away the cloud and the sky is bright and clear. All his sin is removed, as when the fuller cleanses the filthy garment and makes it white as snow. All his sin is removed forever, "as far as the East is from the West." So who can lay anything to the charge of the man whose sins Christ has forgiven? This forgiveness is preached unto you through the Man, Christ Jesus, even to you who believe on His name!

The word of this salvation is *the proclamation of perfect salvation through the risen Redeemer*, for the Apostle adds, "by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." That is to say, there were some sins which the Law given to Moses never thought of forgiving, but there are no sins which Christ is either unable or unwilling to forgive. The Law of Moses could not, in very deed, put away *any* sin, so fresh sacrifices had to be continually offered under the Mosaic dispensation. "But this Man" whom we preach unto you, "after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God," having no need to present any more sacrifices. So that if you believe on Him, your sins shall be not figuratively, but actually put away forever—and there shall remain to you no more consciousness of sin. Washed in the precious blood of Christ, you shall be whiter than snow and shall enter into Heaven, none daring to accuse you, for who shall accuse the man or woman whom Christ has justified? This is the word of salvation, then, that is sent to you, my dear Friends, as much as to those to whom Paul spoke. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." He shall never perish, for he is forgiven by God and is "accepted in the Beloved."

If there are any of you who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to me that you are like a ship that is derelict—left to the mercy of the winds and waves. O Soul, yours is an unhappy condition for anyone to be in! Though as yet you are not destroyed. Though as yet you are not in Hell, it ought to be misery enough for a man to feel, "I am not under

the direction of God. I have not Christ on board to be my Pilot." Stop, young woman! Stop, young man! If that is the case with you, go no further as you are, but ask the Lord to direct you from this time forth and even forever more! I stand here as a living witness to this fact that it is the highest wisdom and happiness to trust in the Lord! I have relied upon Him since I was 15 years of age and my only grief is that I did not trust Him earlier! But since the hour that brought me to His feet and enabled me to rest in Him, He has been a good Helper, a sure Guide and a blessed Friend to me! And speaking from my own experience, I would entreat my Brothers and Sisters who are younger than I am to delay no longer, but to take my Heavenly Father to be their Guide also! May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, lead you to do so this very hour, for Jesus Christ's sake!

II. Now let us pass on to a second question which is, IN WHAT MANNER IS THIS GOSPEL SENT TO YOU? Let me have your ears and your heart while I try to answer this important question as the Holy Spirit shall guide me.

Well, first, it was sent to you, dear Friend, whoever you may be, *in Christ's universal commission* which He gave to His disciples, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." You are a creature, are you not? Then the Gospel is to be preached to you! Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are a sinner, are you not? Then, Christ came to save you and this faithful saying is worthy of your acceptation! Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His last invitation in the Book of Revelation, says, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Surely, "*whoever will"* must include you, whoever you may be, for you have a will and you can come to Christ if you will—

"Let every mortal ear attend,
And every heart rejoice"—

for, to everyone of woman born—

The trumpet of the Gospel sounds
With an inviting voice."

Young or old, rich or poor, whomever you may be, "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent" by Him who bade us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, saying, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

But it is also sent to you in another sense, for *the preaching of it has actually come to you*. The word of this salvation is sent to every creature under Heaven, but the great mass of mankind has not yet heard it. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent?" O Church of the living God, what a sin lies at your door because they are not sent and, therefore, the heathen do not hear and hence they are not saved! But, "to you," the preacher has come! You have heard the Gospel—some of you from your childhood. Can you recollect the time when you did *not* hear it? You say, sometimes, that it has been dinned into your ears until you are almost weary of it. When we come in-

to the pulpit, we cannot tell you anything fresh—it is just the same old story that you have heard so long. "To you" the word of this salvation has been sent and you have heard it and know what it is!

Perhaps some of you may say to me, "Sir, we live in a place where the Gospel is not preached. We have rank Ritualism in the parish church and nothing but vapid intellectualism in all the Dissenting chapels." I am sorry if that is true, but look here, Sirs—you have all got this Bible, or you can all get it and it will be a stern witness against everyone of you, whether you hear the Gospel preached or not! I suppose that a copy of the Bible is in almost every Englishman's house—I wonder whether there is one home in this land without it—there should not be. Well, then, as long as this invaluable preacher is with you—as long as you can read the Word of God in your home, or in the field, or in the barn or the shop—to you, indeed, is the word of this salvation sent!

Further, I believe that, *to some people, the Gospel is sent in a yet more remarkable manner*. Possibly the very fact that you are here, at this service, is one of the many instances in which the Gospel has been sent to you. There was a young man, some years ago, who dishonored his father's name in the village where he lived—a scapegrace, as they called him—and he ran away from home to a distant land. He came to London and went on board a vessel, at the docks, expecting to sail. This was on a Saturday, but an "accident" occurred and the ship was delayed, so he had a Sunday in London. He remembered that his father had often spoken of the Tabernacle, so he enquired the way and came here—an utterly ungodly young man. Some months after, in a letter which he wrote to his home, his father was surprised to find that he was commencing to preach the Gospel. He said that on that Sunday night when he came here, the Lord met with him and saved him. That was a blessed "accident" that kept him from sailing on the Saturday and that brought him here to listen to the Gospel of Jesus!

I never know who may be in my congregation. Ah, Tom, you scapegrace, I should not wonder, as you have come in here, if there was another wonder in store for you! And I trust that the Lord has sent the Gospel to you by that singular Providence which has brought you among us! Out of this crowd there must be some who are here under very peculiar circumstances. Some of you have come up from the country and you have been persuaded by friends to come here. I do not know you, or anything about you, but my Lord does and I trust that to you is the word of this salvation sent by the very Providence which has brought you here! A child takes the seed of a weed, when it is fully ripe, and blows upon it in sheer sport—away go the little parachutes, bearing the seeds through the air—and you may find that weed over hill and dale miles away! We, though not little children, take the Divine Seed of the Truth of God and, with our anxious, but believing breath, we blow it abroad in this congregation. Where that seed may fall, we cannot tell. It may fall upon some stranger from the backwoods of Canada, or some Brother from a great city of America, or some lonely worker who has been toiling far away in

India, or on some at home, unknown to us, who, nevertheless, shall receive into good soil the seed, not of a weed, but of a precious flower of God! And if the world is not sooner brought to its close, even a thousand years hence there may be plants growing that can trace their spiritual parentage to the sowing of tonight! O young man, young woman, worker for Christ—you can never tell the infinite issues of what seemed so small a matter as the sowing of the good Seed of the Kingdom!

Sometimes God sends the Truth very specially home to the heart and conscience of the hearer by the singularity of the preacher's words. He has been guided by the Holy Spirit to paint the man's portrait to the life and the man has been astounded at it. He has imagined that somebody must have informed the preacher about him, yet the speaker was, all the while, quite innocent of the man's affairs. "Why, the very words I have used," says he, "and the inmost thoughts of my heart were laid bare!" Do you not know that this is one of the characteristics of the Word of God? Paul says that it "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If anything in the preaching at any time comes right home to you—as though the preacher looked right into you, knew all about you and reckoned you up as a boy does a sum in arithmetic on His slate—do not begin to wonder how it is done, but realize that, in this way, "to you is the word of this salvation sent." Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now arrest some of you—laying His hand of Grace upon your shoulder as the sheriff's officer does when he arrests a man in the name of the law! May the Lord say to you, "You are My prisoner. You shall give your heart to Me. Make haste and come down and receive Me into your heart, for there I must dwell forever"—

"Thus the eternal counsel ran—
'Almighty Grace, arrest that man!'"—

And when the eternal counsel so runs and the Divine decree so determines, so shall it be, for the Lord God is mighty to save and none shall be able to withstand the power of His Omnipotent Grace!

III. Now, thirdly, I am going to keep to the same theme, yet to touch another string while I reply to this question—IN WHAT POSITION DOES THE GOSPEL PLACE A MAN WHEN IT COMES TO HIM?

The word of this salvation has been sent to many of you. In what position does it put you? Well, first, *in a position of great indebtedness*, for you owe—I dare not try to calculate how much—God for sending the Gospel to you. That there should be a Gospel to send to you—that Christ should be given for you—that His precious blood should be shed for you—that there should be full and free forgiveness for you, though you feel that you are altogether undeserving of it—all this makes up a stupendous favor from God. May you never dare to thrust it from you!

Then think of what you owe to the Providence that has sent the Gospel to you. For you, dear Friends, Apostles lived, labored, suffered and journeyed so that even to these distant isles of Britain the Gospel of Jesus might be brought. For you Reformers battled, bled and died that they

might dispel the darkness of error and falsehood and bring out the Light of the Truth of God. For you, martyrs suffered by the thousands! Go to Smithfield and recall what your brave sires endured in order that their sons might have the Gospel freely preached to them—that very Gospel which many of them despise! Wonderful have been the arrangements of Divine Providence to keep the Light of Truth burning in these lands!

The fact that at this moment you are hearing the Gospel preached imposes a great obligation upon you. Who built this place, but for the most part generous Christian people—who are even now praying for your conversion—God's servants who love you and desire your eternal welfare? And, though I ask no thanks of you, yet does my soul yearn over you, poor Soul, longing that you may find the Savior as I have found Him and be as happy in Him as I am. Well, you cannot be thought of and loved by others thus, you cannot have the great wheels of Divine Providence continually revolving to bring the Gospel to you and, above all—transcendently above all—you cannot have the Lord Jesus Christ bleeding on Calvary's Cross that there may be a Gospel to preach to you without your being put under very solemn obligations!

Further, the fact that you have the Gospel sent to you *puts you into a very hopeful position*. I like to think about how many people are going to be saved every time the Gospel is faithfully preached. It is not preached in vain—we deliver a message from God that never misses the mark at which He aimed! We are sure that it is so, for we preach it in faith. We always expect to hear of sinners being saved and we are never disappointed, nor shall we ever be while we can preach the Truth of God with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. It is in His power that we preach, far we have sought the aid of the Holy Spirit! And thousands of you have sought His aid, too, and we have not sought in vain as we look for conversions and we, therefore, feel, dear Friends, that you are in a hopeful condition—and we believe that many of you will be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!

But remember—and here let me throw the whole emphasis of my soul into my message—*you are put into a very responsible position,* for if the Gospel is thus brought to you and you reject it, it will be a savor of death unto death to you! To every person to whom the word of this salvation comes, I have to say, in my Master's name—If you are not saved by it, you will have the blood of your soul on your own skirts. Woe unto you if you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life and declare that you will not have Christ to reign over you! Woe unto you if you are disobedient and stumble at this stumbling-stone! Ah, my dear Hearers, it may seem but a trifling thing to you to hear the Gospel, but this makes your position very different from what it would otherwise have been! The Last Great Day will call me to account for every word I utter in delivering my Master's message—and it will also call each one of you to account for the reception or rejection of that message! You young men and young women, and you graybeards will have to answer in that day for the way you deal with tonight's message! You will not be able to excuse yourselves by

saying, "We never heard of pardon through the blood of Jesus." You will not be able to say, "The preacher did not proclaim the Gospel to us. He gave us some fine language and tried to play the orator—and finished off with a grand display of fireworks." You will never be able to truthfully say that! You know that there is nothing that I desire but to set Christ plainly before you and to beseech, entreat and implore you to put your trust in Him, for He is worthy of all the trust of your heart!

So, have done with all other confidences and with the love of sin—and lay hold on eternal life! But, whether you will do so or not, you can be sure of this—to you is the word of this salvation sent and the Kingdom of God has come near to you!

IV. My last question is this. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO TREAT THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION, NOW THAT IT IS SENT TO YOU?

First, *are any of you going to contradict it and blaspheme it*? I trust not, although that sin is not an uncommon one nowadays. Yet I most sincerely hope that I am not addressing one who blasphemes the Christ who died for sinners—such love as His ought to be free from blasphemy!

If you do not commit that sin, I fear that you may say, as so many others have said before you, "*I will think of it tomorrow*." You do not really mean to think of it if you talk like that. When Felix said to Paul, "Go your way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for you," what he meant was, "I do not want to listen to you any longer; you are a nuisance to me." Let me put the matter to you very plainly. You either love Christ or do not love Him—which is it? That "tomorrow" plea is a lie! Satan has invented it in order that he may enable men to reject Christ and yet flatter their souls with the notion that they are not doing so. Come, then, it may be that this is the last time the question will ever be put to you in this fashion. I have you, as it were, by the button-hole now and, as the "Ancient Mariner" detained the wedding guest with his weird story, so would I hold you with this earnest personal pressure upon your heart and conscience! Do you mean to give Christ the go-by, or not? Remember that the bell shall toll before long for you—and six feet of earth shall hold down each one who comes to this Tabernacle and who now sits and listens to the word of this salvation!

Oh, whatever you do, do not procrastinate! Say, "No," if you mean, "No." Say "Yes," if God the Holy Spirit enables you to say it, but do not say it as some have too readily done in certain revival services, without fully considering the matter! They have jumped into religion and jumped out again just as quickly. Like the rocky-ground hearers, the seed quickly sprang up and there was the green blade, but there was no depth of earth, so it soon withered away. Ask the Lord to plow your soul and to break up the soil of your heart that there may be roothold for the good Seed of the Kingdom!

And, in order to attain to this end, look right away from yourself to Jesus—away from your repenting, pleading and chapel attendance and anything else—to Jesus only, with that true faith which has nothing to do with anything but the finished work of the Christ who says, "Look unto

Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Do not trust to going into enquiry-rooms and talking with earnest evangelists and other Christian workers. If you would be saved, your soul must come to grappling terms with Christ—and Christ must come to close terms with you—otherwise you will be none the better for having heard the Gospel! Indeed, the very fact that you have heard it will only increase your condemnation!

I think I hear someone say, "Gladly would I have Him now! I would give my eyes to have Him." Well, you need not give your eyes, or anything else—you may have Him for nothing! I have told you the story of the vessel that was out at sea, as the captain thought, but he was out of his reckoning. They ran short of water, they had not a drop to drink. So at last they hailed a vessel and, speaking through the trumpet the captain cried, "We need water! We are perishing for lack of water." Imagine his surprise when there came across the wave this reply, "Dip it up! You are in the river Amazon! It is fresh water all round you. Dip it up!" You perhaps think that you are out on the salt sea, but you are not—God's mercy is all around you! Throw your bucket overboard; dip it up! Trust in Jesus—

"Only trust Him! Only trust Him!
He will save you now!
Only trust Him, Only trust Him!
He will save you now!"

Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." That was Paul's answer to the question and I cannot give you a better one. Believing does not take a week, or even a minute. Your heart rests and relies on Christ and Christ saves your heart. See me leaning here, with all my weight, upon this platform rail? Lean so upon Christ, with all your weight. Have done with everything but Jesus—and when you have believed on Him, then obey Him by being baptized in His name, for He put belief and Baptism together when He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

So, accept the whole of the Gospel and keep to the command of Christ in every point—and then you may look to the faithful God to fulfill His promise that you shall be saved! The Lord bless you and save every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 13:13-49.

Verse 13. *Now when Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.* "John"—that is, John Mark, as we see by chapter 15:37.

14, 15. *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue went unto them, saying, You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say so.* The rulers of the synagogue

had noticed them as strangers coming in and perceived that they were Jews, probably by their wearing the same kind of garments as other Jews did.

16. *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience.* Or, rather, "and you Gentile proselytes, give audience."

17. *The God of this people of Israel choose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm He brought them out of there.* It is always well to begin with our hearers upon some common ground. So, wishing to persuade these people to receive the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, Paul begins with that which was always attractive to their ears—the history of their nation—with a special mention of the peculiar favor which God had shown to His chosen people, Israel, in bringing them up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.

18-21. *And about the time of forty years He put up with their manners in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave unto them Judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the Prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.* Do you not sometimes hear people speak disparagingly about certain parts of Scripture and say, "Oh, that is the historical part"? Dear Friends, never fall into the error of thinking less of one part of Scripture than of another, but remember that "all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the men of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This sermon by Paul is a rehearsal of Old Testament history—and he would not have spoken unprofitably—you may depend upon that! I would urge you to bear a protest *against* the method which seems to be springing up, nowadays, of saying, "That part of the Bible is for the Jews." Or, "That particular Epistle"—for they speak thus even of the New Testament—"is not for us." It is *all* for us and we are to seek to profit by every word of it, praying the Holy Spirit to apply it to our hearts!

22-25. *And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will. Of this man's seed has God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Savior—Jesus—after John had first preached before His coming, the Baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Who do you think I am? I am not He. But, behold, there comes One after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loosen.* Paul went on with his narrative as far as the history of Saul and David—and so he came to great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had come by way of Old Testament history to Christ and by way of John the Baptist to Christ—and that is how the preacher of the Gospel should

travel. On whatever road he journeys, his terminus must be Christ. The motto of all true servants of God must be, "WE PREACH CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED." A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without flour in it! No Christ in your sermon, Sir? Then go home and never preach again until you have something worth preaching!

26. *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever among you fears God.* Or, "is a proselyte to God."

26, 27. *To you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the Prophet which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.* See how easy it is for people to hear the Bible read and yet to know very little about what it contains? They may have the lessons read every Sabbath in their hearing and yet they may not understand anything that is in them. They may even become great readers of the Scriptures, yet not come to Christ as it was with those to whom the Lord Jesus said—"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. But you will not come to Me, that you might have life." If you are content with merely reading or hearing the Scriptures and do not come to Christ, Himself, you stop short of salvation! Yes, you stay in a position where you may be capable of the grossest sin—as were these people at Antioch in Pisidia.

28-37. *And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. But God raised Him from the dead: and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the Second Psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give You the sure mercies of David. Why He says also in another Psalm, You shall not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.* Note how Paul keeps to Scripture! An Inspired Apostle, himself, yet He appealed to the Old Testament to support his case. That was the best argument he could possibly use with Jews—and often it will be the best that we can use with Gentiles.

38-42. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the proverb; Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the*

synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. They did not mind hearing sermons twice in those days! We are not often asked to preach the same sermon over again. But these people wanted to know the Truth of God and, therefore, they asked to have it repeated. If our people will not receive the Gospel the first time we preach it, we must tell it to them over and over again. With the hammer of the Word of God, we must strike the same nail on the head again and again. Even if we do not utter the same words there must always be the same Subject, Sabbath by Sabbath and week by week.

43-46. *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the Grace of God. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spoke against these things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold.* Though Jews themselves, they could not bear to see the bigotry of their nation.

46. *And said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* And a blessed turning it has been for you, dear Friends, and for me!

47-49. *For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 504, 521.
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

HOW GOD COMES TO MAN
NO. 2900

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1904.

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"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you?" Genesis 3:8, 9.

"How will God come to us now that we have rebelled against Him?" That is a question which must have greatly perplexed our first parents. They may have said to one another, "Perhaps God will not come to us at all and then we shall be orphans, indeed. If spared to live on, we must continue to live without God and without hope in the world." It would have been the worst thing that could have happened to our race if God had left this planet to take its own course and had said, concerning the people upon it, "I will leave them to their own way, for they are given over to idols."

But if He came to our first parents, in what way would He come? Surely Adam and Eve must have feared that He would be accompanied by the angels of vengeance to destroy them straight away, or, at any rate, to bind them in chains and fetters forever. So they questioned among themselves, "Will He come and if He does, will His coming involve the total destruction of the human race?" Their hearts must have been sorely perplexed within them while they were waiting to see what God would do to them as a punishment for the great sin they had committed. I believe they thought that He would come to them. From their past experience they knew so much of His graciousness that they felt sure that He would come. Yet they also understood so much of His holy anger against sin that they must have been afraid of His coming—so they went and hid themselves among the trees of the garden although every tree must have upbraided them for their disobedience, for everyone of the trees would seem to say, "Why do you come here? You have eaten of the fruit of the tree of which you were forbidden to partake. You have broken your Maker's command and His sentence of death has already gone out against you. When He comes, He will certainly come to deal with you in judgment according to His faithful word—and when He does, what will become of you?" Every leaf, as it rustled, must have startled and alarmed them. The

breath of the evening breeze, as it passed through the garden, must have filled them with fear and dread as to the doom awaiting them.

Now, "in the cool of the day," or, as the Hebrew has it, "in the wind of the evening," when the evening breeze was blowing through the garden, God came. It is difficult for us to even imagine how He revealed Himself to our first parents. I suppose He condescended to take upon Himself some visible form. It was "the voice of the Lord God" they heard in the garden and you know that it is the Word of God who has been pleased to make Himself visible to us in human flesh. He may have assumed some form in which they could see Him, otherwise, as a pure Spirit, God could not have been recognized either by their ears or their eyes.

They heard His voice speaking as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day. And when He called to Adam, albeit that there was righteous anger in the tone of His voice, yet His words were very calm and dignified and, as far as they could be, even tender, for, while you may read the words thus, "Adam, where are you?" You may also read them thus, "Where are you, poor Adam, where are you?" You may put a tone of pity into the words and yet not misread them. So the Lord comes thus in gentleness in the cool of the day and calls them to account. He patiently listens to their wicked excuses and then pronounces upon them a sentence, which, heavy though it is towards the serpent and heavy though it is towards all who are not saved by the woman's wondrous Seed, yet has much mercy mingled with it in the promise that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent—a promise which must have shone in their sad and sinful souls as some bright particular star shines in the darkness of the night!

I learn from this incident that God will come to sinful men, sooner or later, and we may also learn from the way in which He came to our first parents, how He is likely to come to us. His coming will be different to different men, but we gather, from this incident, that God will certainly come to guilty men even if He waits till the cool of the day. And we are also able to understand a little about the way in which He will ultimately come to all men.

Remember this, Sinner, however far you may get away from God, you will have to come close to Him one of these days! You may go and pluck the fruit that He forbids you to touch and then you may go and hide yourself among the thick trees in the forest and think that you have concealed yourself—but you will have to come face to face with your Maker at some time or other! It may not be today, or tomorrow. It may not be until "the cool of the day" of time. No, it may not be till time, itself, shall be no more—but, at last, you will have to confront your Maker! Like the comet that flies far off from the sun, wandering into space for an altogether inconceivable distance and yet has to come back again, however long the time its circuit takes—so you will have to come back to God, either willingly, repentantly, believingly, or else unwillingly and in chains to receive your sentence of doom from the lips of the Almighty whom you have provoked to anger by your sin! God and you have to meet as surely as you are now living—at some time or other, each one of you must hear

the voice of the Lord God saying to you, as He said to Adam, "Where are you?"

Now, from this meeting between God and fallen man, I learn a few lessons which I will pass on to you as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. The first is this. When God did meet with fallen man, it was not until the cool of the day. This suggests to me GOD'S GREAT PATIENCE WITH THE GUILTY.

Whether Adam and Eve sinned in the early morning, or in the middle of the day, or toward evening, we do not know. It is not necessary that we should know this, but it is probable that the Lord God allowed an interval to intervene between the sin and the sentence. He was not in a hurry to come because He could not come except in anger to bring their sins home to them. You know how quick the tempers of some men are. If they are provoked, it is a word and a blow with them, for they have no patience. It is our littleness that makes us impatient. God is so great that He can endure far more than we can. And though our first parents' sin greatly provoked Him—and it is to His Glory that He is so holy that He cannot look upon iniquity without indignation—yet He seemed to say to Himself, "I must go and call these two creatures of Mine to account for their sin. Yet judgment is My strange work—it is mercy in which I delight. This morning I drew back the curtains that had shielded them during the night and poured the sunlight in upon them, not a second beyond the appointed time, and I was glad to do it. And all day long I have been showering mercies upon them and the refreshing night-dews are already beginning to fall upon them. I will not go down to them till the latest possible moment. I will put it off till the cool of the day." God will do nothing in the heat of passion—everything shall be deliberate, calm, majestic and Divine!

The fact that God did not come to question His sinful creatures till the cool of the day ought to teach us the greatness of His patience and it should also teach us to be patient with others. How wondrously patient God has been with some of you who are here! You have lived many years and enjoyed His mercies, yet you have scarcely thought about Him. Certainly, you have not yielded your hearts to Him. But He has not yet come to deal with you in judgment. He has waited 20 years for you young people—30 years, 40 years, for you middle-aged folk—50 years, 60 years for you who are getting past that period and perhaps 70 years, or even 80 years He has been known to tarry for, "He delights in mercy," but He does not delight in judgment! Seventy years form a long life, yet many persons spend all that time in perpetrating fresh sin. Called to repentance over and over again, they only become the more impenitent through resisting the call of mercy. Favored with blessings as many as the sands of the seashore, they only prove themselves the more ungrateful by failing to appreciate all those blessings.

It is amazing that God is willing to wait till the cool of such a long, long day of life as 70 or 80 years make up! How patient, then, we ought to be with one another! Yet are you, parents, always patient with your children—your young children who may not have willingly or consciously

offended you? What patience you ought always to exercise towards them! And have you a like patience towards a friend or a brother who may use rough speech and provoke you? Yet such your patience ought to be. Never should we take our brother by the throat and say to him, "Pay me what you owe," so long as we find God deliberately waiting till the cool of the day before He comes to those who have offended Him—and even then uttering no more words of anger than should be uttered and mingling even those words with mercy that has no boundaries!

II. The second thing that I gather from the Lord's coming to Adam and Eve in the cool of the day is HIS DIVINE CARE FOR THE GUILTY.

Though He did not come till the cool of the day, thus manifesting His patience, He did come then, thus manifesting His care for those who had sinned against Him. He might have left them all night long—all night long without their God—all night long without Him after they had done just what He had forbidden them to do. All night long—a sleepless night, a fearful night, a night that would have been haunted with a thousand fears—all night long with this great battle trembling in the balance, with the great question of their punishment unsolved and an indefinable dread of the future hanging over them! Many of you know that the trial of being kept in suspense is almost worse than any other trouble in the world. If a man knew that he had to be beheaded, it would be easier for him to die at once than to have to kneel with his neck on the block and the gleaming axe lifted up above him, not knowing when it might fall. Suspense is worse than death! We seem to feel a thousand deaths while we are kept in suspense of one. So God would not leave Adam and Eve in suspense through the whole night after they had sinned against Him, but He came to them in the cool of the day.

There was this further reason why He came to them—notwithstanding the fact that they had disobeyed Him and that He would have to punish them, He remembered that they were still His creatures. He seemed to be saying within Himself, "What shall I do to them? I must not utterly destroy them, but how can I save them? I must carry out My threat, for My word is true, yet I must also see how I can spare them, for I am gracious and My Glory is to be increased by the display of My Grace towards them." The Lord looked upon them as the appointed progenitors of His elect and regarded Adam and Eve, also, let us hope, as His elect whom He loved notwithstanding their sin So He seemed to say, "I will not leave them all night without the promise which will brighten their gloom." It was only one promise and, perhaps, it was not clearly understood by them—still, it was a promise of God, even though it was spoken to the serpent—"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." So, not one night were God's poor fallen creatures left without at least one star to gleam in the darkness for them and thus He showed His care for them.

And still, dear Friends, though God is slow to anger, yet He is always ready to pardon and very tender and compassionate even when He has to pass sentence upon the guilty. "He will not always chide; neither will He

keep His anger forever." You can see His care and consideration even for the most unworthy of us because He has not cut us off in our sin! We are—

"Not in torment, not in Hell."

We can see the marks of His goodness in the very garments on our backs and the food of which we partake by His bounty. Many of His gifts come not merely to those who do not deserve them, but to those who deserve to be filled with the gall and wormwood of Almighty Wrath!

III. Now, thirdly, I want to show you that WHEN THE LORD DID COME, HE AFFORDED US A PATTERN OF HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD COMES TO AWAKEN THE CONSCIENCES OF MEN.

I have already said that sooner or later God will come to confront each one of us. I pray that if He has never come to you, dear Friend, in the way of awakening your conscience and making you feel yourself a sinner, He may come to you very speedily. And when He does come to awaken you—it is somewhat in this way.

First, *He comes seasonably*—"in the cool of the day." Adam's work was done and Eve had no more to do until the next day. At that hour they had been accustomed, in happier times, to sit down and rest. Now God comes to them and the Spirit of God, when He comes to awaken men, generally visits them when they have a little time for quiet thought. You dropped in and heard a sermon—the most of it slipped from your memory, but there were some few words that struck you so that you could not get rid of them. Perhaps, though, you thought no more about the message to which you had listened. Something else came in and took your attention. But a little while later you had to watch all night by the bedside of a sick friend—and then God came to you and brought to your remembrance the words that you had forgotten. Or it may be that some texts of Scripture which you learned when you were a child began to speak to you throughout the watches of the night. Or perhaps you were going along a country road or, it may be that you were out at sea on a dark night and the billows rolled heavily so that you could not sleep—and you even feared that you would be swallowed up by the raging sea—then—*then* came the Voice of the Lord God speaking personally to you! When other voices were silenced, there was an opportunity for His voice to be heard!

Not only did the Lord come to Adam and Eve seasonably, but *He spoke to Adam personally* and said, "Where are *you*?" One of the great mistakes in connection with all preaching is that so many hearers will persist in lending other people their ears. They hear a faithful Gospel sermon and they say, "That message would fit neighbor So-and-So admirably! What a pity Mrs. So-and-So did not hear it! That would have been the very word for her." Yes, but when God comes to *you*, as He came to Adam and Eve—and if you are not converted I pray that He may—the sermon He will deliver to you will be, every word of it, for you! He will say, "Adam," or, "John," or, "Mary," or whatever your name is, "where are *you*?" The question will be addressed to you, alone! It will have no relation to any of your neighbors, but to you, alone. The question may take some such

form as this—"Where are you? What have you been doing? What is your condition now? Will you now repent, or will you still go on in your sins?" Have not you, young man, had some such experience as this? You went to the theater, but when you came home you said that you had not enjoyed it and that you wished you had not gone. You went to bed, but you could not sleep. It seemed as if God had come to wrestle with you and to reason with you about your past life, bringing up one thing after another in which you have sinned against Him. At all events, this is the way He deals with many—and if He deals thus with you, be thankful for it and yield yourself up to Him—do not struggle against Him!

I am always glad when men cannot be happy in the world, for, as long as they can be, they will be. It is always a great mercy when they begin to be sick of the dainties of Egypt, for then we may lead them, by God's guidance, to seek after the milk and honey of the land of Canaan—but not till then. It is a great blessing when the Lord puts before you, personally, a true view of your own condition in His sight—and makes you look at it earnestly, concentrating your whole thought upon it—so that you cannot even begin to think about others because you are compelled to examine yourself, to see what your real condition is in relation to God!

When the Lord thus comes to men and speaks personally with them, *He makes them realize their lost condition.* Do you not see that this is implied in the question, "Where are you?" Adam was lost—lost to God, lost to holiness, lost to happiness. God, Himself, says, "Where are you?"That was to let Adam know this, "I have lost you, Adam. At one time I could speak with you as with a friend, but I cannot do so any longer. You were once My obedient child, but you are not so now. I have lost you. Where are you?" May God the Holy Spirit convince every unconverted person here that he or she is lost—not only lost to themselves, to Heaven, to holiness and to happiness—but lost to God! It was God's lost ones of whom Christ so often spoke. He was, Himself, the Good Shepherd who called together His friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost." And He represents His Father saying of His son when He has come back to Him, "'This, My son was dead'—dead to Me—'and is alive again. He was lost'—lost to Me, 'and is found.'" The value of a soul to God and God's sense of loss in the case of each individual soul is something worth thinking over and worth calculating, if it can be calculated. God makes man realize that he is lost by His own moans and pleas, even as He said to Adam, "Where are you?"

You will observe, too, that the Lord not only came to Adam and questioned him personally, but *He also made Adam answer Him.* And if the Lord has, in this way, laid hold of any of you, talking with you in the cool of the day and questioning you about your lost condition, He will make you confess your sin and bring you to acknowledge that it was really your own. He will not leave you as Adam wanted to be left—namely, laying the blame for the disobedience upon Eve. And He will not leave you as Eve tried to be left—namely, passing the blame on to the devil! Before the Lord has done with you, He will bring you to the point that you shall feel, confess and acknowledge that you are really guilty of your own sin

and that you must be punished for it. When He brings you down to that point and you have nothing at all to say for yourself, then He will pardon you!

I remember well when the Lord brought me to my knees in this way and emptied out all my self-righteousness and self-trust until I felt that the hottest place in Hell was my due desert—and that if He saved everybody else, but did not save me—yet He would still be just and righteous, for I had no right to be saved! Then, when I was obliged to feel that it must be all of Grace, or else there could be no salvation for me—then He spoke tenderly and kindly to me. But at first, there did not seem to be any tenderness or pity to my soul. There was the Lord coming to me, laying bare my sin, revealing to me my lost condition and making me shiver and tremble while I feared that the next thing He would say to me would be, "Depart from Me, accursed one, into everlasting fire in Hell!" Instead, He said to me in tones of wondrous love and graciousness, "I have put you among My children. 'I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.'" Blessed be the name of the Lord, forever and ever, for such amazing treatment as this meted out to the guilty and the lost!

IV. Now, fourthly, and very solemnly, I want to show you that THIS COMING OF THE LORD TO ADAM AND EVE IS ALSO PROPHETICAL OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE WILL COME AS A JUDGING SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO REJECT HIM AS AN AWAKENING SPIRIT.

I have already reminded you unconverted ones that as surely as you live, you will have to come to close terms with God like the rest of us. Sooner or later you will have to know Him—and to know that He knows you. There will be no way of escaping from an interview which will be most serious and most terrible for you. It will happen "in the cool of the day." I do not know when that may be. On my way to this service I called to see a young lady to whom, "the cool of the day" has come at twenty-five, or thirty years of age. Consumption has made her life a comparatively short one, but, blessed be God, His Grace has made it a very happy one and she is not afraid, "in the cool of the day," to hear the voice of the Lord God calling her Home! It is well that she is not afraid, but you who have not believed in Jesus will have to hear that same Divine Voice in the cool of your life's day! You may be spared to grow old—the strength of youth and of manhood will have gone and you will begin to lean on your staff and to feel that you have not the vigor you used to have—and that you cannot do such a hard day's work as you used to do and you must not attempt to run up the hills as you once did. That will be "the cool of the day" to you—and then the Lord God will come in to you and say, "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live."

Sometimes that cool of the day comes to a man just when he would have liked it to be the heat of the day. He is making money and his children are multiplying around him, so he wants to stay in this world a little longer. But that cannot be—he must go up to his bed and he must lie there for so many days and nights—and then he must hear the voice of the Lord God as He begins to question him and say, "Where are you in

relation to Me? Have you loved Me with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? Have you served Me? Are you reconciled to Me through the death of My Son?" Such questions as these will come to us as surely as God made us! And we shall have to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. I pray you to think of these things and not to say, "Ah, that will not happen just yet." That is more than any of us can tell—and let me remind you that life is very short even at the longest. I am especially appealing to those who are of my own age. Do not you, dear Friends, find that when you are between 40 and 50 years of age the weeks seem to be much shorter than they used to be when you were young? I therefore gather that when our friends are 70 or 80 years of age—time must seem far shorter to them than it ever was before! I think that one reason why Jacob, when he was a 130 years old, said to Pharaoh, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life," was simply this—that he was really such an old man, though not as old as his ancestors, that time seemed even shorter to him than it did to younger men. If that was so, then I suppose that the longer a man lives, the shorter time would appear to be. But, short or long, your share of it will soon be over and you will be called upon to gather up your feet in bed and meet your fathers' God.

When that solemn and decisive hour comes, your interview with God will have to be a personal one. Sponsors will be of no use to anyone upon a dying bed! It will be of no use, then, to call upon Christian friends to take a share of your burden. They will not be able to give you of their oil, for they have not enough Divine Grace for themselves and you. If you live and die without accepting the aid of the one Mediator between God and man, all these questions will have to be settled between your soul and God without anyone else coming between yourself and your Maker! And all this may happen at any moment. This personal talk between God and your soul at the end of your life may be ordained to take place this very night—and I am sent, as a forerunner, to give you this warning so that you may not meet your God altogether by surprise, but may, at any rate, be invited and exhorted to be prepared for that great interview!

Whenever that interview takes place, God will deal with you in solemn earnestness—personally bringing home your sin to you. You will be unable to deny it, for there will be One present at that interview who has seen it all—and the enquiries which He will make about the state of your soul will be very searching ones. He will not merely ask about one sin, but about *all* your sins. He will not only ask about your public life, but also about your *private* life—nor yet merely enquire about your doings, but about your sayings, your willings and your thinking—and about your whole position in relation to Himself, even as He asked Adam, "Where are you?"

In imagination—I pray that it may be only in imagination—I see some of you die unsaved. And I see you as you pass into the next world unpardoned and your soul realizes, for the first time, what was the experience of the rich man, of whom our Savior said, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes"—

as though he had been asleep and had only just awakened to his true condition! "He lifted up his eyes" and gazed all around, but he could see nothing except that which caused him dismay and horror! There was no trace of joy or hope, no trace of ease or peace. Then, through the awful gloom, there came the sound of such questions as these, "Where are you, Sinner? You were in a House of Prayer a few weeks ago and the preacher urged you to seek the Lord, but you procrastinated! Where are you now? You said that there was no such place as Hell, but what do you say about it now? Where are you? You despised Heaven and refused Christ—where are you now?" What horror will seize the disembodied spirit as it reflects that it has brought itself into the condition of which it was warned—and from which it was invited to escape—but which it willfully chose for itself, thus committing eternal suicide! The Lord in mercy preserve all of you from doing that! But if you *will* do it, then shall come forth from the lips of the justly offended God the irrevocable sentence, "Depart from Me, you cursed."

One of the most dreadful things in connection with this meeting of God with Adam was that Adam had to answer the Lord's questions. The Lord said to Him, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" In our courts of law we do not require men to answer questions which would incriminate them, but God does. And at the Last Great Day the ungodly will be condemned on their own confession of guilt! While they are in this world they put on a bronze face and declare that they have done no wrong to anybody—not even to God. They say they pay their way and they are as good as their neighbors—better than the most of them! But all their brag and bravado will be gone at the Day of Judgment and they will either stand speechless before God—and by their speechlessness acknowledge their guiltiness in His sight—or if they do speak, their vain excuses and apologies will but convict them! They will, out of their own mouths, condemn themselves like that wicked and slothful servant who was cast into the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth! God grant that we may never know, from sad personal experience, what that expression means!

V. Now, lastly, this meeting of God with Adam should lead us who believe in Christ to EXPECT TO MEET HIM ON THE MOST LOVING TERMS, for if even when He came to question guilty Adam and to pass sentence upon him, He did it so gently and mingled with the thunder of His wrath the soft shower of His Grace when He gave the promise that "the Seed of the woman" should bruise the serpent's head, may we not expect Him to meet us, by-and-by, on the most loving terms if we are in that woman's Seed and have been saved by Jesus Christ, His Son?

He will come in the evening, Brothers and Sisters, when the day's work is done, so do not fret about the burden and heat of the day. The longest and hottest day will come to an end—you will not live here forever. You will not always have to wear your fingers to the bone in trying to earn a scanty livelihood! You will not always have to look round upon your children and wonder where the bread will be found with which to feed them! No, the days on earth cannot last forever and, with many of

you the sun has already climbed the hill and begun to go down the other side—"the cool of the day" will soon come! I can look upon a good many of you who have already reached that period. You have retired from active service, you have shaken off a good deal of business care and now you are waiting for your Master to come to you. Rest assured that He will not forget you, for He has promised to come to you. You will hear His voice before long, telling you that He is walking in the garden and coming to you. Good old Rowland Hill, when he found himself getting very feeble, said, "I hope they have not forgotten poor old Rowley up there." But he knew that he was not forgotten! Nor will you be, Beloved.

You will hear your Lord's voice before long and the mercy is that you will know it when you do hear it! Have you not often heard it before now? Many a time, in this house, you have heard His voice and you have been glad. In the cool of many an evening you have sat still and communed with God. I like to see an old Christian woman with her big Bible open, sitting by the hour together and tracing with her finger the precious Words of the Lord—eating them, digesting them, living on them and finding them sweeter to her soul than honey or the droppings of the honeycomb to her taste! Well, then, as you have heard your Lord's voice and know its tones so well. As you have been so long accustomed to hear it, you will not be astonished when you hear it in those last moments of your life's day! You will not run to hide yourself as Adam and Eve did! You are covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, so you have no nakedness to fear and you may respond, "Did You ask, my Lord, 'Where are you?' I answer, 'Here I am, for You did call me.' Did You ask where I am? I am hidden in Your Son! I am 'accepted in the Beloved.' Did You say, 'Where are you?' Here I stand, ready and waiting to be taken up by Him, according to His promise that where He is, there I shall be, also, that I may behold His Glory."

Why, surely, Beloved, as this is the case, you may even long for the evening to come when you shall hear His voice and shall go up and away from this land of shadows and chilly nights, into that blest place where the Glory burns on forever and ever, the Lamb is the Light thereof and the days of your mourning shall be ended forever!

God grant that you may all have a part and a lot in that Glory, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 3.

Verses 1-9. *Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die: for God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall*

be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you? In tones of mingled pity and rebuke He asked, "Where are you?"

10, 11. *And he said, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself. And He said.* Note the calm majesty of every word. Here is no human passion, but Divine dignity. "And He said"—

11, 12. *Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat? And the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* There is no sign of true confession here. Adam had been an unfallen creature a few hours before, but now he had broken the commandment of the Lord—and you can see how completely death was brought into his moral nature, for if it had not been so, he would have said "My God, I have sinned, can You and will You forgive me?" But instead of doing so, he laid the blame for his sin upon his wife which was an utterly evil action. "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." He almost seemed to lay the blame upon God because He had given him the woman to be with him! He was guilty of unkindness to his wife and of blasphemy against his Maker in seeking to escape from confessing the sin which he had committed! It is an ill sign with men when they cannot be brought frankly to acknowledge their wrong-doing.

13. *And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that you have done?* Oh, that question! How far reaching it is! By her action and her husband's, the floodgates had been pulled up and the flood of sin had been let loose upon the world! They had struck a match and set the world on fire with sin! And everyone of our sins is essentially of the same nature and has in it, substantially, the same mischief. Oh, that at any time when we have sinned, God would ask each one of us the question, "What is it that you have done?"

13. *And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* Still, you see, there is no confession of guilt, but only the attempt to push the blame off upon somebody else. The Lord God did not ask the serpent anything, for He knew that he was a liar. But He at once pronounced sentence upon him—

14, 15. *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon your belly shall you go and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between*

your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. And now there is no creature so degraded as that once bright angel who is now the devil! He is always going about with serpentine wriggling, seeking to do more mischief. On his belly does he go and still is dust his food. That which is foul, material, carnal, he delights in. And his head is bruised, blessed be the name of the woman's promised Seed! The old serpent's head is bruised with a fatal bruising, while the wounded heel of our Savior is the joy and delight of our hearts!

16, 17. *Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you. And unto Adam He said, Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it; cursed is the ground for your sake. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life.* How obliquely fell the curse! Not, "Cursed are you," as the Lord said to the serpent, but, "Cursed is the ground for your sake."

18-21. *Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you, and you shall eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return. And Adam called his wife's name, Eve: because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.* Some creature had to die in order to provide them with garments and you know Who it is that died in order that we might be robed in His spotless righteousness. The Lamb of God has made for us a garment which covers our nakedness so that we are not afraid to stand even before the bar of God!

22-24. *And the LORD God said, Behold the man is become as one of US, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, Cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—397, 715.

—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.

MOURNING AT THE CROSS
NO. 2901

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 23, 1876.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem this Spirit of Grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."
Zechariah 12:10.

NOTICE in this verse the very remarkable change of persons which you find in it, for you have, first, the first person, and then, the third—"They shall look upon *Me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for *Him*." It is the same Person who speaks in each case and He is speaking concerning Himself in both instances, so it is very remarkable that He should first say, "*Me,"* and then say, "*Him*." What is this but another illustration of the Unity of the Godhead and yet the Trinity of the adorable Persons in it? Notice that the One who, in this chapter, speaks of Himself as, "Me" and "Him," is none other than Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth. Read the first verse—"The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, says the Lord, which stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him." The Creator of the heavens and the Creator of our spirit is the same Person who was pierced, and who says, "They shall look upon Me." Yet there is a distinction, for we next read, "They shall mourn for *Him*." Jesus Christ is God and, therefore, so speaks of Himself. Yet He is also Man and, therefore, He is spoken of in the third person.

There are other instances in which the Divine and Human in Christ Jesus are spoken of in a very remarkable manner. Turn, for instance, to the 50th Chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah at the 3rd verse—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." No one but God could truly say that. Now turn to the 6th verse. I need not read the two intervening verses, but I will put the 3rd and the 6th together—"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." Can you realize the tremendous descent from the Godhead of Him who clothes the heavens with blackness and covers them with sackcloth, to the Manhood of Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? That is another illustration of the Truth of God

which is so singularly implied in our text where we read that "Jehovah, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him," also says, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced."

The next point I want you to notice is the remarkable fact that Jesus Christ was crucified and pierced. Did it ever strike you as being very singular that He should have been pierced? When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, he said to them, "Take Him, and judge Him according to your law." Would you not have supposed that the Jews, on hearing that, would at once have seized the opportunity of putting Christ to death according to their law? They accused Jesus of blasphemy, saying, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." You know that the death ordained by the Law of Moses for a blasphemer was by stoning. And if I had not read any of the Old Testament prophecies, or the New Testament narrative, I would have felt morally certain that when Pilate said, "Take Him, and judge Him according to your law," they would have taken Him away and stoned Him to death! And I would have felt all the more certain that this would be the case because such was the animosity and hatred of the high priests against Him that I would have thought that each one of them would have wanted to cast the first stone at Him.

But when He was sentenced to be crucified, the act of putting Him to death was left to the Roman soldiers! And it is, to me, very surprising that as the Jews had an opportunity of stoning Him, themselves, they did not avail themselves of it. Why was this? Why, because this ancient prophecy had said, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." And because another still more ancient prophecy had said, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Therefore Jesus Christ must die by crucifixion—not by stoning!

There is another very notable thing in connection with this prophecy. The piercing of the hands and feet of Christ by the nails, might, perhaps, not seem sufficient to carry out the idea of the prophecy—"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." So, when our Lord hung upon the Cross—when "He was dead already"—as the Roman soldiers said when they came around to break the legs of the criminals to put an end to their sufferings, one of the soldiers who had never read the Old Testament and knew nothing about what was written there—probably just to gratify his heart's cruel instinct—takes his spear and thrusts it into the heart of Christ! "And forthwith came there out blood and water." Now, if that had been done by someone who knew about the prophecy, it might have been said that there was some collusion to fulfill the prophetic Scriptures. But, as this Roman soldier was a barbarian who did not believe at all in the Jewish Scriptures, is it not a remarkable thing that this prophecy was fulfilled through his spear being thrust into the heart of Jesus Christ as He hung upon the Cross? So now, as you read these words, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced," adore the Infinite Wisdom of God who was able to fulfill the prophecy made hundreds of years before in the most singular and literal manner!

Our text is a prophecy of the conversion of the Jews. They practically pierced the Savior when they clamored for His Crucifixion although Pilate tried to make a way for His escape—and the whole Jewish race has continued to endorse their dreadful deed. Most of the Jews who are now living still reject Christ with the utmost scorn and contempt. The very mention of His name often produces a manifestation of the greatest fury. They call Him, "the Nazarene." I would not like to mention the various opprobrious epithets by which our Lord is called by the Jews. I marvel not that they speak of Him as they do, for, as they reckon Him to be an impostor, it is but natural that they should heap scorn upon Him. But in doing so they show that they accept the act and deed of their forefathers—and so His blood is upon them and upon their children according to the terrible imprecation uttered to Pilate. But the day is coming when all this will be changed. Israel, still beloved of the Lord, the first-born of all the nations, shall yet recognize Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as being the true Messiah—and then there will come over Israel such a sorrow for having rejected the Messiah as no nation ever knew before! They will look back on all the hundreds or thousands of years during which they have been a people scattered and exiled from their own land which was the glory of all lands—and they will then realize that what Isaiah and the other Prophets wrote was plain and clear and that they ought to have seen it before.

Judicial blindness has happened unto them even until the present day but they will then see and there will never be any other Christians in the world such as they will make, so devout and earnest and so anxious to do the will of God in all things. Then will the Gentiles also be gathered in when Israel shall at last receive her king. The first Christian missionaries were of the seed of Abraham and so shall the last and most successful ones be! God will graft in again the natural branches of the good olive tree together with us who were, by nature, only wild olive trees, but who have, by Grace, been grafted into the good olive tree! O glorious day when that comes to pass! May God send it soon and may some of us, if not all, live to see it! Yet remember that though it will be a day of great joy to the repentant Jews, it will also be to them a day of deep sorrow as they recall their long rejection of their dear Lord and Savior.

I want to remind you that the way in which the Jews will come to Christ is just the way in which you and I also must come to Him if we ever come to Him at all. They are to come mourning for Him and sorrowing especially because they crucified Him. But you and I also crucified Him as much as the Jews did—at least in a certain sense of which I am going to speak to you and, consequently, when we come to Christ, we must come in just the same way that the Jews are to come to Him. In fact, there is no difference in this matter between the Jews and the Gentiles. There is similar sin in each case and the same Savior—and when we come to Christ, it must be with the same kind of mourning and the same kind of faith with which Israel shall come in the days when God, in His mercy, shall gather her to Himself.

I. My subject is to be Evangelical sorrow—godly sorrow for sin—and my first remark concerning it is that WHEREVER IT EXISTS, IT IS ALWAYS A CREATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications:..and they shall mourn." There was never any real godly sorrow which worked repentance acceptable to God except that which was the result of the Holy Spirit's own work within the soul.

True evangelical repentance is *not produced by mere conscience.* However much the conscience may be awakened and instructed, the Spirit of God must operate upon the heart—otherwise the natural conscience cannot rise to the heights of true repentance.

It is *not the product of mere terror*. I believe that men can be driven into a sort of repentance by preaching to them the wrath of God, or by a sense of that wrath overtaking them in times of sickness or of the approach of death. But terror alone is hardening, rather than softening in its influence! It produces a repentance that needs to be repented of—it cannot produce evangelical sorrow for sin.

And, certainly, *true repentance can never be produced in the soul by any outward machinery*. Attempts have been made to produce it by covering the so-called "altar" with drapery of a certain color—violet, is, I think, the proper color to represent repentance—and by darkening the "church," as it is called—by tolling a bell at a certain time during the service, by a sort of spiritual charade, acting the tragedy of the Cross with mimic blasphemy, or, rather, with *real blasphemy and a shameful mimicry of the Crucifixion* of our Lord. Surely, no true repentance will ever be worked in that way! People may be made to weep and to feel by such travesties, but no *spiritual result* comes of it any more than of the weeping which may be produced at the theater by some pathetic scene that is acted there. No, no—the preaching of the Gospel is the ordained means of getting at men's hearts—and only the Holy Spirit's power can lead men to repent of their sins and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation!

Therefore it follows that *genuine mourning for sin comes as a gift of Divine Grace*: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace." Grace comes into the heart and enlightens the understanding so that a man understands what his criminality is in the sight of God. Then the Grace of God operates upon the conscience so that the man sees the evil and the bitterness of the sin which he has committed against the thrice-holy Jehovah. Then the same Grace affects the heart so that the man beholds the Infinite graciousness and eternal love of Christ and then begins to loathe himself to think that he should ever have treated Christ so ill. So, by a work of Grace upon the soul—*and not by any other process*—does the Spirit of God make men weep for sin so that they hate it and turn away from it.

This work of Grace is always attended by prayer. Notice the promise in the text—"I will pour…the Spirit of Grace *and of supplications*." Despairing repentance dares not pray, so that is not the kind of repentance that God accepts. Remorse for sin has often been worked in men's minds and it has driven them to despair—and that despair has prevented them from

praying. But the godly repentance which the Holy Spirit gives always sets the sinner praying. Judas Iscariot repented, after a fashion, but he could not pray, so he went out and hanged himself. God save all of you from a prayerless, tearless repentance! But if you repent of sin and at the same time really pray, then I believe we have the right to say that God has poured upon you the Spirit of Grace and of supplications—and that your mourning for sin will prove to be a godly sorrow that will work in you every blessed thing. God grant to you more and more of this Grace as long as you live!

This leads me to make a further remark which is that *true repentance is continuous in a Christian*. When a man mourns for sin as he ought to do, he does not leave off mourning as long as he is in this world. I am sure of this because we are told that it is "the spirit of Grace and of supplications" that God pours upon His people. Now, Grace lives in the Christian all his life and supplication also abides in the Christian all his life—so that we may infer that the third gift of the Spirit, namely, mourning for sin, will also abide in the Christian as long as he lives. I have frequently quoted to you the saying of good old Rowland Hill, that the only thing he regretted about going to Heaven was that he supposed he should have to say, "Goodbye," to repentance when he entered the pearly gates. "But," he said, "she has been my sweet companion, together with faith, all my pilgrim journey and I expect to have these two Graces with me as long as I am in this world." Oh, yes, Beloved, we are not finished with repenting and we never shall be as long as we are here! The more we rejoice in God, the more we repent to think that we should ever have sinned and that we still sin against Him. The more we see of the loveliness of Christ, the more we repent that we ever were once blind to it! The more we taste of His amazing love, the more we smite upon our breasts and grieve to think that we should ever have refused Him and should have felt no love in our hearts in return for His great love to us. If you are through repenting, Brothers and Sisters, the Holy Spirit has finished working in you, for as long as He works, Grace, supplications and repenting all go together!

II. Now, having shown you that wherever there is true evangelical mourning for sin, it is the work of the Spirit of God, I pass on to remark, in the second place, that wherever there is this acceptable mourning for sin, IT IS CAUSED BY LOOKING TO CHRIST.

"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." What is the inference from that fact? Why, that repentance is not a preparation for looking to Christ! Do you not see that? The looking is put *first* and the mourning afterwards. Yet I know what many of you have thought. You have said to yourselves, "We must mourn for sin and then look to Christ to pardon it." That is not God's order and we must always be careful to keep all the Truths of God in the order in which He has put them. Remember, Sinner, that there will never be a tear of acceptable repentance in your eyes till you have first looked to Jesus Christ! "Oh, but," someone says, "I have had many terrors and horrors concerning sin, yet I have never looked to Christ." Then, all those terrors and horrors are unac-

ceptable! They may be the work of conscience, or, perhaps, partly even the work of the devil, himself—but evangelical repentance begins with a believing look at Christ! You must first fix your eyes upon Christ before you can truly repent! And I tell you that all your repenting apart from believing in Jesus are of no value, of no use—therefore, away with them! If you weep for sin without fixing your gaze upon Christ, you will have to weep again over your repentance, for it is, itself, another sin! Look away from everything else to Jesus, for He can melt that hard heart of yours and enable you to repent. Do not, as our proverbs say, put the cart before the horse, or put the fruit into the ground instead of the root—but begin with looking unto Jesus and then true repentance will surely follow!

But what is there in looking to Christ to make a man hate sin and repent of it? I answer—*Looking to Him we see how sin hates purity*. There was an eloquent, flowery preacher who, as he delivered his discourse one Sunday morning, exclaimed, "O Virtue, fair and beauteous maid, if you should once descend from Heaven to earth, and stand among the sons of men, they would be all charmed by your beauties and would fall down and worship you!" It so happened that there was a certain plain, blunt preacher who was not at all an eloquent orator who had to preach in the afternoon in the same building. And having heard the morning discourse, he ventured to repeat the apostrophe to Virtue which I quoted just now and when he had finished the quotation, he said, "But, O Virtue, you *did* descend from Heaven to earth in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—and did all men worship You? No, they vilified You, they abhorred You, they said, 'let Him be crucified,' and they took You and nailed You to the accursed tree and put You to a shameful death!" The death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross was an impeachment of the whole world! It showed how bitterly fallen man hates perfection—and if Christ were to come again to the earth as He came before, men would again crucify Him! And if Christ's disciples were more like their Lord, I doubt not that they would be far more persecuted than they now are—even as they were in the ages that are past!

Further, when we look on Jesus Christ upon the Cross, *we see sin's ingratitude to love*. Christ was not merely pure and perfect, but He came to earth upon no errand but that of love and mercy. There were no thunderbolts in His hands with which to smite the guilty, but even His enemies said, "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them." He Himself said, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Love and pity to men were in His bosom, yet see how the world treated Him! It would not have pure Benevolence in its midst! He was the Friend of men, the greatest philanthropist who ever lived, loving the most degraded and seeking to lift them up—yet they took Him and nailed Him to the Cross of wood. O Sin, what an accursed thing you are, that you did not only hate Purity, itself, but also perfect Purity combined with Infinite Love and that you did shoot your sharpest arrows into the heart of the best Friend that man has ever had!

Yet even that is not all that a sight of Christ upon the Cross shows to us, for *it also shows us man's abhorrence of God,* for, after all, that which excited the bitterest enmity of the world was the Godhead of Christ—His Divine attributes! Jesus Christ was God and He came to this earth—and wicked men, though they could not kill God, went as near to it as they could by killing Christ who was God as well as Man! We use the word, "regicide," when we speak of a man who kills a king and we rightly use the word, "Decide," in speaking of the crime of which the world made itself guilty when it put Christ to death! It was the ever-blessed Son of God whom wicked men nailed to the tree. And the wicked world would commit the same crime again if it could! If all men were gathered together, taking the human race as it now is, and it were put to the vote, "Shall there be any God?" every fool would hold up his hand for, "No God." "The fool has said in his heart, "No God." And as the mass of mankind belong to that category in *spiritual* things, they say, "No God!"

It is quite possible that I am addressing some people who would be delighted if it could be said to them, "Now, if you hold up your hand, there will be no more religion to bother you, no Judgment Day for you to dread, no Resurrection, no Hell, no Heaven—in fact, God Himself will be put away—as far as you are concerned there will be no God." What good news it would be to you if it were really so, for the thing which troubles you now is that there is a God. Well, that only shows that you, also, are among those who are guilty of the death of Christ, for, if you could do it, you would extinguish God Himself! And this is what they did, as far as they could, when they nailed the Son of God to the Cross of Calvary.

But, dear Friends, when we rightly look to Christ, *we see that our guilt was so great that only an Infinite Sacrifice could atone for it.* Our sin comes home to us. At least mine comes home to me. I look upon the Cross and my self-righteousness says, "I did not crucify Him." But my conscience replies, "No, but you heard, for many years, about Christ being put to death without being at all affected by that fact. And, therefore, you virtually sanctioned the dreadful death by not condemning it! And you were not moved to any feeling of shame even though Jesus died in your place." That is all true, my Lord. For many a day I thought nothing of You. Then my conscience added, "You know that when Christ came to you, in the preaching of the Gospel, for a long while you refused Him. Many a time your conscience was awakened and you were urged to accept Christ as your Savior! But you said, 'I will not have this Man to reign over me.'" Yes, Lord, that also is true. I, who now love You with all my heart, once refused You—no, not merely once, but a thousand times I refused You and so I did what the Jews of old did—rejected You! Ah, Beloved, we chose the pleasures of the world instead of the love of Christ so that we were as bad as they were who said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" We chose the poor, paltry, trivial joys of time and sense—and let the Savior go! Must not all of you confess that you were guilty in this respect?

Possibly I am addressing some who in the days of their ignorance even cursed the name of Jesus and persecuted or ridiculed His people. You

have a loving sister of whom you used to make what you called, "rare fun," because of her love to Christ—and you knew that you were wounding Christ, Himself, through one of His followers. Perhaps there was someone whom you used to persecute very violently for being a lover of the Lord. If you did, you were persecuting Jesus, even as Saul of Tarsus did. Do not say that you never spit in His dear face! Do not say that you never scourged His blessed shoulders! You have done so as far as you could do it—in spirit you have done it, though not in very deed. Look to Him now! Look to Him now and, as you see Him on the Cross and see what wicked men did to Him there, say, "They were only doing it in my place—doing what I would have done if I had been there—doing what I have, in effect, done for a great part of my life."

Even we who have believed in Jesus must accuse ourselves of guilt concerning our treatment of our dear Lord as we look into His face. He has forgiven us, blessed be His dear name! He has not a word to say against us. There is nothing but love in His heart toward us, but we cannot forgive ourselves for all the wrong we have done to Him. Oftentimes we have plaited a crown of thorns and put it on His head as the soldiers did. That silly talk when we ought to have been proclaiming His Gospel—those doubts and fears, that wicked unbelief when we ought to have been fully trusting Him—that love of the world, that greed of gain when we ought to have been honoring Him with our substance—all this was the plaiting of thorny crowns to put upon His blessed brow! Ah, yes, we may well look at Him and mourn! Who among us can look at Him and *not* mourn? God forgive us if we can!

III. My time is almost spent, but I was going to show you, in the third place, that EVANGELICAL SORROW FOR SIN IS THE CHIEF OF SORROWS. Whenever it comes into the heart, it is not a sham sorrow, but a very real one. Our text says, "They shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

The grief of one who has lost his only child is very acute. There is hardly a more painful errand on which a minister of the Gospel, or any other Christian has to go, than to visit a family in which the only child lies dead. There is real sorrow there for they are thinking that their name will not be continued and their dear child was one in whom they took great delight. An only child is usually very much loved, so, for that child to die causes special sorrow. And it is a great grief for a man to lose his first-born—the beginning of his strength in whom he had taken such pride. Well now, such is the kind of grief that a true Christian feels concerning his sin. May we have it more and more, O Lord! It were better that I lost every child—better that I lost life, itself—than that I should sin against You! That is a cruel crime which may well make me mourn.

The Prophet then goes on to compare the mourning for sin to the mourning of the whole nation when Josiah died and the land rang with bitter lamentations for the loved monarch who had been slain in battle. The weeping men and wailing women went through every street and Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, was the chief mourner among them all.

Now, such is the sorrow of a soul when it realizes that it crucified Christ. It is a sweet and blessed sorrow, but still, it is a very deep and real one. I ask that I may be made to feel more and more of it—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee!
And then I would—oh, that I might!—
A constant weeper be."

IV. I must not dwell upon this sacred topic, but close with what would have been my fourth division if there had been time for it. That is that EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE DOES NOT ITSELF CLEANSE US FROM SIN.

Are you startled by that statement? Then, read the 1st verse of the 13th Chapter—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Now, dear Friends, if mourning for sin took the sin away, there would not be any need of the cleansing fountain! But, although the mourning was so real and so bitter, it did not take away the mourner's sin. Toplady was right when he sang—

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone—
You must save, and You alone."

But while evangelical repentance does not take away sin, wherever it is present it is a proof that sin *is* taken away. If you have repented of your sin and have believed in Jesus, then you have been cleansed in the open fountain—and that same blood which has cleansed you from guilt will yet prove that it can also cleanse you from the power of sin. Am I addressing any who are now mourning on account of sin? "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." That blessedness awaits you, for, "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Go and confess your transgression unto the Lord—say to Him with David, "Against You, You only, have I sinned." Go and stand at the foot of the Cross and view the flowing of your Savior's precious blood—and while you stand there and mourn for Him, the Holy Spirit will be pleased to bear witness with your spirit and you shall have the blessed assurance which will enable you to know that the blood of Jesus has washed all your sin away—and you shall go on your way rejoicing—hating the sin that made Him suffer and praising the Grace that has forgiven it!

Before I close I would that some poor sinner, instead of trying to mourn for sin, would first look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross, for that is the way to be made to mourn for sin! Instead of thinking that repentance can cleanse you, look to the finished work of Jesus and believe in Him, for that is the only way by which pardon can come to you. May God bless us all and keep us always repenting and always believing, and He shall have the praise and the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 12; 13:1.

Zechariah 12:1. *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel. Thus says the LORD, which stretches forth the Heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him.* Note how this chapter begins—"The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel"—not *against* Israel. The Gospel is always, to the true preacher of it, the burden of the Lord, but, to those who receive it, it is a burden of blessing, a load of mercy. To those who reject it, it will become a burdensome stone, crushing them to their eternal ruin. God grant, in His Infinite Mercy, that none of us may belong to the last class!

2. *Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.* This is a promise of God's abounding mercy to His chosen people Israel. When He comes to their aid, they shall be a cup of trembling to their enemies. Those enemies will try to swallow them, but they will find that they are drinking a cup of poison which will cause their own death. Oh that the day might soon come when God would remember His ancient people, the Jews, and bring them back to their own land as He certainly will do in the fullness of time! And when He has done it, then it shall come to pass that all who fight against them shall find His people to be as a cup of trembling to them. This promise which is to be literally fulfilled to God's chosen people, the seed of Abraham, is also *spiritually* true to all Believers. Christian, your enemies cannot really hurt you! If they could drink you up as men drink a cup of wine, you would be a cup of trembling to them—they would find that they had taken in more than they wanted! All the persecutors of the Church of God, in smiting this Stone, have themselves been broken on it. They have found that they have undertaken a task which has ended in their own destruction. Woe unto the man who fights against the Church of the living God! Victory must always come to the Lord's people, for greater is He who is with them than all that can be against them!

3. *And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.* This is literally true, but it is also spiritually true. As the Church of God is to be a cup of trembling to its enemies, so is it also to be a burdensome stone. They do not like it, they cannot bear it. They would, if they could, get rid of the spiritual Church of God, but they cannot get rid of it. There it is—a Stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, which will grow until it fills the whole earth and breaks in pieces everything that opposes it! Those who set themselves against God and against His Christ, shall find themselves crushed to atoms by this mighty Stone.

4. *In that day, says the LORD, I will smite every horse with confusion and his rider with madness.* The chief strength of Jerusalem's enemies lay in horses and chariots, but God bids His people not to fear them, for He knows how to overcome all power, whether it is the power of cavalry or the power of infantry. He knows how to smite every horse with confusion and every rider with madness, for, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth

even forever." And He can protect them against the most powerful foes that may assail them.

4. *And I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah.* It looked as if the Lord had been asleep, but now He says, "'I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah'—I will look at them and note their sufferings, pity their griefs, plan for their good and come forth for their defense."

4. *And will smite every horse of the people with blindness.* Their enemies shall not be able to see them, but God will see them and He will deliver His people and overthrow all their adversaries.

5, 6. *And the governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of Hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.* The literal prophecy is that the seed of Israel shall go back to their own land and shall prevail over their adversaries—but the spiritual meaning is that the Church of God shall have great power among the people of the earth. They shall have fire put into them—the fire of the Holy Spirit—and they shall be like a lighted firebrand among the wood, or as a flaming torch in a sheaf of corn—and you know how soon the sheaf would be burnt up. If God has put within you fire from Heaven, you will be sure to burn and those with whom you live will soon feel the flame. Place one really gracious man in any district and if he is thoroughly on fire with the Holy Spirit, it will be like throwing a blazing firebrand into a field of dry corn! What a conflagration will there be! The Lord send us many such blessed burnings!

7. *The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.* God will begin by saving the most defenseless. The tents of the people were easily swept away by their powerful foes. "Therefore," says the Prophet, "the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first." As for the people in the strongly defended city of Jerusalem, He would protect them, but He would do it in such a way that they would not take the glory to themselves. God is always very jealous of His own honor. He will save us, but it will be in a way that shall prevent our pride from glorying in it. He will never allow one saved soul to be able to say, "I saved myself," or, "I contributed to the merit which has brought me to Heaven." No—God must have all the glory—every jot and tittle of it! And all His people are glad that He should have it.

8. *In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the LORD before them.* What a blessed thing it is when the Lord strengthens all His people so that the weakest among them are as strong as that ruddy-faced youth who smote Goliath—and the strongest of them are like the swift-winged angels of God, ready to do His bidding! Oh, that this Church might be in that blessed state! You remember how it is written that when Israel came up

out of Egypt, "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." When will the whole Church of Christ get to be in that condition? O you feeble ones, lay hold upon the promise now before us and do not rest till it is fulfilled in you! "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them."

9-11. *And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.* No doubt these verses refer, primarily, to the great mourning when King Josiah fell in battle when all the people wept and mourned for many days because their king had been slain by the archers' arrows. But this is also typical of the lamentation of a heart when it is broken on account of the death of Christ. Sorrow for sin is to be after the fashion of that great national mourning of which Jeremiah sang so plaintively in the Book of Lamentations.

12. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart.* For this was to be a personal sorrow in which both husbands and wives must weep on their own account.

12. *The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.* Perhaps these names are mentioned to indicate different classes and orders of persons—the family of the house of David the king shall mourn and the family of the house of Nathan the Prophet shall mourn. Both David and Nathan had long since gone, but their descendants were still called by their names.

13. *The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart.* The priests, as well as the kings and the Prophets, were to be represented in this universal mourning.

13. *The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart.* Shimei, or Simeon, as the Septuagint gives it—which may either represent the scribes, or else may refer to the people in general. These shall all mourn, personally and separately, for Him whom they have pierced.

14. *All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.* Why these chapters were divided here, I cannot imagine, for it is clear that the passage should run right on.

Zechariah 13:1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanliness.*

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

HOLINESS DEMANDED
NO. 2902

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1904.

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"Holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord."
Hebrews 12:14.

ONE feels most happy when blowing the trumpet of jubilee, proclaiming peace to broken hearts, freedom to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But God's watchman has another trumpet which he must sometimes blow, for thus says the Lord to him, "Blow the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in My holy mountain." There are times when we must sound the alarm—men must be startled from their sleep, they must be awakened to enquire, "What are we? Where are we? Where are we going?" Nor is it altogether amiss for the wisest virgins to look to the oil in their vessels and for the most sound Christians to sometimes be constrained to examine the foundations of their hope, to trace back their evidences to the beginning and make an impartial survey of their state before God. Partly for this reason, but with a further view to the awakening and stirring up of those who are destitute of all holiness, I have selected for our topic, "Holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord."

There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said that this is the *imputed holiness* of Christ. Do they not know when they so speak, that by an open perversion they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the context—"Follow peace with all people, and holiness." Now the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace— and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace! That is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace." We are to follow holiness—that must be practical holiness, the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow. I mean if we look at it *imputatively*—that we have at once—it is *given* to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be fol-

lowed—it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus!

Our text speaks of another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as everyone can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul by which a man is made like God and becomes a partaker of the Divine Nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it! There it stands, whether men like it or not! There are some who for special reasons best known to themselves, do not like it, just as no thieves ever like policemen or jails—yet there it stands and it means no other than what it says! "Without holiness"—practical, personal, active, vital holiness—"no one shall see the Lord." Dealing with this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth and all enjoyment of Christ in Heaven, I shall endeavor, first, *to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he has this holiness or not.* Secondly, *to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact*, "Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord." And then, thirdly, *to plead hard, in Christ's place, with those who are lovers of gain that they may consider this before time is over and opportunity past*.

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, you are anxious to know whether you have holiness or not. Now, if our text said that without *perfection of holiness*, no one could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one who knows his own heart ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will! It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," but, "holiness." This holiness is a thing of *growth*. It may be in the soul as small as a grain of mustard seed and yet not developed. It may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realized—a groan, a pant, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow till the mustard seed shall become a tree. Holiness in a regenerate heart, is but an infant. It is not matured—it is perfect in all its parts, but not perfect in its development. Hence when we find many imperfections and many failings in ourselves, we are not to conclude that, therefore, we have no interest in the Grace of God. This would be altogether contrary to the meaning of the text. As it is not so much my present purpose to show what this holiness is as, *what it is not*, I think while I am endeavoring to undeceive those who have not this holiness, those who are not condemned may reasonably draw some comfortable inferences as to their own pursuit of this inestimable Grace.

Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on without holiness. First, there is *the Pharisee*. The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies. He pays tithes of all that he possesses—his anise, his mint, his cummin—everything, even to the tithe of his parsley-bed! He gives alms to the poor, he wears his phylacteries and makes broad the borders of his garment—in fact, anything and everything that is

commanded ceremonially, he most punctiliously attends to! But all the while he is devouring widows' houses, he is living in the practice of secret sin and he thinks that by ceremonies he shall be able to propitiate God and be accepted. Sinner, pharisaic Sinner, hear the death-knell of your hopes tolled out by this verse! "Without holiness"—and that is a thing you know nothing of—"no man shall see the Lord." Your ceremonies are vain and frivolous! Even if God ordained them, seeing you put your trust in *them*, they shall utterly deceive and fail you, for they do not constitute even a *part* of holiness. You cannot see God till your heart is changed, till your nature is renewed, till your actions, in the tenor of them, shall become such as God would have them to be. Mere ceremonialists think they can get on without holiness. Fell delusion! Do I speak to any Ritualist who finds himself awkwardly situated here? Do I speak to any Romanist who has entered into a place where not the works of the Law, but the righteousness of Christ is preached? Let me remind you again, very solemnly, my Hearer, that those fine hopes of yours built upon the maneuvers of the priests and upon your own performances shall utterly fail you in that day when most you shall need them! Your soul shall then stand in shivering nakedness when you most need to be well equipped before the eyes of God. These men know not true holiness!

Then there is *the moralist*. He has never done anything wrong in his life. He is not very observant of ceremonies, it is true—perhaps he even despises them—he treats his neighbor with integrity, he believes that as far as he knows, if his ledger is examined, it bears no evidence of a single dishonest deed. As touching the Law of God, he is blameless! No one ever doubted the purity of his manner—from his youth up his carriage has been amiable, his temperament what everyone could desire and the whole tenor of his life is such that we may hold him up as an example of moral propriety! Ah, but this is *not* holiness before God! Holiness excludes immorality, but morality does not amount to holiness, for morality may be but the cleaning of the outside of the cup and the platter, while the heart may be full of wickedness. Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objectives, the motives of men. Morality does but skim the surface, holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep—holiness requires that the heart shall be set on God and that it shall beat with love to Him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that.

I think I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse—well washed, robed and even embalmed with spices—but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life! Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms—holiness waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars! These two are of opposite natures—the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies. It is not said in Heaven, "Moral, moral, moral are You, O God!" But, "Holy, holy, holy are You, O Lord!" You note the difference between the two words at once. The one, icy cold. The other,

oh, how animated! Such is mere morality and such is holiness! Moralist—I know I speak to many such—remember that your best morality will not save you! You must have more than this, for without holiness—and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God—without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.

Another individual who thinks to get on without holiness and who does win a fair reputation in certain circles is *the experimentalist*. You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward. To tell you the truth, there is no life at all, but their own profession is that it is all inward. I have had the misery to be acquainted with one or two such. They are voluble talkers, discoursing with much satisfaction of themselves, but bitter critics of all who differ from them in the slightest degree. Having an ordained standard as to the proper length to which Christian experience should go, they cut off everybody's head who is taller than they are and stretching every man out by the neck who happens to be a little too short! I have known some of these persons. If a minister should say "duty" in the sermon, they would look as if they would never hear him again. He must be a dead legalist—a "letter man," I think they call him. Or, if they are exhorted to holiness, why, they tell you they are perfect in Christ Jesus and therefore there is no reason why they should have any thought of perfection in the work of the Spirit within. Groaning, grunting, quarrelling, denouncing—not following peace with all people, but stirring up strife against all—this is the practice of their religion! This is the summit to which they climb and from which they look down with undisguised contempt upon all those worms beneath who are starving to serve God and to do good in their day and generation.

Now I pray you to remember that against such men as these there are many passages of Scripture most distinctly leveled. I think this is one among many others. Sirs, you may say what you will about what you dream you have felt. You may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced. But if your own outward life is unjust, unholy, ungenerous and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ! "Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord." The moment you know a man who is drunk on a Saturday night and then enjoys So-and-So's preaching on Sunday. The moment you know a man who can tell you what a child of God should be and then appears himself exactly what he should *not* be—just quit his company and let him go to his own place! And where is that? Judas can tell you! Oh, beware of such highfliers with their waxen wings mounting up to the very sun—how great shall be their fall when He that searches all hearts shall open the book and say, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. . . Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it not to Me."

There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but there are some among us still—*opinionists* who think they can do without holiness. These, too, it has sometimes been my misfortune to

know. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one, for there are as many Arminians as Calvinists in this line—they think they have got hold of *the* Truth of God, that they are *the* men and that when they die, the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. They can—

"A hair divide
Betwixt the west and north-west side."

There is no question about their being masters in divinity. If degrees went according to merit, they would have been dubbed "D. D." years ago, for they know everything and are not a little proud that they do! And yet these men live a life that is a stench even in the nostrils of men who make no profession of religion! We have some of this kind in all congregations. I wish you would not come here. If we could do you good, we might be glad to see you, but you do so much harm to the rest and bring so much discredit upon the cause at large that your absence would be better than your company. You listen to the sermon and sometimes, perhaps, have the condescension to speak well of the preacher who wishes you would not. Yet, after the sermon is done, on the road home, there may be a bar just opened at one o'clock and the brother refreshes himself and perhaps does so many times! Even if it is the Lord's Day, it is all the same and yet he is a dear and precious child of God? No doubt he is in his own estimation! And then, during the week, he lives as others live and acts as others act—and yet congratulates himself that he knows the Truth of God and understands the Doctrines of the Gospel and, therefore, he will surely be saved! Out with you, man! Out with you! Down with your hopes! "Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord"—

"No big words of ready talkers,
No mere Doctrines will suffice—
Broken hearts and humble walkers—
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work—this is what the Lord wants! You may perish as well with true Doctrines as with false if you pervert the true Doctrine into licentiousness! You may go to Hell by the Cross as surely as you may by the theater, or by the vilest of sin. You may perish with the name of Jesus on your lips and with a sound creed sealed on your very bosom for, "except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Now, if any of you belong to either of these four classes, I think you cannot help knowing it and, being *destitute of Gospel holiness*, you have good cause to bewail your character and tremble for your destiny!

But to help you still further, Brothers and Sisters, that man is destitute of true holiness *who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow*. Oh, to think of our past lives! There were some of us who knew the Lord at 15 years of age, but those 15 years of unregeneracy—we can never forget them! Others may say, "We did not know Him till we were 50 or sixty." Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you have much to weep over, but so have those of us who knew the Lord in early life! I can look back

upon God's mercy with delight, but I hope I shall never be able to look back upon my sins with complacency. Whenever a man looks to any of his past faults and shortcomings, it ought to be through his tears. Some recall their past lives, talk of their old sins and seem to roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel. They live their sins over again. As it was said of Alexander—

"He fought his battles over again,
And twice he slew the slain."

There are those who revel in the memory of their iniquities. They live their life in imagination all over again. They recollect some deed of lewdness, or some act of infamy and, as they think it over, they dare not repeat it, for their profession would be spoiled—but they love the thought and cultivate it with a vicious zest! You are no friend to true holiness, but an utter stranger to it unless the past causes you profound sorrow and sends you to your knees to weep and hope that God, for Christ's sake, has blotted it out!

And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness *if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation.* Have I someone here, a professed Christian, who has formed some design in his mind to indulge the flesh and to enjoy forbidden dainties when an opportunity occurs? Ah, Sir, if you can think of those things that may come in your way without tremor, I suspect you! I would you would suspect yourself. Since the day that some of us knew Christ we have always woke up in the morning with a fear lest we should that day disown our Master. And there is one fear which sometimes haunts me—and I must confess it—and were it not for faith in God, it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man, his life was pure before God and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious luster. But when gray hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God's heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end lest haply, in some evil hour, some temptation should come upon me and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind—"He that thinks he stands may yet fall"? And the very possibility of such a thing—does it not drive you to God's Mercy Seat and do you not cry, "Hold me up my God and I shall be safe"! There is no doxology in Scripture which I enjoy more than that one at the end of the Epistle of Jude—"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to Him be glory." I say you are a stranger to holiness of heart if you can look forward to a future fall without great alarm.

Again, I think you have great cause for questioning unless *your holiness is uniform.* I mean if your life is angelic abroad and devilish at home—you must suspect that it is *at home* that you are what you really are. I question whether any man is much better than he is thought to be by his wife and family for they, after all, see the most of us and know the

truth about us. And if, Sir, though you seem in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in the shop to be amiable, Christian and God-like to the passer-by—if your children should have to mark your unkindness, your lack of fatherly affection for their souls and your wife to complain of your domineering, of the absence of everything that is Christ-like—you may shrewdly suspect that there is something wrong in the state of your heart! O Sirs, true holiness is a thing that will keep by night and by day, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea! That man is not right with God who would not do the same in the dark that he would do in the light! That man is not right with God who does not feel, "If every eye should look upon me I would not be different from what I am when no eye gazes upon me. That which keeps me right is not the judgment and opinions of men, but the eyes of the Omnipresent and the heart of the Lord who loves me."

Is your obedience uniform? Some farmers I know in the country maintain a credible profession in the village where they live. They go to a place of worship and seem to be very good people—but there is a farmer's dinner once a year—it is only once a year and we will not say anything about how they get home. The less of that is said, the better for their reputation. "It, is only once a year," they tell us, but holiness does not allow dissipation even "once a year." And we know some who when they go on the Continent, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there." And therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, Sirs, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate, it is good for nothing! I like the remark which I heard from one of the sailors on board ship in crossing the Irish Channel. A passenger said, to try him, "Wouldn't you like to attend a certain place of amusement?" which he mentioned. "Well, Sir," said the sailor, "I go there as often as I like. I have a religion that lets me go as often as I think proper." "Oh, how is that?" he enquired. "Because I never like to go at all," was the reply. "I do not stay away because of any law, for it is no trial to me, but I should be unhappy to go there." Surely the fish, were it asked if it did not wish to fly, would reply, "I am not unhappy because I am not allowed to fly—it is not my element." So the Christian can say, "I am not unhappy because I do not spend my nights in worldly society, because I do not join in their revelry and wantonness—it is not my element and I could not enjoy it. Should you drag me into it, it would be a martyrdom which to my spirit would be repulsive and painful!" You are a stranger to holiness if your heart does not feel that it revolts at the thought of sin.

Then, let me further remark that *those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy*. We know of some who will not, themselves, perpetrate an unseemly jest, yet if another does so and there is a laugh excited upon some not overly-decent remark, they laugh and thus give sanction to the impropriety. If there is a low song sung in their hearing which others applaud, though they cannot quite go the length of joining in the plaudits, still they secretly enjoy

it—they betray a sort of gratification that they cannot disguise—they confess to a gusto that admires the wit while it cannot endorse the sentiment. They are glad the minister was not there! They are glad to think the deacon did not happen to see them just at that moment yet still, if there could be a law established to make the thing pretty respectable, they would not mind. Some of you know people who fall into this snare. There are professing Christians who go where you at one time could not go but, seeing that they do it, you go too—and there you see others engaged in sin and it becomes respectable because you give it countenance.

There are many things, in this world that would be execrated if it were not that Christian men go to them and the ungodly men say, "Well, if it is not righteous, there is not much harm in it, after all. It is innocent enough if we keep within bounds." Mind! Mind! Mind, professor! If your heart begins to suck in the sweets of another man's sin, it is unsound in the sight of God! If you can even wink at another man's lust, depend upon it that you will soon shut your eyes on your own, for we are always more severe with other men than we are with ourselves! There must be an absence of the vital principle of godliness when we can become partakers of other men's sins by applauding or joining with them in the approval of them! Let us examine ourselves scrupulously, then, whether we are among those who have no evidences of that holiness without which no one can see God!

But, Beloved, we hope better things of you and things which accompany salvation. If you and I, as in the sight of God feel that we would be holy if we could, that there is not a sin we wish to spare, that we would be like Jesus—O that we could!—that we would sooner suffer affliction than ever run into sin and displease our God. If our heart is really right in God's statutes then, despite all the imperfections we bemoan, we have holiness wherein we may rejoice! And we pray to our gracious God—

"Finish, then, Your new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be."

II. Now then, for the second point very briefly, indeed—"Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord." That is to say no one can have communion with God in this life and no one can have enjoyment with God in the life to come without holiness. "Can two walk together except they are agreed?" If you go with Belial, do you think that Christ will go with you? Will Christ be a pot companion for you? Do you expect to take the Lord of Love and Mercy with you to the haunts of sin? Professor, do you think the Just and Holy One will stand at your counter to be co-trader with you in your tricks? What do you think, O man! Would you make Christ a sharer of your guilt? And yet He would be so if He had fellowship with you in it! No, if you will go on in acts of unrighteousness and unholiness, Christ parts company with you or, rather, you never did have any fellowship with Him at all! You have gone out from us because you were not of us, for, if you had been of us, doubtless you would have continued with us.

And as to Heaven, do you think to go there with your unholiness? God smote an angel down from Heaven for sin—and will He let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish Heaven than see sin spoil it! It is enough for Him to bear with your hypocrisies on earth—shall He have them flung in His face in Heaven? What? Shall an unholy life utter its licentiousness in the golden streets? Shall there be sin in that higher and better Paradise? No, no! God has sworn by His holiness—and He will not, He cannot lie—that those who are not holy, whom His Spirit has not renewed, who have not been, by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, made to love that which is good and hate that which is evil shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous! Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no one shall see Him without holiness!

III. I come to my last point which is to plead with you. Doubtless, there are some in this vast crowd who have some sort of longings after salvation and after Heaven. My eye looks around. Yes, sometimes it has been my habit to gaze with sorrow upon some few here whose cases I know. Do I not remember one? He has been very often impressed and so impressed that he has not been able to sleep. Night after night he has prayed, he has wrestled with God—and there is only one thing in his way—strong drink! By the time Wednesday or Thursday comes around he begins to forget what he heard on Sunday. Sometimes he has taken the pledge and kept it three months—but the craving has been too strong for him and then he has given all resolutions and vows up and has plunged into his besetting sin worse than before!

I know others in whom it is another sin. You are here now, are you? You do not come in the morning and yet, when you come at night you feel it very severely. But why not come in the morning? Because your shop is open and that shop seems to stand between you and any hope of salvation. There are others who say, "Well, now, if I go to hear that man, I must give up the vice that disquiets my conscience—but I cannot yet, I cannot yet." And you are willing to be damned for the sake of some paltry joy? Well, if you will be damned, it shall not be for lack of reasoning with you and weeping over you! Let me put it to you—do you say that you cannot give up the sin because of the profit? Profit? Profit? Forget it! "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What profit have you obtained to now? You have put it all into a bag full of holes! What you have earned one way, you have spent in another and you know that if this life were all, you surely have not been any the better for it! Besides, what is profit when compared with your immortal soul? Oh, I plead with you, lose not gold for dross! Lose not substance for shadows! Lose not your immortal soul for the sake of some temporary gain!

But it is not profit with some of you, it is pleasure—it is a morbid passion. You feel, perhaps, for some particular sin which happens to beset you, such an intense longing and, in looking back upon it afterwards, you think you could give up everything but that. Young man, is it some secret sin which we must not mention, or is it some private guilt which is

hidden from all hearts but your own? O Soul, what is this pleasure, after all? Weigh it, weigh it! What does it come to? Is it equal to the pain it costs you now—to the pangs of conscience, to the agonies of remorse? When an American doctor, who had led a loose life, came to die, he seemed to wake up from a sort of stupor and he said, "Find that word, find that word!" "What word?" they asked. "Why," he said, "that awful word—remorse!" He said it again—"Remorse!" And then gathering up his full strength, he fairly seemed to shriek it out—"*REMORSE*!" "Write it," he said, "write it." It was written. "Write it with larger letters and let me gaze at it. Underline it. And now," he said, "none of you know the meaning of that word and may you never know it! It has an awful meaning in it and I feel it now—*Remorse! Remorse!! Remorse!!!*"

What, I ask, is the pleasure of sin contrasted with the results it brings in this life? And what, I ask, is this pleasure compared with the joys of godliness? Little as you may think I know of the joys of the world, yet so far as I can form a judgment, I can say that I would not take all the joys that earth can ever afford in a hundred years for one half-hour of what my soul has known in fellowship with Christ! We who believe in Him have our sorrows, but, blessed be God, we have our joys and they are such joys—oh, such joys with such substance in them and such reality and certainty—that we could not and would not exchange them for anything except Heaven in its fruition!

And then, think, Sinner, what are all these pleasures when compared with the loss of your soul? There is a gentleman, high in position in this world with fair lands and a large estate who, when he took me by the button-hole after a sermon—and he never hears me preach without weeping—said to me, "O Sir, it does seem such an awful thing that I should be such a fool!" "And what for?" I asked. "Why," he said, "for the sake of that court, of those gaieties of life, of mere honor and dress and fashion I am squandering away my soul! I know," he said, "I know the Truth of God, but I do not follow it. I have been stirred in my heart to do what is right, but I go on just as I have done before. I fear I shall sink back into the same state as before. Oh, what a fool I am," he said, "to choose pleasures that only last a little while and then to be lost forever and forever!" I pleaded hard with him, but I pleaded in vain. There was such intoxication in the gaiety of life that he could not leave it. Alas! Alas! If we had to deal with *sane men*, our preaching would be easy—but sin is a madness—such a madness that when men are bitten by it, they cannot be persuaded even though one should rise from the dead. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"But," I hear someone say, "it is impossible! I have tried it and I have broken down. I did try to get better, but I did not succeed. It is of no use, it cannot be done!" You are right, my dear Friend, and you are wrong. You are right—it is of no use going about it as you did. If you went in *your own strength*, holiness is a thing you cannot get—it is beyond you. The depth says, "It is not in me." And the height says, "It is not in me." You can no more make yourself holy than you could create a world! But

you are wrong to despair, for *Christ can do it*! He can do it for you and He can do it now! Believe on Him and that believing will be the proof that He is working in you. Trust Him and He that has suffered for your sins, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall come in and put to rout the lion of the Pit! He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. There is no corruption too strong for Him to overcome, there is no habit too firm for Him to break. He can turn a lion to a lamb and a raven to a dove. Trust Him to save you and He will do it, whoever you may be, and whatever your past life may have been!

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—that is, he shall be saved from his sins and delivered from his evil practices. He shall be made a new man in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit, received through the medium of his faith. Believe, poor Soul, that Christ is able to save you and He will do it! He will be as good as your faith and as good as His own word. May He now add His own blessing to the word I have spoken and to the people who have heard it for His own sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* The Lord can bless the man who is full of sin only when his sin is covered by the Atonement—the Propitiation—which hides his sin even from the sight of God! And he is a truly blessed who, although he knows himself to be a sinner, also knows that his sin is forgiven and covered.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He is an honest, truthful, guileless man. A man cannot be a blessed man while he is double-minded, while he has graft or, what is here called, guile, within him. A sincere and guileless heart is an evidence of Grace so, "blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." But, David, how did you obtain this forgiveness? Let us hear the story of your experience.

3, 4. *When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* He tells us that he had such a sense of guilt that he could not rest. And until he made confession of his sin to God, he became sick in body as well as in soul. It seemed as if his very bones, the most solid part of his frame, were beginning to decay under the influence of his grief and he was getting worse and worse in the brokenness of his spirit till he seemed like a dried-up country in which there is no dew. His moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Yes, David, but how did you get rid of your sin? We see how deeply you felt it—how did you get clear of it?

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* You see, as long as he covered his sin, God did

not cover it. But when he no longer tried to hide it, but made an open confession of it, then God blotted it out and covered it up forever! There was but a believing confession of sin and David's heart was at once at rest! Shall we not try the same remedy? Will we not go to God and say, "Father, I have sinned"? Is there any better course than that? Is it not right to acknowledge a wrong? Is it not the simplest and safest way to go at once to Him who blots out sin and ask for mercy?

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place: You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* Surely if God has given us the pardon of our sin, He will give us everything else that we need! If He has delivered us from Hell, He will certainly deliver us from trouble!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* The forgiven man is afraid of going wrong again. He is as anxious about his future life as he was about his past sin. So the Lord meets him and gives him the gracious promise contained in this verse.

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.* Do not be hard-mouthed. Be obedient to God's will. Be tender of heart and willing of spirit. The Lord will make His children go in the right way, somehow or other. He will put a bit into their mouths if nothing else will do it, but it would be much better for them if they would be of tender and gentle spirit and would yield at once to His gracious and holy will.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* Godly men also have many sorrows, but then they always have sweets with their bitters, but, "many sorrows shall be to the wicked," and there will be no sweets to go with them.

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* He shall have mercy all round him. He who trusts his God shall find that the golden compasses of Divine Mercy shall strike a circle of gracious protection all round him—"mercy shall compass him about."

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* Godly men ought to be glad men. They have a right to be happy. They recommend the Gospel when they are so and they are the true sons of the King of kings when they do not go mourning all their days.

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

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

SLEEPERS AWAKENED
NO. 2903

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 27, 1876.

"But Jonah was gone down into the lowest part of the ship; and he lay there and was fast asleep."
Jonah 1:5.

WE are told before this fact is mentioned that the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea to overtake the ship in which Jonah was sailing for Tarshish. The great wheels of Providence are continually revolving in fulfillment of God's purposes concerning His own people. For them winds blow and tempests rise. It is a wonderful thing that the whole machinery of Nature should be made subservient to the Divine Purpose of the salvation of His redeemed! I was in a diamond-cutting factory at Amsterdam and I noticed that there were huge wheels revolving and a great deal of power being developed and expended. But when I came to look at the little diamond—in some cases a very small one, indeed—upon which that power was being brought to bear—it seemed very remarkable that all that power should be concentrated upon such a little, yet very precious object! In a similar style, all the wheels of Providence and Nature, great as they are, are brought to bear by Divine skill and love upon a thing which appears to many people to be of trifling value, but which is to Christ of priceless worth—namely, a human soul!

Here is this common-looking Jew, Jonah, named according to the general rule that names go by contraries, "a dove," for, at any rate on this occasion, he looked more like the raven that would not come back to the ark! And for this one man—this altogether unfriendly Prophet—the sea must be tossed in tempest and a whole ship full of people must have their lives put in jeopardy! This Truth of God is a very far-reaching one. You cannot well exaggerate it. The vast universe is but a platform for the display of God's Grace and all material things that now exist will be set aside when the great drama of Divine Grace is completed. The material universe is but scaffolding for the Church of Christ. It is but the temporary structure upon which the amazing mystery of redeeming love is being carried on to perfection. See, then, that as the great wind was raised to follow Jonah and to lead to his return to the path of duty, so all things work together for the good of God's people and all things that exist are being bowed and bent towards God's one solemn eternal purpose—the salvation of His own!

But note also, that while God was awake, Jonah was asleep. While storms were blowing, Jonah was slumbering. It is a strange sight, O Christian, that you should be an important item in the universe and yet that you should not know it or care about it—that all things are keeping their proper place and time for you and yet that you are the only one who does not seem to perceive it and, therefore, you fall into a dull, lethargic, sleepy state. Everything around you is awake for your good, yet you are slumbering even as the fugitive Prophet was while the storm was raging!

I am going to speak upon the case of Jonah, first, as we may regard it as a useful lesson to the people of God. And, secondly, as it may be considered as *an equally valuable warning to the unconverted.*

I. First, then, I shall use the case of Jonah as A USEFUL LESSON TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD—and I may very fairly do so when we remember who Jonah was.

First, *Jonah was a believer in God.* He worshipped no false god—he worshipped only the living and true God. He was a professed and avowed believer in Jehovah. He was not ashamed to say—even when his conduct had laid him open to blame and when there was nobody to support him—"I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land." Yet, though he was a believer in God, he was in the lowest part of the ship fast asleep! O Christian—a real Christian, too—if you are in a similar condition, how is it that you can be slumbering under such circumstances? Should not the privileges and the honor which your being a believer has brought to you by Divine Grace forbid that you should be inactive, careless, indifferent? I may be addressing dozens of Jonahs—those who are really God's people, but who are not acting as if they were—chosen of the Most High but are forgetful of their election, their redemption, their sanctification, the life they have begun to live here below and the eternal glory that awaits them hereafter!

Besides being a believer or as a natural consequence of being a believer, *Jonah was a man of prayer.* Out of the whole company on board that ship, he was the only man who knew how to pray to the one living and true God. All the mariners "cried every man unto his god." But those were idle prayers because they were offered to idols—they could not prevail because they were presented to dumb, dead idols! But here was a man who *could* pray—and who could pray aright, too—yet he was asleep! Praying men and women—you who have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven swinging at your belt—you who can ask what you will, and it shall be done for you—you who have many times in the past prevailed with God in wrestling prayer—you who have received countless blessings in answer to your supplications—can you be, as Jonah was, sleeping in the time of storm? Can it be possible that he who knows the power of prayer is restraining it—that he to whom God has given this choice privilege is not availing himself of it? I fear that this may be the case with some of you and looking at Jonah, a praying man sinfully asleep, I cannot help feeling that I may be speaking to many others who are in exactly the same condition!

More than this, Jonah was not merely a believing man and a praying man, but *he was also a Prophet of the Lord*. He was one to whom God had spoken and by whom God had spoken. He was a minister—that is to say one of God's own sent servants though he was not in his proper place when he was in the ship sailing towards Tarshish. But can God's minister neglect their duty like this? If I had been asked at that time, "Where is the Prophet of the Lord?"—perhaps the only Prophet of his age—at any rate a man who was the very foremost in his time—if I had been asked, "Where is he?" I would have said that he must be looked for amidst the masses of the dense population of Nineveh, carrying out his Master's commission with unstaggering faith! Or else that he might be looked for amidst the thousands of Israel, denouncing their idol gods and their wicked ways. But who would have thought of finding Jonah asleep on board such a ship as that? He is a Seer, yet he sees not, for he is sound asleep! He is a watchman, but he is not watching, for he is slumbering and sleeping! Everything is in confusion, yet this man, upon whom rests the Divine anointing and into whose mouth God has put a message to multitudes of his fellow creatures is sleeping instead of witnessing!

Come Mr. Preacher, see to yourself while I am talking about Jonah—and I will take the message to myself while I am talking to you—for this is a matter which ought to come home to all of us upon whom such great responsibilities are laid and to whom such high privileges are given. But all of you who love the Lord are witnesses for Christ in some capacity or other—and it would be a very sad thing if you who are called to speak in the name of the Lord, though it should only be in your Sunday school class, or in a little cottage meeting, or to your own children—should be asleep when you ought to be wide awake and active! May the Lord awaken you, for you are the wrong person to be asleep! You, above all others, are bound to have both your eyes open and to watch day and night to hear what God the Lord will speak to you and what He would have you say to the ungodly or to His own chosen people in His name.

It is also worthy of notice that at the very time when Jonah was asleep in the ship, he was not only a Prophet, but he was *a Prophet under a special commission*. He was not on furlough. He was, on the contrary, empowered by special warrant, under the King's seal and sign manual, to go at once to a certain place and there to deliver the King's message. And yet there he is, asleep in this ship and going in the very opposite direction to the one given him! When Prophets sleep, it should be when their errand has been done and their message has been delivered, but Jonah had not been on his Lord's errand, nor had he delivered his Lord's message. No, he had refused to obey his Lord and had run away from the path of duty—and here he lies, fast asleep in the lowest part of the ship! O dear Brothers and Sisters, if we could truthfully say that our own work for the Lord was done, we might be somewhat excused if we took our rest. But is our life-work done? Mine is not, that I feel certain. In fact, it seems to be scarcely begun. Is yours finished, my Brother, my Sister? Have you so lived that you can be perfectly content with what you have

done? Would it not be a cause of grief to you if you were assured that you would have no more opportunities of glorifying God upon the earth? I think you would feel that very much. Well, then, how can you be willing to be indifferent, cold and dead when so much of God's work lies before you scarcely touched as yet?

All that you and I have done so far has been like apprentice work—we have just been getting our hands in—we have not become journeymen in God's great workshop yet—certainly we cannot claim to be wise master-builders! Few of us, if any, have attained to that degree, so let us not go to sleep. O Sir, shame on you! Asleep in the early morning? A man may take his rest when he gets weary after a long day's toil, but not yet—with all that work to be done—with the King's commission pressing upon us! With the call of the myriads of Nineveh sounding in his ears, Jonah, God's appointed Messenger, should not have been found asleep in the lowest part of the ship.

This, then, is who the man was. He was a believing man and a praying man. He was a Prophet and a Prophet under a special commission. But where was he? Where had he gone?

Well, he had gone down into the lowest part of the ship. That is to say *he had gone where he hoped he would not be observed or disturbed*. He had gone down into the lowest part of the ship—not among the cargo—the mariners threw that overboard, yet the noise did not wake the sleeping Prophet. He was not upon the deck ready to take a turn at keeping watch—no, he had got as much out of the way as he could! And I have known Christian people try, as far as they could, to get out of the way. Possibly they are not living inconsistently, or doing, as far as others can see, anything that is glaringly sinful—but they have retired from their Master's business. They have got into a little quiet place where nobody notices them. I wonder whether there is a Christian who has gone to live in a country village where he has not yet said anything for Christ, although, when he lived in London, he was a busy worker for God? He has, like Jonah, gone down into the lowest part of the ship, into a quiet place where nobody can see him. Around him there are very few Christian people—perhaps hardly any—and he does not want anybody to know that he is a Christian. He would like to live in a private way. If he were asked about himself, he would answer, as Jonah did, "I fear God." But he does not wish to be asked anything about himself. He does not want people to fix their eyes upon him. He is afraid of being too conspicuous. He says that he was always of a retiring disposition, like the soldier who ran away as soon as the first shot of the battle was fired and so was shot as a deserter. He says that he is like Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, or like Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He has gone down into the lowest part of the ship, though, at one time, he was one of the foremost workers for Christ!

He has gone, too, *where he will not lend a hand in any service that needs to be done*. He was once in the Sunday school, but he says that he has had his turn at that and does not intend to do anything more. He

used to be, perhaps, a deacon of a church, but now he does not wish for such a position as that. He says there is a great deal of trouble and toil in connection with such offices and he intends, for the future, to avoid everything that will give him trouble or cause him the slightest toil. Once he took delight in preaching the Word and in those days if anybody had said that he would live to be silent and not speak in Christ's name, he would have been very angry at the man who made such a statement! But it has now come true. Jonah is not up on deck helping to hold the rudder, or to set a sail, or to do anything—not even a hand's turn to help the poor laboring vessel! He has gone to sleep in the lowest part of the ship where nobody enquires about him, at least for the present, and where there is nothing for him to do!

Observe, too, that *Jonah was staying away from the Prayer Meeting*. Do you ask, "What Prayer Meeting?" Why, every other man on board that ship was crying unto his god, but Jonah was asleep in the lowest part of the ship! He was not praying—he was sleeping and, perhaps, dreaming—but he was certainly not praying! And it is a very bad thing when a true servant of God, a praying man and one by whom God has spoken before, begins to get into such a spiritually sleepy state that he not only does nothing to help the Church, but he does not even join in prayer in the time of danger! Do you know anybody in such a state as that, my Brother? "Yes," you reply, "several." Are you in that state yourself, Brother? If so, let charity for people who are doing wrong begin at home—it may extend to others afterwards. But if this cap fits you, wear it and wear it till you wear it out and have improved yourself through wearing it!

This man, asleep in the lowest part of the ship, *represents one who cannot even take any notice of what was going on around him*. At first he did not wish to be observed, but now he does not care to observe others. What is the condition of the millions of heathen in foreign lands? That is a subject that he avoids—he is of opinion that they will be converted in the millennium, or that even if they are not converted, their future lot may be a happy one. At any rate, it is a subject about which he does not concern himself. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship and he appears quite content to let the millions of heathen perish. Then, with regard to the Church of Christ at home, sometimes he is told that everything is prospering, but from other quarters he is informed that we are all going to the bad. Well, he does not know which report is the true one and he does not particularly care! And as for the Church of which he is a member, does he not care for that? Well, yes, in a certain fashion, but he does not care enough for the Sunday school, for instance, to lend a hand there, or for the preaching society to lend a hand there. He never encourages the minister's heart by saying that the love of Christ compels him to take his share of holy service. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship. He is not much noticed, if at all, for those around him have come to the conclusion that he is good for nothing and he, as I have shown you, does not take much notice of what is going on though all the while he is a man of God, a man of prayer and one whom God has used in times

past! I wonder whether these descriptions are at all applicable to any of my hearers? At any rate, I know that they represent, as in a mirror, the lives of many professors of religion. We trust they are sincere in heart in the sight of God, but, to us their sleepiness is more apparent than their sincerity!

Now, further, what was Jonah doing at that time? *He was asleep—asleep amid all that confusion and noise!* What a hurly-burly there was outside that vessel—storms raging, billows roaring—and Jonah was not a sailor, but a landsman and yet he was asleep. Certainly he must have been in a remarkable state to be able to sleep through such a storm as that! And what a noise there was inside the ship as well as outside! Everybody else was crying to his god and the mariners had been throwing the cargo out of the ship, so they must have stirred the whole place up from one end to the other. There seems to have been scarcely any opportunity for anybody to rest, yet Jonah could sleep right through it all, no matter what noise the men made as they pulled the ropes, or threw out their wares, or what outcries they made as they presented their prayers to their idol gods! Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise and, O Christian, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this—for you to be negligent of God's work in such a time as this is just as strange!

The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake. Then there are the rampant errors of the times, the sins of the times, the confusions of the times, the controversies of the times—all these things ought to wake us. And then, beyond the times, there is eternity with all its terrors and its glories! There is the dread conflict that is going on between Christ and Belial—between the true and the false—between Jesus and antichrist. All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the lowest part of the ship. I think, Brothers and Sisters, if we are spiritually awake—if we only look at the condition of religion in our own country—we shall often be obliged at night to literally lie awake and toss to and fro, crying, "O God, have mercy upon this distracted kingdom and let Your Truth triumph over the Popery which many are endeavoring to bring back among us!"But, alas, the great multitude of Believers have little or no care about this matter—they do not even seem to notice it, for they are sound asleep in the midst of a storm!

Notice, also, that *Jonah was asleep when other people were awake.*. All around us people seem to be wide awake, whether we are asleep or not. When I see what is being done by Romanists and observe the zeal and self-denial of many persons who have dedicated themselves to the propagation of their false faith, I am astonished that we are doing so little for the true faith! Is it really the case that God has the dullest set of servants in the whole world? It is certain that men are all alive in the service of Satan—then we should not be half-alive in the service of our God! Are the worshippers of Baal crying aloud, "O Baal, hear us," and the devotees of Ashtaroth shouting, "Hear us, O mighty Ashtaroth," and yet the

Prophet of Jehovah is lying asleep in the lowest part of the ship? Is it so? Does everything else seem to awaken all of a man's energies—but does true religion paralyze them?

I have really thought, when I have been reading some books written by very good men, that the best thing for sending a man to sleep was a book by an evangelical writer—but that the moment a man becomes unsound in the faith, it seems as if he woke up and had something to say which people were bound to hear! It is a great pity that it should be so, just as it was a great pity that everybody should have been awake on that vessel with the exception of Jonah, yet I fear that it is still only too true that those who serve the living God are not half filled with the awakening fervor which ought to possess them for the honor of the Lord Most High!

Jonah was asleep, next, not only in a time of great confusion and when others were awake, but also *in a time when he was in great danger*, for the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging furiously, yet Jonah was asleep. And, Believer, when you and those about you are in danger of falling into great sin through your careless living—when your family is in danger of being brought up without the fear of God—when your servants are in danger of concluding that religion is all a farce because you act as if it were—when those who watch you in business are apt to sneer at Christian profession because they say that your profession is of very little worth to you—when all this is taking place and there is imminent danger to your own soul and to the souls of others, can you still sleep in unconcern?

And Jonah was asleep *when he needed to be awake*. He, above all other men, was the one who ought to be awake and to call upon his God. If anybody goes to sleep nowadays, it certainly ought not to be the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! All things demand that Christians should be in real earnest. I know of no argument that I could gather from time or eternity, from Heaven or earth, or Hell to allow a Christian to be inactive and careless! But if I am asked for reasons why Christians are needed to be in downright earnest and full of consecrated vigor in the service of God, those arguments are so plentiful that I have no time to mention them all! The world needs you! Careless souls need to be awakened! Enquiring souls need to be directed! Mourning souls need to be comforted. Rejoicing souls need to be established! The ignorant need to be taught, the desponding need to be cheered! On all sides, for a Christian there is an earnest cry and, certainly in these days, God has made a truly godly man to be more precious than the gold of Ophir! And that man who keeps himself back from earnest service for God in such a time as this, surely cannot expect the Lord's blessing to rest upon him. Verily, the old curse of Meroz may well be pronounced upon the man who, in this age and under present circumstances, like Jonah, goes down into the lowest part of the ship, lies down and goes to sleep!

Jonah was asleep with all the heathens around him upbraiding him by their actions. They were praying while he was sleeping and, at last it came to this—that the shipmaster sternly addressed the Prophet of God

and said, "What are you doing, O sleeper?" It is sad, indeed, when things have come to such a pass that a heathen captain rebukes a servant of God! And yet I am afraid that the Church of God, if she does not mend her ways, will have a great many similar rebukes from heathen practices and heathen utterances! Look at the enormous sums that the heathen spend upon their idols and their idol temples and worship—and then think how little we spend upon the service of the living God! One is amazed to read of the lacs of rupees that are given by Indian princes for the worship of their dead deities—and yet our missionary societies languish and the work of God in a thousand ways is stopped because God's stewards are not using what He has entrusted to them as they should. Think, too, of the flaming zeal with which the votaries of false faiths compass sea and land to make one proselyte, while we do so little to bring souls to Jesus Christ!

One of these days you will have Hindu and Brahmins talking to us in this fashion, "You profess that the love of Christ compels you, but to what does it compel you?" They even now ask us what kind of religion must ours be that forces opium upon the poor Chinese! They quote our great national sins against us and I do not wonder that they do. I only wish that they could be told that Christians reprobate those evils and that they are not Christians who practice them. But we must do more than even the best Christians are now doing or else we shall have the heathen saying, as the semi-heathen at home say, "If we believed in eternal punishment, we should be earnest day and night to rescue souls from it"—which is to me a strong corroboration of the truth of that Doctrine. We do not need any Doctrine that can make us less zealous than we are! We certainly do not need any Doctrine that can give us any excuse for lack of zeal. Still, there is great force in the remark I quoted just now. We are not as earnest to save men from going down to the Pit as we ought to be if we do, indeed, believe that they are hastening to that doom! The shipmasters are again rebuking the Jonahs! Those who believe in error and who worship false gods turn around upon us and ask us what we are doing. O Jonah, sleeping Jonah, is it not time that you were awake?

But why was Jonah asleep? I suppose that it was partly the reaction after the excitement through which his mind had passed in rebelling against God. He had wearied himself with seeking his own evil way, so now, after the disobedience to God of which he had been guilty, his spirit sinks and he sleeps. Besides, it is according to the nature of sin to give—not physical sleep, I grant you—but to give spiritual slumber. There is no opiate like the commission of an evil deed. A man who has done wrong is so much less able to repent of the wrong and so much the less likely to do so. Jonah's conscience had become hardened by his willful rejection of his Lord's commands and, therefore, he could sleep when he ought to have been awakened and alarmed.

Besides, he wished to get rid of the very *thought* of God. He was trying to flee from God's Presence. I suppose he could not bear his own though-

ts—they must have been dreadful to him. So, being in a pet against his God and altogether in a wrong spirit, he hunts about for a snug corner of the ship, stretches himself out and there falls asleep and sleeps on right through the storm! O sleepy Christian, there is something wrong about you, too! Conscience has been stupefied. There is some darling sin, I fear, that you are harboring. Search it out and drive it out! Sin is the mother of this shameful indifference! God help you to get rid of it! Brothers and Sisters, I am speaking to you with as much directness as I possibly can, yet not with more than I use towards myself. Have I, in my preaching, been slumbering and sleeping? If you find that I am not in earnest, I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, tell me of it and wake me out of my sleep if you can, as I now tell you of it and say, by all that God has done to you in saving you by His Grace and in making you His servant, give not up your soul to slumber, but awake, awake—put on strength and awaken yourself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to prayer and to the service of your God!

Thus I have spoken, perhaps at too great a length, to Christians.

II. Now, more briefly, I want to give A WARNING TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Jonah, asleep on board that ship, is a type of a great number of unconverted people who come to our various places of worship. Jonah was in imminent danger, for God had sent a great storm after him and, my unconverted Hearer, *your danger at this present moment is beyond description*. There is nothing but a breath between you and Hell! One of our beloved Elders was with us here last Sabbath—he is now with the spirits of just men made perfect—but if it had been the lot of any unconverted person here to suffer and to expire in the same manner, alas, how sad it would have been for you, my Hearer! Driven from the Presence of God, you would be cast in the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! The sword of Divine Justice is already furbished, will you yet make mirth? Can you laugh and jest when there is but a step between you and death—but a step between you and Hell? An enemy to God, unforgiven, the Angel of Justice seeking you out as the storm sought out Jonah in that ship, "What are you doing, O sleeper," when the peril of everlasting wrath is so near you?

You are asleep, too, *when there are a great many things to awake you.* As I have already said, there was a great noise in the vessel where Jonah was, a great noise inside and outside the ship, yet he did not awake. I do believe that many of you unconverted people find it hard to remain as you are. You get hard blows, sometimes, from the preacher. At family prayer, often, your conscience is touched. When you hear a passage from the Bible read, or when you hear of a friend who has died, you get somewhat aroused. Why, the very conversion of others should surely awaken you! If nothing else had awoke Jonah, the prayers of the mariners ought to have awakened him—and the earnestness of your mother and father, the pleading of your sister, the cries of new converts, the earnest anxie-

ties of enquirers ought to have—and if you were not so deeply sunken in slumber, *would have* some influence over you to arouse you.

You are asleep *while prayer could save you*. If your prayers could not be heard, I think I would say, "Let him sleep on." If there were no possibility of your salvation, I do not see why you should be awakened from your slumber. Despair is an excellent excuse for sloth—but you have no reason to despair. "Arise, call upon your God," said the shipmaster to Jonah! And we say to you, "Friend, how is it that you are so indifferent and do not pray, when it is written, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find,' and when the facts prove the Truth of the words of Jesus, 'for he that asks receives, and he that seeks finds'?" Heaven is within your reach, yet you will not stretch out your hands! Eternal life is so near to you that Paul writes, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Assuredly that man who has food heaped up before him, but who sits down and goes to sleep with his head in Benjamin's mess and yet will not eat of it deserves to be starved! He who can sleep when the river runs up to his very lips—he who is dying of thirst, yet will not drink deserves to die, does he not? With such wondrous blessings set before you in the Gospel—with Heaven itself just yonder and the pearly gates set wide open, yet you are so indifferent that you despise the good land and murmur and refuse to accept the Savior who would lead you to it—why, surely, you must be sleeping the sleep of death!

You are sleeping while God's people are wondering at you, just as those mariners in the ship wondered at Jonah—and while they are weeping over you and praying for you! There are some in this place who are the constant subjects of prayer. Some of you who are seated here do not know it, perhaps, but there are those who love you and who mention your name day and night before God. And yet, while they are concerned about you, you are not concerned about yourself! O God, if storms cannot awaken these sleeping Jonahs, awaken them by some other means, even though it is by one like themselves, or one even worse than themselves! Send a message that shall upbraid them. Set some blasphemer to ask them how they can attend the means of Grace and yet be undecided! I have known that to happen. I have known a coarse, vile-living man to accost a moral and excellent attendant on the means of Grace and say to him, "Why are you not either one thing or the other? If religion is all a lie, why don't you be as I am? But if it is true, why don't you become a Christian?"And verily may they put such questions as those to some of you!

O Friends, I pray you, if you are out of Christ, do not pretend to be happy! Do not accept any happiness till you find it in Him. To some of you I would speak very pointedly. Are you sick? Do you feel that your life is very precarious? O my dear Friend, you are like Jonah when the ship was likely to be wrecked. Do not delay! Are there the beginnings of consumption about you? Is it supposed to be so? Do not delay! Has some

relative been taken away and does there seem some likelihood that you may have the same disease? Oh, do not sleep, but awake! Are you getting old, Friend? Are the gray hairs getting thick around your brow? Oh, do not delay! For unsaved young people it is wrong to sleep, for he that sleeps when he is young sleeps during a siege! But he that slumbers when he is old sleeps during the attack, when the enemy is actually at the breach and storming the walls! Do any of you work in dangerous trades? Do you have to eat your bread where an "accident" might easily happen as it has often happened to others? Oh, be prepared to meet your God!

But, having begun this list, I might continue it almost indefinitely, but I will end it in a sentence or so. *Are you a mortal man*? *Can* you *die*? *Will* you die? May you die *now*? May you drop dead in the street? May you go to sleep and never wake up again on earth? May your very food or drink become the vehicle of death to you? May there be death in the air you breathe? May it be so? Will you one day, at any rate, have to be carried to your long home, like others, and lie asleep in the grave? Will you give account to God for the things done in the body? Will you have to stand before the Great White Throne to make one of that innumerable throng and to be there put into the balance to be weighed for eternity? If so, sleep not, I beseech you, as do others, but bestir yourself!

May God's Holy Spirit bestir you to make your calling and election sure! Lay hold on Jesus Christ with the grip of an earnest, humble faith and henceforth surrender yourself to the service of Him who has bought you with His precious blood! God grant to all of us the Grace to awake and arise that Christ may give us life and light for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.

Verses 1-5. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* "It is not merely that I have sinned in practice, but I am a sinner by nature. Sin would not have come out of me if it had not first been in me. I am a mass of sin and must, therefore, be loathsome in Your sight."

6, 7. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop.* Take the bunch of hyssop as the priests did, dip it into the basin filled with sacrificial blood—"Purge me with hyssop." Apply the precious blood of Jesus to me—

7, 8. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* He feels like a man whose bones are broken and he asks the Lord, by putting away his sin, to bind up those broken bones till every one of them should sing a song of gratitude to the Divine Healer.

9-13. *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clear heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* "If You will only save me, I will tell everybody about it. I will be a preacher as well as a penitent. Rising from my knees where I have been confessing my sin, rejoicing that You have blotted it all out, I will hasten away and tell others what a good God You are, and they will believe my testimony, and sinners shall be converted unto You.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.* David had been guilty of the death of Uriah. It is a proof of his sincerity that he does not mince matters, but calls a spade a spade and prays, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God."

14. *The God of my Salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* "I will not only preach, but I will also sing. I will be preceptor as well a preacher. A Christian can never do too much for the Lord who has so graciously pardoned him. David feels that he cannot do anything right, either singing or preaching, by himself; so he adds—

15. *O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering.* God cares little for the mere outward forms of worship. Ritualistic observances are nothing to Him—"You desire not sacrifice, otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering." Though these were the fixed ordinances of the Lord under which David lived, yet he was enabled to look beyond them to something higher and better!

17-19. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* When we come to God and are saved by Him, then ordinances take their proper place. You cannot teach a man how to live until he is born and you cannot teach him what his spiritual life is to be until he is born-again. All religious rites and ceremonies which precede the new birth go for nothing. First there must be the inward life—the broken heart, the contrite spirit—and then everything else drops into proper order. Mind this—God help us all to mind it well!

—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 PLUMB LINE
NO. 2904

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 27, 1876.

"Thus He showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A plumb line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel: I will not again pass by them anymore. Amos 7:7, 8.

GOD usually speaks by men according to their natural capacity. Amos was a herdsman. He was not a man of noble and priestly rank, like Ezekiel, nor a man of gigantic intellect and mighty eloquence, like Isaiah. He was a simple herdsman and, therefore, God did not cause him to see the visions of Isaiah, or dazzle his mind with the wondrous revelations that were given to Ezekiel. God's rule is, "Every man in his own order" and if we depart from that, we get out of place and we are apt to try to make others do that which they are not fit to do and then blame them when they fail to accomplish what they should never have attempted! God always uses His servants in the best possible way and as they ought to be used. And so, when the herdsman Amos had a vision, he simply saw a piece of string with a plumb of lead at the bottom of it—a plumb line—a thing which he could easily understand.

There was a mystery about the vision, but the vision itself was not mysterious. It was a very simple emblem, indeed, exactly suited to the mind of Amos, just as the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah were adapted to the more poetic minds of men of another class. You and I, dear Brothers and Sisters, may be very thankful if God should use us as he did Amos and, if He does, we must not be envying the Isaiahs and Ezekiels. If we see a plumb line, let us preach about a plumb line! And if God should ever enable us to understand the visions of Zechariah or Ezekiel, then let us preach about them. Let every preacher or teacher testify according to the measure of the Light of God and Grace that God has given him—then we shall do well. Amos can see a plumb line and he sees it well—and when he has seen it, he tells what he has seen—and leaves God to set His seal upon his testimony.

Now, on this occasion we have nothing before us but this plumb line, but there is a great deal to be learned from it. The first thing is this—*the plumb line is used in construction.* Secondly, *the plumb line is used for*

testing what is built. And, thirdly, it appears from the text that *the plumb line is used in the work of destruction*, for the casting down of that which is found not to be straight.

I. First, THE PLUMB LINE IS USED IN CONSTRUCTION. We are told in the text that "the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line," that is to say, a wall which had been constructed with the help of a plumb line and, therefore, He tested it with that which was supposed to have been used in its construction—which was a fair and proper thing to do. If the wall only professed to be run up without a plumb line, then it might be hard to try it with the plumb line. But as it was a wall which professed to have been constructed according to the rules of the builder's art, it was fair and reasonable that it should be tested by the plumb line.

First, then, dear Friends, a plumb line is used in building when it is done as it ought to be. And I remind you that *God always uses it in His building*. Everything that God builds is built plumb, straight, square and fair. You see that rule at work in Nature—there is nothing out of proportion there. Those who understand these things and look deeply into them will tell you that the very form and size of the earth have a connection with the blooming of a flower, or the hanging of a dew-drop upon a blade of grass and that if the sun were larger or smaller than it is, or if the material of which the earth is formed were more dense, or different in any degree from what it is, then everything—the most magnificent and the most minute—would be thrown out of gear! Someone of old used to say that God is the great Arithmetician—the great Master of geometry—and so He is. He never makes any mistakes in His calculations. There is not anything in the world that He has made in a careless manner. The mixing of the component parts of the air we breathe is managed with consummate skill and if you could resolve a drop of water into its original elements, you would be struck by the wisdom with which God has adapted the proportions of each particle so as to make a liquid which man can drink! Everything is done by order and rule, as in the changes of the various seasons, the movements of the heavenly bodies and the arrangements of Divine Providence. God always has the plumb line in His hand. He never begins to build, as a careless workman would, that which might turn out to be right, or might turn out to be wrong—He makes sure work of all that He does.

In spiritual matters it is very manifest that whenever God is dealing with souls, He always uses the plumb line. In beginning with us, He finds that the very foundation of our nature is out of the perpendicular and, therefore, He does not attempt to build upon it, but commences His operations by digging it out. The first work of Divine Grace in the soul is to pull down all that Nature has built up. God says, "I cannot use these stones in My building. This man has been behaving himself admirably in some respects and he thinks that he is building up a temple to My honor and glory with his own natural virtues, his own good works and other things of a like character. But all this must be dug out." The man has taken a great deal of pains in putting it together but it must all come out

and there must be a great hole left—the man must feel himself emptied, abased and humbled in the sight of God, for if God is to be everything to the man, then He must be *nothing*! And if Christ is to be his Savior, He must be a complete Savior from beginning to end. So the foundation of human merit must be cleared right out and flung away, for God could not build squarely upon it. With such a foundation as that, the plumb line would never mark a perpendicular wall.

After all human merit has been flung out, the Lord begins His gracious work by laying the foundation stone of a simple faith in Jesus Christ—and that faith, though simple, is very real. When a man professes to convert his fellow man, he only gives him a fictitious faith which is of no value to him. But when God saves a sinner, He gives him real faith. There may be little knowledge of the Truth of God, but the little that the man knows is truth—and faith, though it is but as a grain of mustard seed, if it is of the right sort, it is better than that faith which is as big as a mountain, yet all of the wrong sort, which will not stand in the time of testing! But the faith which the Holy Spirit gives is the faith of God's elect—the real faith which will endure even the tests which God applies to it.

Side by side with that faith, God puts true repentance. When a man attempts to convert his fellow man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation and that there is no need of repentance—or if repentance is needed it is merely a change of mind. That is not the Doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the Doctrine that we have believed! That faith which is not accompanied by repentance will have to be repented of! So, whenever God builds, He builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together—the man just as much regrets and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away.

The Lord never builds anything falsely in any man, or teaches him to reckon that to be true which is not true. He builds with facts, with substantial verities, with true Grace and with a real and lasting work in the soul. When the Lord builds in a man, He builds with the plumb line in the sense of always building up that which is towards holiness. Have any of you fallen into sin? Rest assured that God did not build you in that way. Have sinful desires and lusts after evil been excited within you by any doctrine to which you have listened? Then you may be sure that it was not of God! "By their fruits shall you know them," is an Infallible test of doctrines as well as of disciples! And if any of you have embraced any form of doctrine which hinders you from being watchful, prayerful, careful and anxious to avoid sin, you have embraced error and not the Truth of God, for all God's building tends towards holiness, towards carefulness, towards a gracious walk to the praise and glory of God!

When the Lord builds a man up, He makes him conscientious, makes him jealous of Himself, makes him detect the very shadow of sin so that before the sin, itself, comes upon him, he holds up his all-covering shield of faith that he may be preserved from its deadly assaults. You may always know God's building because it is pure building, clean building—but if anybody builds you up in such a style that you can talk of sin as a trifle and think that you may indulge in it even in the least measure with impunity—that is certainly not God's building!

And, blessed be His name, when our souls are really given up into the Lord's hands, He will continue to build in us until He has built us up to perfection! There will come a day when sin which now makes its nest in this mortal body of ours shall find this body dissolving and crumbling back to the earth of which it was made—and then our emancipated spirits, delivered from the last taint and trace of sin—free from even the *tendency* to evil—shall soar away to be with Christ which is far better—and to wait for the trumpet of the Resurrection, when the body, itself, shall also be delivered from corruption, for the grave is a refining pot and, at the coming of Christ, our body shall be pure and white like the garments of a bride arrayed to meet her bridegroom! And the soul, reunited with the body, shall have triumphed over every sin! This is the way that God builds. He does not build us up so that we can go to Heaven with our sin still working in us. He does not build us up to be temples for Him to dwell in and let the devil also dwell in us. Antinomian building is not according to the fashion of God's building—God builds up surely, solidly, truthfully, sincerely and until we have reached that state of perfection which makes us fit for Heaven!

Now, Beloved, as God thus uses the plumb line in His building, I gather that *we also should use the plumb line in our building.* First, with regard to the lifting up of our own soul, I would urge upon myself, first, and then upon you, next, the constant use of the plumb line. It is very easy to seek after speed and to neglect to ensure certainty. There is such a thing as being in a dreadful hurry to do what had better never be done, or else be done in a very different style. We see some people who become Christians in about two minutes—and I am devoutly thankful when that is really the case. We see some others become full-grown Christians in about two days and instructors of others in the course of a week—and, very speedily, they attain to such vast dimensions that there is no ordinary church that is big enough to hold them! That is very quick work—that is the way that mushrooms grow, but it is not the way that oaks grow! I urge you all to remember that often the proverb, "the more haste, the less speed," is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you only grow an inch in the course of ten laborious years, yet that growth is real—it is better than appearing to grow six feet in an hour when that would only be disease puffing you up and blowing you out. Often and often the soul needs to use the plumb line to see whether that which is built so very quickly is really built perpendicularly, or whether it does not lean this way or that. As the work goes on,

we should frequently stop and say to ourselves, "Now, is this right? Is this real? Is this true?" Many a time, if we did that, we would have to fall on our knees and cry, "O Lord, deliver me from exalting myself above measure and counting myself to be rich and increased with goods when, all the while, I am wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."

I would like you young men who are here to use the plumb line when you begin your spiritual life-building. I mean this—your father and mother are members of a certain church, but do not you, therefore, go and join that church without a thorough investigation of the principles on which it is founded. Use the plumb line to see whether it is all straight and square. Try all the doctrines that are taught and do not embrace that which is popular, but that which is Biblical! Then try with the plumb line the ordinances of the church—do not submit to them simply because other people do so, but use the plumb line of Scripture to test them all. You know that as a body we are not afraid that you will ever read your Bible too much. We, as Baptists, have no objection to your bringing everything that is taught to the test of the Bible, for we know that we would be the gainers if you were to do that. But instead of using the plumb line of the Bible, many people have a newly-invented test—the Book of Common Prayer, or Minutes of the Conference, or something else equally valueless! Now, whatever respect I have for books of that sort, I prize my Bible infinitely above them all and above all the volumes of decrees of popes, councils and conferences put together! I would not like to feel that I had been building, and building, and building, and building and yet that there had been a radical error in the whole structure, for I had commenced with a mistake and I had been building myself up not in the most holy faith of the Apostles, but in the most mischievous error of my own notions! I pray you, apply the Bible plumb line continually to all your beliefs, views and practices!

But, even before you do that, use the Gospel plumb line to see whether you really were ever born-again, for our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Test yourselves as to whether you have really believed in Jesus Christ for, "without faith it is impossible to please God." And if you have believed in Him, take care that while you think you are getting more faith, more love, more patience, more of every Grace—keep the plumb line going—otherwise you may get a great deal into the structure that you will have to take out, again, and you will get the building out of the perpendicular and the whole of it may come down with a crash!

And this plumb line is also to be used upon all work that is done on behalf of other people. There is much teaching which has been given with a pure motive, but which, nevertheless, cannot endure this test. There are some little sects still existing upon the face of the earth that were formed with much labor by their originators, but they are evidently not gold, or silver, or precious stones, for they are passing away with the lapse of time. I would like, as a minister of the Gospel, to do for God that which will endure the supreme test of the Day of Judgment. I should not

like to build up a great Church and then, when I was dead and gone, for it to be scattered to the four winds—and to learn in Heaven that I had been mistaken except as to the matter of my own salvation and that, consequently, while some good was done, there was evil done as well! No, we must constantly use the plumb line so that what we build may be perpendicular and may stand the test of the ages and the test of God's great Judgment Seat! Look to it, Sirs, you who are diligent, that you are diligent in spreading the Truth of God and not error! See to it, you who count up your many converts, that they are real converts and not the mere fruit of excitement! See to it, you who plod on from day to day so industriously seeking to save souls that they are really saved and truly brought to Christ, for, if not, your work will be in vain! Churches that are built in a hurry will come down in a hurry—wood, hay and stubble that look all right in the building will look terrible in the burning when the Day of the Trial by Fire comes!

So that is our first point—that the plumb line is to be used in the construction of the building.

II. Secondly, THE PLUMB LINE IS TO BE USED FOR TESTING THE BUILDING WHEN IT IS BUILT.

Do not let us judge either ourselves or one another simply by the eyes. I have frequently thought that a building was out of the perpendicular when it was not and I have sometimes thought it perpendicular when it really was not so. The human eye is readily deceived, but the plumb line is not—it drops straight down and at once shows whether the wall is upright or not .*We must continually use upon ourselves the plumb line of God's Word*. Here is a wall that needs to be tested—the wall of self-righteousness. This man thinks he is all right. He never did anything very wrong. Moreover, he is religious in his way. He says that he has kept the Law of God from his youth up. That is a fine piece of wall, is it not?—with some very handsome stones inlaid with fair colors. You are very proud of it, my dear Friend, but if I put the Bible plumb line to your life, you will be astonished to find how much out of the perpendicular it is. The plumb line is according to this standard, "If any man will be saved by his own works, he must keep the Law of the Lord perfectly, for he who is guilty of the breach of any one of God's commandments, has broken the whole Law. 'Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.'" That condemns your wall, does it not?—because you have not at all times kept the whole Law of God in the fullness of the meaning which Christ gave to it. If you are to be saved by works, there must not be a single flaw in the whole wall of your life! If there is, it is not in the perpendicular.

Here is another wall, built by a man who says that he is doing his best and trusting to Christ to make up for his deficiencies. Well, my dear Friend, your wall is sadly out of the perpendicular because there is a text which says, "Christ is all"—and I know that the Lord Jesus Christ will never be willing to be put side by side with such a poor creature as you are—to be jointly used with yourself to your soul's salvation! Remember

that in the Gospel plan it is not Christ and Co.—it must be all Christ, or no Christ at all! So, if you are depending partly upon self and partly upon Him, my plumb line shows that your wall is out of the perpendicular and that it will have to come down.

Another man is depending upon rites and ceremonies. Now there are some very strong texts in Scripture concerning that matter. Here is one. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Will you come before God bringing the blood of beasts or costly offerings? Has He not told you that to come before Him with a broken and a contrite heart and, especially to come to Him through the merit of the one great Sacrifice offered by His Son is the only acceptable way of approaching Him? The most gorgeous ceremonies in the whole world cannot save a single soul! That wall is out of the perpendicular and must come down!

Here is another man who says, "I am, as often as I can be, a hearer of the Word." I am glad that you are, but if you are only a hearer and not a *doer* of the Word, your wall is out of the perpendicular, for, if it is good to hear what is right, it is still better to *do* it. And your condemnation will be all the more terrible if you have known what you ought to do and yet have not done it. There are many of you who come here and who have been coming for a long time who, I hope, will be led to do much more than simply come to hear, for I trust that you will be led by the Holy Spirit to lay hold on eternal life! If not, your wall will not endure the test of the Bible plumb line which plainly shows that you are quite out of the perpendicular!

There are many other bowing walls, beside those I have mentioned, but I cannot stop to try them now. I would, however, most earnestly urge you all to remember that if you *do not test yourself* by the plumb line of God's Word—*if you are God's servant, you will be tried and tested*. Have you ever known what it is to be laid aside, on a bed of sickness, and to have everything about you tried? In times of acute pain I have had every morsel of what I thought to be gold and silver put into the fire, piece by piece, by the Master, Himself, until He has put it all in. Thank God some of it has been proven to be gold and has come out all the brighter for the testing. But oh, how much of it has proved to be alloy, or even worthless dross! You can have a great deal of patience when you have not any pain. And you can have a great deal of joy in the Lord when you have got joy in your worldly prosperity—and you can have any quantity of it when you have no troubles to test its reality! But the real faith is that which will endure the trial by fire. The real patience is that which will bear intense agony without a murmur of complaint. The Lord will test and try you, my Brothers and Sisters, sooner or later, if you are His. He will be sure to use the plumb line so you had better use it yourself. It may save you much anxiety in the future if you stop now to question yourself and to enquire whether these things are real and true to you or not.

And remember, once more, that *God will use the plumb line at the Last Great Day to test everything*. How many of us could hear, without a tremor, the intimation that God had summoned us to appear before His

bar? O my Brothers and Sisters, if the great scales of Divine Justice were swinging from this ceiling right now and the Judge of All said to you, "Step in and let me see what is your weight," is there one of us who could solemnly and sincerely rise and say, "Lord, I am ready for the weighing"? Yes, I trust that many could say, each one for himself or herself, "There is not anything good in me, but my hope is fixed on Christ alone. And though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I want to be, nor what I shall be, yet 'by the Grace of God I am what I am.' My profession of being a Christian is not a lie. It is not a pretense, it is not a piece of religious masquerade—it is true, great God—it is true."

My Brother, my Sister, if you can say that, you may step into the scales without any fear, for the contrite and believing heart can endure being weighed! But into the scales you will have to go whether you are ready or not. Your building will all have to be tested and tried. Some of you have built fine mansions, towers and palaces—but the plumb line will be applied to them all and it is God, Himself, who will use the plumb line in every case! No counterfeit will be allowed to pass the pearly gates, nor anything that defiles, or works abomination, or makes a lie. At the Last Great Day none shall pass from beneath the eye of the Judge of all without due examination. He will not suffer even one of the guilty to escape, nor condemn any of those who have been absolved for Christ's sake. It will be a right and just judgment that will be given in that day—but there will be judgment!

III. My last point is this—THE PLUMB LINE IS USED IN THE WORK OF DESTRUCTION.

When a city wall was to be battered down, the general would sometimes say, "This wall is to be taken down to this point." And then the plumb line was hung down to mark how far they were to go with the work of destruction. They thus marked out that part which might be spared and that which must be destroyed. Now, in the work of destruction, God always uses the plumb line and *He goes about that work very slowly*. He shows that He does not like it. When the Lord is going to save a sinner, He has wings on His feet—but when He is going to destroy a sinner, He goes with lead footsteps, waiting, warning many times and while He waits and warns, He sighs and cries, "How shall I give you up?" He even goes so far as to use an oath, saying, "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." God never brings men to judgment, as the infamous Judge Jeffreys did, in a great haste—he would hurry them off to the gallows with indecent speed. But, at the Last Great Day there will be a solemn and stately pomp about the whole dread assize—the sounding of the trumpet, the bursting of the graves, the setting up of the Great White Throne, the opening of the books and the majestic appearance of Him from whose face Heaven and earth will flee away! And when the Judgment begins, it will not be without due order, nor will it be without keen perception of all differences. There will hang the Infallible plumb line! That which is perpendicular will be declared to be perpendicular

and that which bows will be shown tottering to its fall, for, before the Judge's eyes and before the eyes of the assembled universe shall hang a plumb line, with these words above it, "He who is filthy, let him be filthy still…and he who is holy, let him be holy still."

The whole judgment shall be according to the plumb line. *Not a soul, in that great day, will be sent to Hell who does not deserve to go there!* If there is any man who can plead that it would be unjust to condemn him—if he can truthfully prove that he has been obedient up to the measure of his light—if he can prove that justice is on his side—God will not do an unjust turn to him or to any other man. Those awful gates that grind upon their iron hinges never yet opened to receive a soul damned unjustly! It would be impossible, in the very nature of things, for such a thing to happen. If any man could truly say, "This is unjust," he would have taken away the sting of Hell, for this is the essence and the soul of Hell—"I am wrong and can never get right. I am wrong and do not want to get right. I am so wrong that I love the wrong and make evil to be my good, and good to be my evil! I hate God, for it is impossible, while I am in such a state as this, that I can be otherwise than unhappy—and this is the greatest Hell that can happen to a man—not to love God and not to love right." That is the flame of Hell, the worm that gnaws forever—that being out of gear with God—that being out of harmony with the Most High forever! I think that there needs to be no fiercer Hell than that.

So the final judgment will be according to the plumb line so that no one will be condemned unjustly. You talk to me about the fate of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel and I reply, "I know very little about them, but I know that God is just, so I leave them in His hands knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right." There will not be one pang, to a soul in Hell, more than that soul deserves—not a single spasm of despair, or a sinking in hopelessness that is imposed by the arbitrary will of God. It will be a terrible reaping for them, when they reap sheaves of fire, but they will only reap what they have sown. There will be an awful pouring out of Divine Vengeance upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, but no one will be able to say that the judgment is unjust. The lost will feel that they only have to eat as they baked and to drink as they brewed. It will all be just to them and this is what will make the teeth of the serpent of Hell and the flame of its fire—that it is all just—that if I were, myself, judge, I must condemn myself to what I have to suffer. Think of that and escape from the wrath to come!

And as that plumb line hangs there, in that Great Day of Account, *there will be differences made between some lost men and other lost men.* All Hell is not the same Hell any more than all flesh is the same flesh. That man knew His Lord's will and did it not—lay on the lashes to the fullest that the law allows! That other man did not obey His Lord's will, but then, he did not know it, so he shall be beaten with few stripes. Few will be too many for anyone to bear, so do not run the risk of them! But, oh, the many stripes—what will they be? There are the lost that perished in Sodom and Gomorrah—those filthy beings whose sins we dare not

think upon. There they are and there is the Hell they suffer. There hangs the plumb line and, by His unerring justice, God awards their doom!

But what will He award to you, and you, and you who have heard the Gospel simply and plainly preached, and yet have rejected Christ? You will have to go lower down in Hell than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, for God's plumb line tells us that sin against the Light of God is the worst of sin and that the willful rejection of the atoning blood flowing from the loving Savior's wounds is the climax of all iniquity! That is how the plumb line will work. And when you come up, you rich man who has spent your money in sin—and when you come up, you poor man who works so hard—there shall be a difference between the one of you and the other—between the seducer whom the world allows to enter into her drawing room and the poor girl whom he led astray, for, though both are guilty—God will make a difference, not as men make it here, but quite the other way! The man of talent, of rank and of position who frittered away his whole existence in the life of a butterfly—there will be a difference between his sentence and that of the obscure, uneducated individual who did sin, but not as he did who had the greater gifts! To put one talent in a napkin brings its due punishment—but to bury or misuse 10 talents shall bring a tenfold doom—for there will hang that plumb line and by the rules of Infinite Justice everything shall be determined.

"This is dreadful talk," some of you may be saying. It is. It is. And it is a dreadful business altogether for the lost—that being driven from God's Presence when you die—hearing Him say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." You do not like to hear about this and I do not like to preach about it. Only I must do so lest you come unto that place of torment because I failed to warn you. Then might you say in your despair, "O cursed preacher! O unfaithful minister! You tried to tickle our ears with pleasant things but you left out all allusions to the wrath to come! You toned down the Truth of God, you softened it—and now we are ruined forever through your wicked desire to please our foolish ears!

O Sirs, you will never be able to truthfully say that, for I do pray you to escape from that awful future! Run no risk of it. I think every one of you would like to have his house insured against fire and to know that as far as proper title-deeds go, whatever you have is held on a good tenure. Then I implore you, make sure work for eternity by laying hold on Christ Jesus! Yield yourself up to Him that He may make you right where you are wrong, put you in gear with God and set you running parallel with the will of the Most High! That He, indeed, may build you up on the perpendicular, on the solid foundation of His eternal merits by faith through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit—that you may be so built that when God, Himself, holds the plumb line, it may hang straight down and He will be able to say, "It is all right." Happy will you be if you hear His verdict, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

May God grant this mercy to each one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

Verse 1. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.* Their spiritual part had not grown strong. Their old carnal nature still had the preponderance as Paul was obliged to address that which was the bigger half of them.

2. *I have fed you with milk.* That is a blessing.

2. *And not with meat.* That is not a blessing. It is a great privilege to be fed even with the simple Doctrines of Grace, with the milk of the Gospel. But it is a higher blessing to have such a spiritual constitution as to be able to eat the strong meat of the Word!

2, 3. *For hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men?* As ordinary, unregenerate men.

4. *For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?* Is not this just how common, ordinary men would do? Where is your spiritual-mindedness if you so act?

5. *Who then is Paul?* Mark, it is Paul, himself, who asks this question! He puts his own name here in order to show that he does not despise Apollos any more than he despises himself.

5-9. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry.* You are God's tilled ground. Then the Apostle works out the same thought under another image turning from agriculture to architecture.

9, 10. *You are God's building. According to the Grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon.* Paul began the churches. He was the first preacher of the Gospel in Corinth and also in other places—and other preachers followed in his footsteps. When a man lays a good foundation, he always feels anxious that those who come after him should build in the same substantial manner as he has begun. It is a great grief to a man if he sees that after he has laid a foundation of the Truth of God, somebody else follows and builds up an error on the top of it. Alas, men still do that sometimes!

10-15. *But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones,*

wood, hay, rubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work endures which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. If he is a good man, he builds for God, though he may build mistakenly and say much that he ought not to have said. He shall escape, as a man flies out of a burning house, but all his work is gone. What a dreadful thing that would be, at the end of life, to get into Heaven, but to have seen that all your life's work had been a failure—to have been building a great deal, but to see it all burned—or to know, as you die, that because it was not God's Truth, it would all be burned!

16, 17. *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God*—For so it should run—

17. *Him shall God destroy.* If any man should pull down that which Paul built for God—if any man shall pull down that which any faithful minister of Christ has built before him—"him shall God destroy;"

17, 18. *For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* For that kind of folly is the doorstep of true wisdom.

19. *For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.* All that which calls itself philosophy and talks about its culture and so on, is foolishness with God—just as much today as it was among the Greeks.

19. *For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness.* They call themselves wise, but they shall all be taken in their own craftiness.

20, 21. *And again, The lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men.* Men are poor things to glory in.

21, 23. *For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.* Glory be to His holy name!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103, 614, 641.

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

THE FATHER AND THE SON
NO. 2905

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1904,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1876.

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3.

THE 12 Apostles were favored with the most intimate communion with our blessed Lord, but I can hardly say that they entered into fellowship with Him during His life on earth. Each of them might have been asked the question that our Savior put to one of them—"Have I been so long a time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" But after Christ had ascended to Heaven and the Spirit of God had rested upon His disciples and in proportion as the Spirit did rest upon them, all that they had seen, heard and handled of their Lord became a means of communion between Himself and them. They were then able to realize what a very near, dear, deep and familiar communion had been possible to them through having spent some three years or so with Him in public and in private and having actually seen Him, heard His voice and felt the touch of His hands.

Now, since their literal hearing, seeing and touching Christ did not create communion with Him apart from the work of the Spirit, we need not so much regret, as we might otherwise have done, that we never saw, or heard, or touched the Savior—because we, also, without seeing, or hearing, or touching Him, can believe in Him and rejoice that He said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And, further, as it is through faith, rather than by sight, or hearing, or feeling that the Spirit of God operates upon us, when we believe the witness of the Apostles concerning Christ, the Spirit of God will bless their message to us and we shall enter into the Apostles' fellowship! What the Apostles learned, they learned in order that they might tell others. All that John saw, he was prepared to speak of according to his ability, that others might have fellowship with him and, dear Friends, remember that if you ever learn anything of Christ—if you have any enjoyment of His Presence at any time—it is not for you, alone, but for others to share with you! When fellowship is the sweetest, your desire is the strongest that others may have fellowship with you and when, truly, your fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, you earnestly wish that the whole Christian brotherhood may share the blessing with you. My great

desire, just now, is not so much to preach to you *as to lead you*, by the Holy Spirit's gracious assistance, into the actual enjoyment of that which the Apostles possessed, that, believing, as we do, their testimony, we might thereby enter into their fellowship!

First, I am going to try to answer this question, *What is this fellowship with the Father and with His Son in general?* Secondly, I want to show you how we *can enjoy this fellowship in meeting, as we do, to celebrate the sacred Supper in memory of our ascended Lord.*

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON WHICH THE APOSTLES ENJOYED AND WHICH THEY WISHED US TO SHARE WITH THEM?

Let me give you an illustration to show you what fellowship is. Yet, while I use it, I regret that it falls so far short of the Truth of God I wish to illustrate, yet I know not of a better one. Suppose that a great plague raged in London, like that which carried off so many of the population in years gone by? And suppose that there lived, in this city, a father and a son whose one care was for the healing of others. Suppose you lived in the same house as they lived in and that you saw the intimate affection existing between them? And suppose that you were in their council chamber when they consulted together as to what was to be done for the perishing citizens? You would mark the resolve of the son to make a sacrifice of himself from day to day by going into the homes of those who were dying with the plague. You would observe him as, with his father's smile resting upon him, he went forth to his work. You were privileged to live in the house while the work of rescue was going on and you saw how the sick ones were being plucked from the grip of the terrible disease, like brands from the burning. You watched the father's love and the son's self-sacrifice—and you were filled with admiration of them.

Now, that being taken as a supposition, feeble as it is, I want to ground upon that my description of what is meant by fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. You must not, however, confuse fatherhood and sonship, as they exist among men, with these relationships as they stand towards God, for it is the eternal Father and the eternal Son with whom we are to be brought into fellowship and the terms that are used in speaking of them are accommodated to our poor understandings—but they are not to be *literally* construed and, they are especially not to be understood in any *carnal* sense, nor to be applied to the *unregenerate*.

Well, suppose we are living in such a house as I have tried to describe to you—the first thing necessary for fellowship with such a father and such a son would be *mutual communication*. To live in the house where they were, yet never to speak to them, or to be spoken to by them, would be no sort of fellowship! Merely to know that there were such persons in the house and to know that they were engaged in such blessed work as that would not make us partakers with them and would not give us communion with them. We must speak to them and they must speak to us. And the speaking, on both sides, must be of a kind, loving sort—not,

on our part, that which would offend them, nor, on their part—that which would imply anger towards us. That is the very beginning of our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There must be mutual communication between us. We must have heard the voice of God in our hearts and we must have spoken to God from our hearts. You cannot enjoy this fellowship, my Friend, whatever you say, unless your soul has learned to speak with God in prayer and praise—and unless your ears have learned to listen to whatever He says to you through His Book and by His Spirit, through His ministers and in Creation and Providence. His voice is sounding everywhere and, in order to fellowship with Him you must have the ears that hear and the heart that believes what He says to you. And you also must have a tongue that responds to His voice, for there can be no true communion without mutual communication. Do you not perceive the kinship of the two words, *communion and communication*, communion and conversation? This there must be or there will be no true fellowship.

Now think of our illustration again, but transfer it to the higher sphere. You are living in the house and you are sick with the plague. Yet, suffering in that fashion in the house where the one business carried on is the healing of the sick, I will suppose that *you refuse to put yourself under the care of the son, who is the great physician.* If you despise his remedies, or delay receiving them, you cannot be said to have any true fellowship with him. Evidently you do not appreciate his efforts on behalf of others, or you would be willing to accept his services on your own account. It is his business to save, yet you are not saved. He is quite close to you and he is able, with a single touch of his hand, to heal you, yet you will not permit his skill to be exercised upon you. Then, clearly, you do not believe in him, for you do not desire to submit yourself to him! And it is equally clear that you have no fellowship with him and cannot have any. If we are to have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must, first of all surrender these poor sinful souls of ours into His dear hands—and we must go to the Father and say to Him, "Father, we have sinned." And as we gaze, by faith, upon the atoning Sacrifice, we must say, "But although we must confess that we have sinned, there is the blood that makes atonement for sin—therefore, Father, accept us because we put our trust in Your only-begotten Son."

This is essential to true fellowship and, as you will see, it is a part of it. So here you are, first of all, in communication with the Father and the Son and, secondly, reconciled to God by the death of His Son—healed of the awful, soul-destroying plague of sin. And thus you have taken two steps upon the great highway of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ! And you can sing with Toplady—

"For Your free electing favor, You,
O Father, we adore!
Jesus, our atoning Savior,
You we worship evermore!"

But it is necessary, further, supposing us to be living in the house with this father and son and desiring to have full fellowship with them,

that we should have *an intelligent apprehension of the work they are doing*. Suppose we know as a matter of general knowledge that they are healing the sick, but we are not aware of the self-denials to which that well-beloved son has exposed himself, or of the bountiful heart of that generous father who was willing even to yield up his son to endure all the perils of the plague for the sake of those who were smitten by it? If we do not know as much as this, we cannot have anything like full fellowship with the father and the son, but in proportion as we study the details of their work—and perceive the adaptation of what they are doing to the great end they have in view—we shall be sure to have fellowship with them. So, Beloved, when you are yourselves saved, study to know more and more about both Christ and the Father! Dive deeply into the great mystery of the Divine Purposes of Love and Mercy. See how the Father ordained, before the foundation of the world, that in the race of mankind He would find exponents of His boundless love who will make known to principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, throughout eternity, the manifold riches of His Grace. See, too, how He laid upon His Son the work of healing this sin-smitten world. Study every detail that you can ascertain concerning the Father and the Son—the minutest touch upon the canvas is worthy of a century's study, so full is every point of deep mystery and rich instruction to the soul. And I am persuaded that as you increase in the knowledge of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ through the Revelation of the Divine Spirit, you will also increase your fellowship with the Father and with His Son!

We advance still further *when this work, which is being done by those whom we are in such close contact, commands our intense approbation and admiration.* Turning, for a minute, simply to our illustration, think of the heroic father and of his self-denying son and say to yourself, "How amazing it is that these plague-stricken people should be allowed to come and howl and rage against him under his very window! Yet all the while he is living for them—how strange it is that these very people who in the madness that follows from their disease, even seek the life of his son, the great physician! Nevertheless they are the objects of that great physician's sedulous care and he is ready to lay down his life for them if he may save them!" You would thus find your heart going out in admiration of that father and son and such undeserved and disinterested love as theirs would bring you into fellowship with them. Now lift the illustration again into the higher sphere, and see, through it, the grand design of God to make His foes His friends, to change rebels into loyal courtiers, to make ingrates into sons and daughters and to lift up the heirs of wrath and cause them to sit with Him as kings and priests upon His Throne! When you see how Christ comes down to raise this world up from the gulf into which it had fallen and, like another Atlas—only far greater—to bear upon His shoulders the weight of the world's sin, you cannot help admiring Him! And as you admire and approve, you enter into a still higher measure of fellowship with the Father and with His Son.

You get on to a further stage when, at last *you are able to enter into sympathy with the Divine Workers*. Suppose (to go back to our illustration), you lived in the house with that father and son and saw this work of mercy going on day after day—poor starving and dying people being picked up, placed in the hospital and healed—and that great physician, the son, perpetually suffering in order that he might heal them, enduring all manner of insults and ignominy at their hands, yet always determining to save them? You would come, at last, to feel such sympathy with both father and son that the plague-stricken people would be almost as much the objective of your care as of theirs! You would be worked up into enthusiasm for the poor sufferers and you would feel that it was such a blessed work to help in caring for them that if it were possible, you would wish to be engaged in it. You begin to take an interest in all the details of the service and you rejoice as you hear of one and another of the sick ones being restored. You feel that you must love the self-denying physician who is giving up comfort, ease, honor—everything—to save the suffering and dying people. You feel such sympathy with him in the work that he is doing that you could kiss his feet. And when you hear of his being despised and rejected, you feel that you could wash his feet with your tears of regret that he should be treated in so shameful a fashion.

You are getting into fellowship with him now! And when I look at my dear Lord and Master and think of the Father and the Son planning and working with heart and soul for the salvation of the chosen. And when I see sinners saved one by one, or even by hundreds delivered from sin and made fit for Heaven, my soul feels a deep sympathy with this glorious work! Do you not also feel it, dear Friends? Do you not wish that sinners may be saved? Do you not pray that they may be? Does not your heart feel intense sympathy with the eternal purpose of the Father and the gracious work of the Savior? If so, you are having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ!

I can suppose that living in the house with that father and son, *you would want to go still further and share their work*. If you had been cured by the skill of the physician, you would feel so intensely sympathetic with him in the great work that he is carrying on that, somewhat timidly and humbly, you would venture to say, "Can I be of any use? Can I carry the medicine, or put on the bandages, or give a cup of cold water to fevered lips, or wipe a tear from a weeping eye, or sit up at night with the sick who need to be watched and tended? Or can I even clean the floor of the house, or unloose the laces of the physician's shoes?—

"My God, I feel the mournful scene,
My heart yearns over dying men
And wishes my pity would reclaim
And snatch the firebrands from the flame."

And if, as will be sure to be the case when you are doing something for Christ, some of the patients begin to mock you, as they mocked Him, that will reveal to you another phase of fellowship with Him. Then you will understand why He was so patient, for you will need to ask Him to make you patient. And when your words of warning, or instruction, or

comfort are rejected, as His were, you will go to Him and say, "O Savior, I understand now a little of what Your griefs were when You were despised and rejected of men, for they have rejected Your Word which You did put in my mouth." In struggling to do good to others, you will meet with such rebuffs, misrepresentations, difficulties and direct oppositions that you will go to the Savior and say to Him, "O my Lord, I can now understand You better—not that I am anything like what I ought to be, but even my failures help me to see more of Your Sovereign patience and Your mighty love. O Divine Self-Denier—wondrous Self-Sacrificer—I would never have had such fellowship with You as I now have if You had not permitted me to take some humble part in this, Your great and glorious work!"

So now you see. You have reached a point a long way ahead of where we started. You are now enjoying fellowship with the Father and with the Son because you have become a co-worker with God! We put our puny hands to the great work which He has undertaken and He strengthens our weak hands to do marvels for His name's sake. He works mightily within us and so we are able to work for Him and to have fellowship with Him. To come to the climax of all, I will suppose that you are living in that house of mercy which has been my figure all along and that you throw your whole soul so completely into the work that is carried on there that you say to the father and son, "This work so fully commands my sympathy and so delights my heart that I am quite carried away with enthusiasm for it. I admire the characters and I love the persons of those with whom I dwell—and now I ask that all I am and all I have may be used for the furtherance of this work—that I may not be reckoned merely as a lodger in this house, but be regarded as one of the family and that from henceforth, I, in my poor, humble capacity—for I am less than nothing—may never be personally mentioned again, but may be considered as part and parcel of this great mysterious firm whose existence means nothing but good to the city, and whose influence is all being employed for the health of the inhabitants."

You know what I mean—lifting the illustration to the higher sphere—and it is well if you can say to the Lord, at last, "My Lord, henceforth for me to live shall be to do what You will and to give myself wholly up to seek those for whom Christ lived here below and upon which the Father's heart has always been set. Father, You will that Your Truth should be known wherever lies have, at present, the dominion—then give me Grace, I pray You, to will it, too, and to publish Your Truth everywhere according to the measure of my ability. You will that the nations of the earth should be subdued unto your Son and become His loyal subjects—then, I pray You to put me into the ranks of the legions by whom You will achieve this glorious victory."

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you will indeed have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ when *you are nothing* and Christ is everything! When you do not live to make money, or to attain to earthly honor, or to gain comfort, or anything else for yourselves, but when each of you can say, "This one thing will I do, for Christ will I live,

and for Christ will I be content even to die so that to the utmost ends of the earth His name and fame may be made known."—

"I want to live as one who knows
Your fellowship of love.
As one whose eyes can pierce beyond
The pearl-built gates above.
As one who daily speaks to You,
And hears Your voice Divine,
With depths of tenderness declare,
'Beloved, you are Mine!'"

II. Now, in the second place, I have to briefly answer the second question—HOW MAY FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE SON BE ENJOYED IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

As you all know, the Lord's Supper is the memorial feast in which we are to show, or proclaim, the Lord's death "till He comes." Come He will and our hearts cry to Him, "Even so, come quickly, good Master!" This Supper sets forth His death and the way in which we derive benefit from it, namely, by receiving Him spiritually into our souls even as we take the bread and wine literally into our bodies and assimilate them so that they become part of ourselves. Well, then, how can we have fellowship with God in showing forth the death of Christ by means of this memorial supper?

I think we can do so, first, *by coming to the conclusion that the Sacrifice of Christ was an absolute necessity*. We are fully persuaded that God the Father would never have given up His only-begotten Son to die for human guilt if there had been any other way of saving lost sinners—and also that Jesus Christ would never have taken upon Himself the awful burden of human guilt and agreed to be bruised of the Father if it had not been absolutely essential that He should die, or that man should, or that justice should—it had to be one of the three! God the Father agreed with God the Son that this colossal Sacrifice was necessary. My Soul, do you also agree that it was necessary? Do you see that there was no loophole for your escape except through the bleeding Savior's wounds? Will you now admit with all your heart that the Father's wisdom was right and that the Son's wisdom was right? Has the Spirit of God taught you that this was the best plan of salvation that could possibly have been devised? Looking all around, have you come to the conclusion that there is no salvation by works, no salvation by tears and no salvation anywhere but by the blood of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son? If any of you have come to that conclusion, you have thereby entered into fellowship with the Father and with the Son, for they have long ago come to the same conclusion!

Then, next, dear Friends, while you are sitting around the Communion Table, *endeavor to think of the sufferings of Christ so that you will, in your measure, enter into the moods of His mind while He was suffering for you.* As He felt a great horror of sin, pray the Lord to make you feel intense horror of it—and let the very thought of it wound you as it wounded Him. He felt the shame of sin—then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how

shameful it is. In your mind and heart, crown sin with a crown of thorns like that with which it crowned your Lord. And spit at sin, and scoff at sin, even as sin did scoff and spit at your Lord! Yet further, our Lord Jesus felt that justice must be honored—so feel in your soul, as you come to the Table, that the Justice of God must be honored, magnified and glorified. Have fellowship with Christ in feeling that, cost what it may, God is never unjust. Agree to that in your heart of hearts and you will be having fellowship with the Father and with the Son while you are so agreeing!

Go over in your mind all the griefs and woes that your dear Lord endured and remember how He resolved that for the joy that was set before Him, they were all things to be despised. Do you feel that any losses and cross which you may have to bear for His sake, or any scorn or persecution that may ever come upon you because you belong to Christ are things that are only to be reckoned as the small dust of the balance in comparison with the glory of God? Then you are drinking of Christ's cup and being baptized with His Baptism—and having fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Let your thoughts travel along the road to Gethsemane and from Gethsemane to the accursed gallows on the hill of Calvary. In your meditation follow your Lord and ask Him to let you drink of the brook by the way, as He did, that you also may lift up your head—and in that way you will have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. You may even adopt the rapturous language of Faber and sing—

"I love to kiss each print where
Christ did set His pilgrim feet,
Nor can I fear that blessed path
Whose traces are so sweet."

Then, again, Beloved, I pray the Holy Spirit *to help you and to help me to glorify God concerning the death of Christ while we are at His Table.* As you eat the bread and drink the wine, think of what Christ suffered and of the mysterious way in which His sufferings have brought Glory to the Father's name. I do verily believe that when Christ bore the sins of His people up to the tree—and away from the tree—the Justice of God was more honored than it would have been if all the elect had been sent to Hell forever! If our sins had been punished upon ourselves with the utmost rigor of the Divine Law, that Law would not have been as honored throughout the entire universe of intelligent beings as it now must be when they hear that God, Himself, would sooner pay the penalty of sin than allow His Law to be broken with impunity! O august death of Christ in which God, Himself, becomes the sacrificial Victim and bleeds and dies rather than that on the spotless tablets of His Law, any stain should be made, even though it should be by the finger of His mercy! Glorify God, then! Praise Him and let your whole soul extol Him for this wondrous arrangement of Grace—

"So just to God, so safe for man"—

for so you will be having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. You probably remember that the line I just quoted was writ-

ten by Dr. Watts in praise of the Gospel. And I hope that you can say with him—

"What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan,
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man!
How well Your blessed Truths agree!
How wise and holy Your commands!
Your promises, how firm they be!
How firm our hope and comfort stands!
Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."

Next, you can enter into fellowship at the Communion Table *by loving Christ, your Mediator, as well as by glorifying God the Father*. You know that God loves Jesus Christ. I mean, the Man Christ Jesus, God and Man in one Person. He loves Him not only in His essential Godhead, as He must always love Him, but He also loves Him for His work's sake. With what delight do the Father's eyes rest on His Son! How sweetly does He say to Him, "Well done!" How does He delight to honor and glorify Him! Do you not also feel something of the same sort of love to Christ as you gather around His Table? Ask the Spirit of God to cause you to be enamored of Christ and to make Him to be "altogether lovely" in your eyes. Pray for such a view of Him that your inmost heart shall melt under the Divine passion of love to your dear Lord. Let His wounds be the charm to win you. Let His spotless Character be the beauty to enthrall you. And when you thus love Christ, you will perceive that as God the Father loves Christ even more than that, you will have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ!

We do not invite you to come and *kneel* around the Communion Table, for there is nothing upon it to be worshipped. But when the breaking of bread is being celebrated, we ask you to sit as much at your ease as you can, just as the Last Supper was instituted by our Lord. Those who gathered round that table reclined in the Oriental posture of repose. We cannot do that, nor would it be in harmony with our usual idea of what is reverent and seemly. At the paschal feast they stood with their loins girded and their staves in their hands, for they were about to depart in haste into the wilderness. You have no need to do that, but you may sit at this Table as one who is at rest—and so you may have fellowship with God—for do you not know that this feast celebrates Christ's rest? His blood has been shed, His body broken—He has become food for our souls! His Redemption work is finished! He has gone His way until He shall come, the second time, to drink the new wine in the Kingdom of His Father. Christ rests, so if you also rest you will be in sympathy with His finished work.

Remember also that God rests. When Noah offered a sacrifice to God, Jehovah smelled a sweet savor of rest—not in Noah's sacrifice, but in what Noah's sacrifice typified and symbolized—that is, in the Sacrifice of

Christ. If I may use such an expression concerning You, O blessed God, Your Sabbath was broken by man's sin. It grieved God that He had made man because he so rebelled against Him and dishonored Him. And, therefore, the Lord had no rest. But when He saw Christ on the Cross—a Man who had done all His will, suffering all His will—God, as well as Man, bearing human sin in His own Person—it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief. But when He had done it and the Son had finished His Sacrifice and come home, then the Father rested! He could rest in His love and rejoice over His Church with singing, for the ransom price for her Redemption was paid, the battle was fought and the victory won forever! Sin was overcome, the old serpent's head was broken, Hell was vanquished and death was doomed to die! And it is now only a matter of time when the gleaming banners of Christ, lit with the light of victory, shall be borne aloft after the final fight of Armageddon—and when that is over there shall go up this mighty shout which every star shall hear—while Heaven's heights shall echo and re-echo the strain and the deeps of Hell are stirred with the wondrous chorus of the redeemed, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns"—reigns because of the Cross—reigns because Christ was there able to say, "It is finished!"

Come then, Beloved, and rest, for so you will have fellowship with God, Himself! Let no sense of sin disturb you—no distracting thoughts annoy you. Say to yourself, "God is satisfied with Christ's work and so am I. God has said, 'It is enough' and what is enough for the Infinite God is surely enough for me." The Lord bless you, as you come to His Table, for His Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 1; 2:1-6.

May that Divine Spirit who inspired every Word of this wonderful letter, bless it to all our hearts as we read it!

1 John 1:1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.* You remember how John begins his Gospel—"In the beginning was the Word," and how, a little later, he says, "In Him was life." The Holy Spirit seems to have recalled those expressions to his mind, for He moves him to use them again. Note how clearly, how explicitly John writes concerning the Logos, the eternal Word. He says, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life...that declare we unto you." The facts of Christ's history on earth are recorded by eyewitnesses who could not be deceived concerning them. They exercised their various senses with regard to Christ—hearing, seeing and touching Him again and again. They were veracious witnesses and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected and even touched and handled

by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.

2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us).* John and his fellow Apostles were eyewitnesses of the coming to earth of God in human flesh—the indwelling of the Word of Life in a body like our own.

3, 4. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Hear this, you people of God! The objective of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is that you may have joy—yes, that you may have a heart full of joy and that you may know what full joy means, for here below we get but drops and dashes of joy unless we are brought into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ! But then, we have the very joy of God in our souls! Oh, the delight of it! Oh, that you could all know it to the fullest!

5. *This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.* That is to say, God is knowledge, God is truth, God is purity. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." There is no darkness of sin, or ignorance, or error about God.

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth.* He who walks in ignorance and sin is in fellowship with the powers of darkness—he is certainly not in fellowship with God who is light!

7. *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* So that in the very highest state to which we can attain in this world, namely, walking in the light, as God is in the light and having fellowship with Him, *even then we shall sin and shall still need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from its stain.* So those exceedingly err who say that the Christian can or does live utterly free from sin! Either they have lowered the standard by which they judge the actions of men, or they excuse themselves on some Antinomian principle—or else they must be altogether ignorant of the Truth of God about the matter—for "if we walk in the light, as God is in the light" and have fellowship with Him, still, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." And, therefore, there is sin needing to be cleansed, for Christ does no work as a superfluity! But what a mercy it is for us to feel the continual cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus so that if we sin through ignorance, or if we sin by omission or by commission, that precious blood constantly keeps us so pure that we can still walk with God!

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* It does not matter, either, in what sense we say it! We may try to beguile ourselves with the idea that we say it in some peculiar Gospel

sense, but, "we deceive ourselves" if we say it in any sense whatever, *for we have sin and we do sin!*

9. *If we confess our sins.* That is the point! And he who says that he has no sins will not confess them! He who believes himself to be perfect cannot enjoy the blessing described in this 9th verse. To deny that we have any sin is to walk in darkness and to show we are without the light which would reveal our sin to us! And if we are walking in darkness we cannot be in fellowship with God. But to see sin in ourselves from day to day—humbly to confess it and mourn over it—is to walk in the light. And walking in the light we shall have fellowship with God who is light. "If we confess our sins"—

9, 10. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*

1 John 2:1. *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not.* That you may abstain from it, abhor it and not indulge in anything that would lead you towards it.

1. *And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.* We are to seek to live a perfectly holy life, but inasmuch as we constantly fall short of that ideal, here is our comfort—we still have an Advocate—we still have One who undertakes our cause and pleads for us before His Father's Throne!

2. *And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Whoever comes to Him shall receive deliverance from sin. Neither Jew nor Gentile is exclusively considered in the offering of the Atonement of Christ—those for whom He died are of every race, color, class and kin.

3-6. *And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.* May the Holy Spirit graciously lead us all to this extraordinary walk of Grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—798, 807.

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HONOR FOR HONOR
NO. 2906

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1904.

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"Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."
1 Samuel 2:30.

GOD is certain, sooner or later, to recompense men according to the rule of Infallible Justice and if it is so among saints, it is equally so among sinners. If we could really know the secret history of any man's life, we would be able to understand his career better than we now do. There is many a life of which we have had to say to the Lord, "Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known." Yet if we had known more about the man, it would have been all plain enough. If we had seen the sin that was hidden from human eyes, we would have understood the sorrow that was evident to all.

That will suffice with regard to the general principle that is enunciated in our text. If we honor God, He will honor us. And if we despise Him, we shall be lightly esteemed. Now, taking only the first clause of the text, there are two things upon which I wish to speak with great earnestness. The first is, *here is a plain duty*, namely, to honor God and, secondly, *here is a very generous reward*—"Those who honor Me I will honor."

I. First, then, HERE IS A PLAIN DUTY—to honor God.

It is the natural duty of every creature to honor its Creator and with such a glorious and blessed God as Jehovah is, it certainly must be incumbent upon all who have any understanding of His existence, to render honor and homage to Him. Such is His personal grandeur, such is the perfection of His Character, such is His almighty power and such are the obligations under which we are placed to Him as our Creator, that altogether apart from spiritual things, it is, undoubtedly, the duty of every creature to honor God!

But what shall I say, Beloved, of those of us who are the Lord's chosen people? Do I need to prove that we should honor our God? He is our Father and He said long ago, "If then, I am a Father, where is My honor?" Ordinary children are told to honor their father and mother—then how much more should the children of God honor their Father who is in Heaven? He has done so much for us above and beyond our creation—in our election, in our effectual calling, in our regeneration, in the blood-washing, in the daily supply of our needs, in the continual preservation

of our souls from going down into the Pit—that we are overwhelmed with indebtedness to Him—and the very least return that we can make to Him is to render Him all the honor that we can. He has made Himself known to us in a way that He has not revealed Himself to the rest of His creatures. His handiwork is seen in the whole visible Creation. In every star His glory shines. But He is not seen there as He is revealed to us in Christ Jesus and, alas, unrenewed men have not eyes with which they can see the resplendent Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But He has given to us this spiritual eyesight! He has taught us much about Himself by His Spirit and the Spirit has revealed to us even the deep things of God. If it were possible for us to *not* honor Him after all that we know of Him, what criminality would be ours! But the knowledge and the Grace He has given us compel us to honor Him and the more we know of what He is, and of what He has done for us, the more do we feel that we must and will honor Him. Glory be unto Your holy name, O gracious Father, that in our inmost spirits we adore, honor and worship You at this moment! And, by Your Grace we will do so till time shall be no more!

I hope you see clearly that it is your duty to honor God, so let us enquire in what way that duty comes home to each one of us. First, I think that we are to honor God *by confessing His Deity in all our prayers, praises and, indeed, at all times.* May none of us ever fall into the various heresies which some have held concerning the Persons of the blessed Trinity in Unity! Of all errors, these most closely touch the very vitals of true religion. I suppose if any man looks long into the Doctrine of the Trinity, he will be like one who gazes upon the sun and will be apt, first, to be dazzled and then to be blinded by the excessive light. If a man asks that he may understand this great mystery and refuses to believe until he does, then he will most assuredly be blinded! How can you, O man, hold the sea in the hollow of your hand? And how can you see God's face and yet live? Do you marvel that your mind staggers under the load that you try to put upon it and that your reason begins to reel? We cannot comprehend God! But we can honor the Father by worshipping Him and honor the Son by adoring Him—and honor the Holy Spirit by paying homage, reverence and glory unto Him—and never countenancing in our spirit any error which would detract from the Glory of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, for, if we do, we shall not obtain the blessing promised in our text—"Those who honor Me I will honor."

God save us from believing any doctrines which cast reflections upon our Lord Jesus Christ, or upon the Divine Spirit! I am afraid that the Church of Christ has never yet sufficiently honored the Spirit of God and that, in the ministry of the present day, there is such a general ignoring of the Holy Spirit and His work that many hearers might say, as those disciples at Ephesus did, "We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Spirit." If that is the case, it ought to be repented of and avoided in the future—for you may depend upon it that honoring the Triune God is absolutely essential to obtaining the blessing promised in our text, "Those who honor Me I will honor."

Secondly, we can do this *by confessing the dominion of God* and proving the reality of our confession by yielding obedience to Him. It is no use for you to say, "I honor God," and yet to continue to live contrary to His Law. If we do honor Him, we shall seek to obey His commandments and though, by reason of infirmity, we shall fall short of the perfection of obedience, we shall honor the Lord by weeping over our imperfections. We shall not quarrel with the requirements of God's commands, but we shall ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be conformed to them. That man does not honor God who goes picking and choosing among the Divine Precepts, attending to one, but not to another! He is not honoring God who does not render obedience to His will in all things—the social duties that appertain to the hearth and home, the duties that are associated with the Church of God and the duties which concern the common life of ourselves and others. It is never right to offer to God a sacrifice stained with the blood of a duty—and it is by endeavoring to be obedient to the Lord in all respects that our desire to honor Him is to be proved. If there is anything about the Lord's will that you do not like, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that is a point in which you are wrong! It is an indication of the true state of your soul when there is any Divine Precept against which you kick—and you should pray very fervently that you may overcome that sin and be conformed to the Lord's will in all things—for, unless you honor Him by seeking to render universal obedience to Him—unless, being saved by His Grace, you abhor all sin and seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit to walk blameless in all the commandments of the Lord, you have not given Him the honor which He rightly claims and you cannot expect that He should honor you!

In the next place, seeing that we have all sinned, we must honor God *by confessing sin and so glorifying His Justice*. I believe that God is greatly glorified by a man who is overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt, when he comes and bares his bosom to the Divine inspection, acknowledging all his offenses, grieving over them and, as it were, laying his head upon the block and saying, "Lord, if You execute me. If You let the axe of Your Justice fall upon me to my utter destruction, I dare not complain for I deserve it all." Therefore, dear Friends, submit yourselves to the sentence of God—acknowledge how just it would be if He were to execute it upon you, for so you shall find favor at His hands. I do not know what else a poor convicted sinner can do that can be more acceptable to God, with the one exception of his coming to fully believe in Christ. So, guilty one, glorify God by making confession of your guilt. You have broken His Holy Law—acknowledge your offense in having broken it. Pay respect to the commands of God by confessing that you ought to have kept them. Admit the heinousness of the sin by which you have violated the will of God, for, in so doing, you will be honoring the Lord!

And you, dear child of God, conscious of so many imperfections, remember that you honor God when you lie very low before Him—when you loathe yourself—when, as in the very dust, you cry, "Lord remember Your poor unworthy child and have pity on me!" You are thus magnifying and glorifying the holiness of God to which you feel that you have not yet

attained. If you admit that you are but dust and ashes in His sight and not worthy to be regarded with favor by Him, that humility of yours is honoring and glorifying to Him.

Further, we can honor the Lord *by submitting to His teaching*. A great many people go to the Bible to find texts in it to endorse a system of divinity which they have already embraced. That is not honoring God. The right course is to get your system of divinity out of the Bible under the unerring teaching of the Holy Spirit. This is the Book that is to teach us—we are not to try to square it to our scheme, but we are to make our scheme—if we have one—embrace all that is here revealed so far as we can ascertain it. Young man, I can speak from experience when I say that nothing will give you greater peace of mind than taking the Word of God as your only guide from the very beginning of your Christian life. It is commonly said that "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants," but I scarcely know of any sect of Protestants, with one exception, of which that is true. There is something that all the others believe which cannot be found in the Bible and they have some other book or tradition tacked on at the end of the Bible. Sit down, my Friend, and study the Book without note or comment, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you what it means—and whatever it means, you believe it! You will not discover all that it means—there will be mistakes in you, as in your fellow Christians, but follow the Truth of God, as far as you can see it, wherever it may lead you, even if following it shall cause you to stand quite alone, for, in so doing, you will be honoring it and it will honor you.

It is such a sweet thing to be able to say, "I may have been mistaken, but I have honestly sought to know the mind of God and with earnest dependence upon the Holy Spirit I have desired to accept His teaching. And, as far as I have learned it, I have followed it, regardless of the consequences of doing so, knowing that it must always be safe to follow where the Spirit leads the way." Act thus, young men and young women, whatever others may do! Some of them are content to follow the erroneous customs of former generations, although they are clearly contrary to the Word of God. Do not follow their evil example, but while the wax is soft, let it take the Divine impression of the Truth of God and so may you grow up to honor God beyond all who have gone before you!

There is another way of honoring God and that is *by simply trusting Him at all times*. Always remember that the greater our troubles, the greater our weakness, the greater our infirmities—the greater is our opportunity of glorifying God by the aid of His Holy Spirit. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." They see much that landsmen never see and those who have deep experience of trial and trouble are the people who see most of the wonders of the Lord in the spiritual realm. Dear Brother, all seemed to go well with you until you trusted God—but since you did so, everything has seemed to go wrong with you! Can you trust Him now? Faith, when we are in smooth water, honors God, but faith, when we are in rough waters, will glorify Him far more! It is easy to bless His name when the barn is full and the table

loaded—but can you glorify Him now that the homestead has burned down and the cupboard is bare? Ah, good woman—you could glorify God when your husband was in vigorous health and your children were all round about you—but now that He has been taken from you and your children are following him, consumption seizing upon them one after the other—can you trust the Lord now? And you, my Brother, now that your leg is broken, or your lungs begin to fail, or the asthma comes upon you, or old age is coming to cripple you—now that your circumstances are changing and your friends, like the swallows in autumn, begin to forsake you—can you rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of Your salvation now? If you can do so, it is now in your power to honor God in a very wondrous way. It is glorious to be able to say, with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Whatever happens to you, never doubt the wisdom of God's working, or the love of His heart, but still, "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." If you do this, you will honor Him and He will, in due time, honor you!

I might remind you of many other ways in which we may honor and glorify God, but I will only mention one more. And that is this—*when we have not any particular trouble, we ought to honor God by great joy*. I do not mean by such joy as the worldling has in his corn and wine, but by *holy joy*. How few Christians speak of God as their exceeding joy! I think we do meet with cheerful Christians, nowadays, more frequently than we used to, for we were, at one time, taught that the longer a man's face, the greater was His Grace. We do not believe in any such notion as that! Yet, to my mind we seldom, if ever, attain to the standard of joy which ought to be the abiding portion of a child of God. The elect ought to be the happiest people beneath the sky! Look at a great furnace when there is a strong blast blowing upon it—what intense heat there is there! A Christian ought to be like that furnace, glowing with intense delight, fervent love and overflowing joy! Why should you not rejoice, Beloved? Your sins are forgiven you! You are an heir of Heaven. You are, it may be, within a month or two, or within a year or two of being at God's right hand—to go no more out forever! Why should you not rejoice? Even now His Spirit dwells within you, His heart burns with love towards you and He rejoices over you—why should you not rejoice? If you rejoiced more, you would honor the Lord more and He would honor you even as He has promised! The poorest saint here can share in this great blessing simply by honoring God. The man with the least talent can honor God! The most ignorant Christian, the one who is least instructed in worldly learning can honor God! The weakest in bodily health, the sick, the dying can all honor God if they are His people! This plain duty is one which is possible to all the saints, by the Holy Spirit's gracious aid. May He help each one of us to carry it out and truly to honor God!

II. Now I turn to the second point—HERE IS A VERY GRACIOUS REWARD—"Those who honor Me I will honor."

First, *this is true in the Church of God*. The sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas—were priests, but they did not honor God and, therefore, God did not honor them. The people despised them and loathed the very ser-

vices of the sanctuary because of their sin—and God thrust them out of the priest's office. I believe, my Brothers—and there are many of us who either are already ministers of the Gospel, or are in course of training for that high office—I believe that unless we with all our hearts honor God in our ministry, He will never honor us. My dear Brother, if you ever go in for anything else but glorifying God, you will make a failure of it! If you start with the idea of being a fine preacher, one who is able to orate in rounded periods and flowery sentences, or if it is your great ambition to gain a good position among respectable people, you will certainly come down with a crash and great will be your fall! But if any young man, truly called of God, says to himself, "I will glorify God whether I live or die—whether I am poor or whether I am prosperous—whether I am the means of bringing many souls to Christ, or am, apparently, a failure in my ministry, I will, at least preach the Truth of God and I will pray over it, and I will agonize in prayer for the souls of men. My teaching shall not aim at glorifying philosophical opinions, or displaying my own culture and my own powers of thought, but I will, above everything else, honor God. I will honor the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I will preach nothing up but Christ and nothing down but sin. I shall not seek to honor the denomination to which I belong, but I will live and labor simply to honor God"—well, my Brother, if that is your resolve, then the Lord will honor you!

Then, next, *this promise is true with regard to our own households*. Poor Eli, I have no doubt, wished to have honor in his own house, so he paid great deference to his wicked sons. He knew that they were doing very, very wrong, but he spoke very gently to them, just as some Christian people whom I know are doing in their own families. Their boys are living as badly as ever they can, but they only say, "Our sons are so high-spirited and so easily offended that we must only indirectly hint that they are doing wrong. It would never do for us to pull them up sharply and say to them right straight out, 'You are going headlong to Hell and we implore you to stop, for, if you continue to act as you are now doing, you will be ruined forever.'" Yes, and in many a house God is not honored by family prayer—and the boys and girls are taught to look after money as if that were the chief end of life! "You go in for business, John, and make money somehow and do not be too particular about the means you employ in getting it. And, Mary, that is a very nice young man, an excellent Christian man, too, who is coming to see you—but he will not do for a husband—he has not enough money and that is the main thing to be considered nowadays." The worship of Mammon, the golden calf, prevails almost everywhere. God commanded His ancient people not to offer their children to Moloch, but it is done very often today—many parents are offering their sons and daughters to Moloch—the Moloch of fashion, the Moloch of wealth—daughters are given to men without characters as long as they have a sufficient quantity of gold.

Well now, if the father or mother, instead of falling into that sin, says, "My chief concern for my dear boys and girls is that they should know the Lord. I should be glad to see them succeeding in business, or happily

married to those who are in a good position, but my great longing is that they may know Christ and be found in Him, for that is the main thing, after all, and I will not tolerate in my house anything that Christ would not look upon with approbation, neither will I permit, as far as my power can go, anything that would grieve the Spirit of God." I believe that wherever parents thus seek the honor of God, God will honor their families very wonderfully. You will find, almost everywhere, that when a man gives everything up for God and does not look so much for the advancement of his own family as for the good of God's family as a whole, the Lord says to him very much what Queen Elizabeth said to one of the London merchants of her day. "I want you to go to Hamburg to attend to some business of mine," said the queen. "But Your Majesty," said the merchant, "my own business will suffer in my absence." "No," said the queen, "it will not, for if you attend to my business, I will attend to yours." And the Lord says to us that if we honor Him, He will honor us. And even in this present life He will give us a hundred fold for anything we give up for Him—and in the world to come? LIFE EVERLASTING!

May none of you, dear Friends, ever be like Eli who had to mourn over the destruction of his sinful sons. But may you honor God in your families, for then He will also honor you there. Who is so honored as the venerable Christian who has his sons and his grandsons around him? He is a king, every inch of him, though, perhaps, he never earned more than a day-laborer's wages. As he lays his hands upon the heads of his children's children and implores his God to be their God, also, I seem to see a Patriarch stand before me in a grandeur which an emperor might envy! God will honor you in your family if you honor Him there.

Then, again, God has a way of honoring His people *in the society around them*. You, young man, going into that warehouse and taking a clerkship with many others—if you are consistent, true to your colors and serve God faithfully—they will ridicule you, very likely, for a while. But if you continue to be consistent, they will soon respect you. If you honor God, God will honor you and you will find that, in society, it is the wise and safe method to keep the Lord always before you! Some of you young men who have come up to London from the country are apt to think that as others do not go to a place of worship on the Sabbath, you will not do as you did at your home. But I pray you to keep up your good country custom, for your employers and those who are about you will think far better of you if you do so. And, although this is, by itself, a low and ignoble motive, yet it has its place among the higher reasons for attending the means of Grace. If you honor God, you will get honor in the eyes of those whose opinion is worthy of your regard.

Again, if we honor God, He will honor us *in the wide, wide world*, so far as our influence may reach. Look at that great crowd gathered in Smithfield! Who is that poor wretch standing in the middle? Many of those around him look upon him with the utmost scorn and derision. They have chained him up to a stake, and they are bringing dry firewood, for they are going to burn him to death! Who is that man? People in the crowd cry out that he is a dreadful heretic who deserves to die! But if you

turn to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, you will find his name recorded there among the noble army who died as heroes of the Cross. Because he suffered for Christ, God has honored him and, at this present day, who among us would not rather be the martyr who was burned than the cardinal who was the means of getting him burned? Who would not rather have been numbered among the faithful multitudes in the valleys of Piedmont whose names are all unknown, than have been the Duke of Savoy, or the King of France, or the Pope of Rome who conspired together to put them to death?

And, dear Friends, if God did not honor us before men at all, it would not matter much, *for those who honor Him, He honors in their own consciences.* God can honor you in such a way that you will be more contented with that honor than if your name and fame were blazoned forth before the whole world even though nobody else sees that He does it! The orator who addressed an audience and found that all his hearers went away with the exception of one man, was quite content with his one auditor, for that man was Plato! And if, in this world, you should so act that you should have no approbation left except the approval of God manifested to your own conscience, you might well be content! "I, Athanasius, against the world," was a grand thing for that staunch hero of the faith to be able to say, but if God was with Athanasius, he might just as well have said, "I, Athanasius, against fifty thousand worlds," for what is the whole universe in comparison with God? "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Honor God, my dear young Friend leaving the parental roof and coming to London. I pray you to honor God and even if you should not meet with the esteem which a good character ought to win for you from those by whom you are surrounded—if you should come under a cloud—if you should, after all, have to live a life of poverty and obscurity—yet the fact that you have done what is right and that God smiles upon you with approval and gives you peace of conscience and quiet confidence in your soul will be a sufficient reward for you!

I close by reminding you that *we never know, any of us, how much God is honoring us*. You did a noble deed the other day, my Brother, yet no one said, "Thank you," for it. You gave all you had, poor widow—the two mites that were all your living and nobody knew anything about it. But do you suppose that there is no fame except that which is spoken of by the breath of *man*? There are blessed spirits hovering all around us—multitudes of holy angels are watching the saints—and they see and approve all that is right! And I doubt not that there is often a worthy affirmation uttered by angelic lips when they see the devotion of the saints of God—the devotion which is unseen by mortal eyes!

And, last of all, there shall come a day when this earth shall be all ablaze and, amidst the terrors of that great consummation of the age, the dead shall rise and you shall be among them, Brothers and Sisters. Then shall the trumpet sound exceedingly loud and long—and all human beings and the fallen spirits, too, shall come to judgment! And there, amidst such a throng as never was before beheld, the despised, misrepresented, persecuted follower of the right who honored God at all costs

shall receive, before the assembled universe, honor from the Lord of All! Lift up your heads, O you children of God, for your Redemption draws near! It is a grand day, with some men, when they receive the Victoria Cross from their sovereign's hand, or when they are elevated to the House of Lords. But it will be a far higher honor when Christ shall say to the righteous, "Come, you blessed of My Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and when He shall say to each one who has faithfully served Him, "Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter you into the joy of your Lord." Brothers and Sisters, if God has saved us, let us live as in the light of the coming Day of Judgment! And may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day and honor us because first, by His Grace, *He enabled us to honor Him*!

As for you who never think of honoring God and never care about Him, your destruction is certain if you continue in the way in which you are now walking. If you want to know how you may be damned, it is only a little matter of neglect that will ensure it. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" I fear that many of you are living in that neglect. May the Holy Spirit graciously turn you from it and cause you to seek the Lord and believe in Jesus this very moment—that you, too, honoring God by your confession of sin and by believing in His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He has set forth as the one Propitiation for sin, may find the promise of our text true to you, also—for He will honor you even as you have honored Him!

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

Verses 1-3. *And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the LORD, my horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside You: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.* This is a very suggestive and forcible expression. God does not judge our actions by their appearance, but puts them into the scales of the sanctuary and weighs them as carefully as bankers weigh gold!

4-8. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has born seven and she that has many children is waxed feeble. The LORD kills, and makes alive: he brings down to the grave, and brings up. The LORD makes poor, and makes rich: He brings low, and lifts up. 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: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and He has set the world upon them.* What a clear view Hannah had of the Sovereignty of God and how plainly she perceived that God overrules all mortal things and does as He wills! How

she seemed to glory in the power of that almighty hand whose working unbelievers cannot discern, but which, to this gracious woman's opened eyes, was so conspicuous everywhere!

9-12. *He will keep the feet of His saints and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of Heaven shall He thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king and exalt the horn of His anointed. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they knew not the LORD.* Yet they were priests and when a man stands up to minister in holy things, and by virtue of his office is supposed to know the Lord, yet really does not, he stands not only in a position of the utmost guilt, but also in a position in which he is never likely to get a blessing. He seems to be beyond the reach of the ordinary agencies of mercy because he has assumed a position to which he has no right.

13, 14. *And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was boiling, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came there.* There was no such rule or regulation given by God, but these sons of Eli had made rules for themselves. It is always wrong to alter the regulations of the Lord's House. Even the least of them should be obeyed exactly as it stands.

15, 16. *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have boiled flesh of you, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as your soul desires, then he would answer him, No, but you shall give it to me now: and if not, I will take it by force.* There were sacrifices in which God had His portion in the burning of the fat upon the altar—and the priest had a portion allotted to him. And the offerer himself had a portion upon which he fed, in token of his communion and fellowship with God. The priest ought to have been content with what was an ample portion for him, but the greed of these young men prostituted holy things and defiled the House of the Lord.

17. *Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.* They not only grieved God, but they also grieved His people so much that they ceased to come where their consciences were wounded and where their most tender sensibilities were perpetually shocked.

18. *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.* What a contrast there was between little Samuel and the sons of Eli! He was not led astray by the evil example of those who were older than he and to whom he would naturally look up because of their high office. This dear child escaped contamination because God's Grace

preserved him and also because his mother's prayers, like a wall of fire, were round about him.

19-21. *Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, the LORD give you seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.* She lent one child to the Lord and she had five others given to her! God always pays good interest on all His loans. "He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord." It would be well if more would see how much interest they could get from such a loan as that!

22-25. *Now Eli was very old, and heard what his sons did unto all Israel and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil doings by all the people. No my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear: you make the LORD'S people to transgress. If one man sins against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?* That is the way Eli rebuked his sons. "And very gently he did it, dear old man," says someone. Yes, but don't you imitate him! If you do, you may also inherit the curse that came upon his house! There are other virtues in this world besides gentleness. There is sometimes needed the power to speak sternly—to rebuke with firmness and severity—and Eli had not this. He was an easy-going old soul. Ah, but when the honor of God is at stake, such action as his is out of place! It is all very well to have everybody saying, "Mr. So-and-So is such an amiable man! There is no sectarianism and no bigotry about him. He never says a word to offend anybody." Just so, but Martin Luther was not at all that kind of man and where would we have been without such protests as his?

25. *Notwithstanding, they listened not unto the voice of their father because the LORD would slay them.* They had gone so far in their sin that the Lord permitted them to go still further—and to bring punishment upon themselves for their evil deeds.

26. *And the child Samuel grew on and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men.* How vividly the Holy Spirit brings out the contrast between Samuel and these two wicked young men! They grew on in sin, but the child Samuel grew on in favor, both with God and with men. The Lord loves to watch His lilies growing among the sharp thorns and to see how brightly His stars are shining in the blackest night.

27, 28. *And there came a man of God unto Eli and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him?* That is, Aaron—

28-30. *Out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? And did I give unto the house of your father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering, which I have com-*

manded in my habitation, and honor your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings of Israel My people? Therefore the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever. There was a condition attached to that promise—a condition implied, if not expressly stated.

30, 31. *But now the Lord says, Be it far from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come that I will cut off your arm.* That is, "the strength of your family shall be taken away"—

31-33. *And the arm of your father's house, that there shall not be an old man in your house. And you shall see an enemy in My habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. And the man of yours whom I shall not cut off from My altar, shall be to consume your eyes, and to grieve your heart: and all the increase of your house shall die in the flower of their age.* God does not think little of sin in His ministers and in His sanctuary! There is a difference between sin and sin. The place where it is committed may make a difference and the office of the man who commits it may make a difference. Sin makes its culmination when the sinner is highly favored and brought into close relationship with God by office.

34, 35. *And this shall be sign unto you, that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die, both of them. And I will raise Me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before My anointed forever.* No doubt first referring to Zadok who succeeded afterwards to the priest's office, but looking still further forward to our Lord Jesus Christ who is the ever-faithful High Priest who always does according to that which is in the mind and heart of the Father!

36. *And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left in your house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray you, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.* Or, rather, as the margin has it, "Put me, I pray you, into somewhat about the priesthood." "Put me into something that has to do with the priesthood." So the house of Eli passed from its honorable elevation into degradation and poverty. However highly favored any of us may have been, let us never presume upon that and turn aside to sin. If we do not know the Lord and do not honor Him in all the acts that we perform in His name, it may be a degradation like that of Eli's house may come upon us because we have despised the will and the words of the Most High.

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

THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST
NO. 2907

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 12, 1891.

"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." John 16:14.

THE needs of spiritual men are very great, but they cannot be greater than the power of the Divine Trinity is able to meet. We have one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—One in Three and Three in One. And that blessed Trinity in Unity gives Himself to sinners that they may be saved. In the first place, every good thing that a sinner needs is in the Father. The prodigal son was wise when he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Every good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, the first Person in the blessed Trinity, because every good gift and every perfect gift can only be found in Him. But the needy soul says, "How shall I get to the Father? He is infinitely above me. How shall I reach up to Him?" In order that you might obtain the blessings of Grace, God was in Christ Jesus, the second ever-blessed Person of the Sacred Trinity. Let me read you part of the verse that follows my text—"All things that the Father has are Mine." So you see, everything is in the Father, first, and the Father puts all things into Christ. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." Now you can get to Christ because He is Man as well as God. He is "over all, God blessed forever," but He came into this world, was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of poverty, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." He is the conduit conveying to us all blessings from the Father. In the Gospel of John we read, "Of His fullness have we all received and grace for grace." Thus you see the Father with every good thing in Himself putting all fullness into the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus who is also the Son of God.

Now I hear a poor soul say, "But I cannot get to Christ. I am blind and lame. If I could get to Him, He would open my eyes, but I am so lame that I cannot run or even walk to Him. If I could get to Him, He would give me strength, but I lie as one dead. I cannot see Christ or tell where to find Him." Here comes in the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Unity! It is His office to take of the things of Christ and show them unto saints and sinners, too. We cannot see them, but we shall see them quickly enough when He shows them to us! Our sin puts a veil between us and Christ. The Holy Spirit comes and takes the veil away from our heart and then we see Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's office to come between us and Christ, to lead us to Christ, even as the Son of God comes

between us and the Father, to lead us to the Father so that we have the whole Trinity uniting to save a sinner—the Triune God bowing down out of Heaven for the salvation of rebellious men! Every time we dismiss you from this House of Prayer, we pronounce upon you the blessing of the Sacred Trinity—"May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you!" And you need all that to make a sinner into a saint and to keep a saint from going back to being a sinner again! The whole blessed Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—must work upon every soul that is to be saved!

See how Divinely they work together—how the Father glorifies the Son, how the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, how both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus glorify the Father! These Three are One, sweetly uniting in the salvation of the chosen seed.

Tonight our work is to speak of the Holy Spirit. Oh, what a blessed Person He is! He is not merely a sacred influence, but a Divine Person—"very God of very God." He is the Spirit of holiness to be reverenced, to be spoken of with delight, yet with trembling, for, remember, there is a sin against the Holy Spirit. A word spoken against the Son of Man may be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (whatever that may be, I know not) is put down as a sin beyond the line of Divine Forgiveness! Therefore reverence, honor and worship God the Holy Spirit, in whom lies the only hope that any of us can ever have of seeing Jesus and so of seeing God the Father!

First, tonight, I shall try to speak of *what the Holy Spirit does.* "He will receive of Mine and show it to you**.**" Secondly I shall seek to set forth *what the Holy Spirit aims at.* "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." And, thirdly, I shall explain how *in both these things He acts as the Comforter*, for we read in the seventh verse, our Savior say, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you," and it is of the Comforter that He says, "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

I. First we are to consider WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES. Jesus says, "He will receive of Mine and show it to you."

The Holy Spirit, then, *deals with the things of Christ*. How I wish that all Christ's ministers would imitate the Holy Spirit in this respect! When you are dealing with the things of Christ, you are on Holy Spirit ground—you are following the track of the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit deal with science? What is science? Another name for the ignorance of men. Does the Holy Spirit deal with politics? What are politics? Another name for every man getting as much as he can out of the nation. Does the Holy Spirit deal with these things? No, my Brothers, "He will receive of Mine." O my Brother, the Holy Spirit will leave you if you go gadding about after these insignificant trifles! He will leave you if you aim at magnifying yourself, your wisdom and your plans, for the Holy Spirit is taken up with the things of Christ! "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." I like what Mr. Wesley said to his preachers. "Leave other things alone," he said, "you are called to win souls." So I believe it is with all true preachers. We may leave other things alone. The

Holy Spirit, who is our Teacher, will acknowledge and bless us if we keep to His line of things. O preacher of the Gospel, what can you receive like the things of Christ? And what can you talk of so precious to the souls of men as the things of Christ? Therefore follow the Holy Spirit in dealing with the things of Christ.

Next, the Holy Spirit *deals with feeble men*. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." "To you." He is not above dealing with simple minds. He comes to those who have no training, no education and He takes the things of Christ and shows them to such minds. The greatest mind of man that was ever created was a poor puny thing compared with the infinite mind of God! We may boast about the great capacity of the human intellect, but what a narrow and contracted thing it is at its utmost width! So, for the Holy Spirit to come and teach the little mind of man is a great condescension. But we see the great condescension of the Holy Spirit even more when we read, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And when we hear the Savior say, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes." The Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to those who are babes compared with the wise men of this world! The Lord Jesus might have selected princes to be His Apostles. He might have gathered together 12 of the greatest kings of the earth, or at least 12 senators from Rome—but he did not—He took fishermen and men belonging to that class to be the pioneers of His Kingdom! And God the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, high and sublime as they are, and shows them to men like these Apostles were—men ready to follow where the Lord led them and to learn what the Lord taught them.

If you think of the condescension of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us, you will not talk any more about coming down to the level of children when you talk to them. I remember a young man who was a great fool, but did not know it and, therefore, was all the greater fool. Once, speaking to children, he said, "My dear children, it takes a great deal to bring a great mind down to your capacities." You cannot show me a word of Christ of that kind! Where does the Holy Spirit ever talk about its being a great come-down for Him to teach children, or to teach us? No, no! He glorifies Christ by taking of His things and showing them to us, even such poor ignorant scholars as we are.

If I understand what is meant here, I think that it means, first, that the Holy Spirit *helps us to understand the words of Christ*. If we will study the teaching of the Savior, it must be with the Holy Spirit as the Light of God to guide us. He will show us what Christ meant by the words He uttered. We shall not lose ourselves in the Savior's verbiage, but we shall get at the inner meaning of Christ's mind and be instructed therein, for the Lord Jesus says, "He will receive of Mine and show it to you." A sermon of Christ—even a single word of Christ—set in the Light of the Holy Spirit shines like a diamond! No, like a fixed star, with light that is never

dim! Happy men and happy women who read the words of Christ in the Light shed upon them by the Holy Spirit! But I do not think that this is all that the text means.

It means this—"Not only shall He reveal My words, but My *things*," for Christ says, "All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you."

The Holy Spirit takes the *Nature* of Christ and shows it to us. It is easy to say, "I believe Him to be God and Man," but the point is to apprehend that He is God and, therefore, able to save and even to work impossibilities. And to believe that He is Man and, therefore, feels for you, sympathizes with you and, therefore, is a Brother born to help you in your adversities. May the Holy Spirit make you see the God-Man tonight! May He show you the Humanity and the Deity of Christ as they are most blessedly united in His adorable Person—and you will be greatly comforted thereby.

The Holy Spirit shows to us the *offices* of Christ. He is Prophet, Priest, King. Especially to you, Sinner, Christ is a Savior. Now, if you know that He takes up the work of saving sinners and that it is His business to save men, why then, dear Friend, surely you will have confidence in Him and not be afraid to come to Him! If I wanted my shoes mended, I would not take my hat off when I went into a cobbler's shop and say, "Please excuse me. May I beg you to be so good as to mend my shoes?" No, it is his trade! It is his business. He is glad to see me. "What do you need, Sir?" he asks and he is glad for the work. And when Christ puts over His door, "Savior," I, needing to be saved, go to Him, for I believe that He knows His calling and that He can carry it out and that He will be glad to see me—and that I shall not be more glad to be saved than He will be to save me! I want you to catch that idea. If the Holy Spirit will show you that, it will bring you very near to joy and peace this very night!

May the Holy Spirit also show you Christ's *engagements*! He has come into the world engaged to save sinners. He pledged Himself to the Father to bring many sons and daughters to Glory and He must do it. He has bound Himself to His Father, as the Surety of the Covenant, that He will bring sinners into reconciliation with God. May the Holy Spirit show that fact to you—and right gladly you will leap into the Savior's arms!

It is very sweet when the Holy Spirit shows us the *love* of Christ—how intensely He loves men! How He loved them of old, for His delights were with the sons of men—not because He had redeemed them, but He redeemed them because He loved them and delighted in them! Christ has had an eternal love to His people—

"His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love."

It is His Heaven to bring men to Heaven! It is His Glory to bring sons and daughters to Glory! He is never so happy as when He is receiving sinners. And if the Holy Spirit will show you the depth and the height, the length and the breadth of the love of Christ to sinners, it will go a long way towards bringing all who are in this house, tonight, to accept the Savior.

And when the Holy Spirit shows you the *mercy* of Christ—how willingly He forgives, how He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin—how He casts your sins into the sea, throws them behind God's back, puts them away forever—ah, when you see this, then your hearts will be won to Him!

Specially I would desire the Holy Spirit to show you the *blood* of Christ. A Spirit-taught view of the blood of Christ is the most wonderful sight that ever weeping eyes beheld! There is your sin, your wicked, horrible, damnable sin—but Christ comes into the world and takes the sin and suffers in your place! And the blood of such an One as He, perfect Man and Infinite God—such blood as was poured out on Calvary's tree—must take away sin! Oh, for a sight of it! If any of you are now despairing and the Holy Spirit will take of the blood of Christ and show it to you, despair will have no place in you any longer! It will be gone, for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," and He that believes in Him is forgiven all His iniquities!

And if the Holy Spirit will also take of the *prayers* of Christ and show them to you, what a sight you will have! Christ on earth, praying till He gets into a bloody sweat! Christ in Heaven, praying with all His glorious vestments on, accepted by the Father, glorified at the Father's right hand and making intercession for transgressor—praying for you, praying for all who come to God by Him and able, therefore, to save them to the uttermost! This is the sight you will have! A knowledge of the intercession of Christ for guilty men is enough to make despair flee away once and for all! I can only tell you these things, but if the Holy Spirit will take of them and show them to you, oh, Beloved, you will have joy and peace tonight through believing!

One thing I must add, however, and then I will leave this point upon which we could dilate for six months. I want you to remember that *whatever the Holy Spirit shows you, you may have*. Do you see that? He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. But why? Not as a boy at school does to one of his companions when he is teasing him. I remember often seeing it done. He pulls out of his pocket a beautiful apple and shows it to his schoolmate. "There," he says, "do you see that apple?" Is he going to say, "Now I am going to give you a piece of it"? No, not he! He only shows him the apple to tantalize him. Now, it would be blasphemy to imagine that the Holy Spirit would show you the things of Christ and then say, "You cannot have them." No, whatever He shows you, you may have! Whatever you see in Christ, you may have! Whatever the Holy Spirit makes you to see in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, you may have it! And He shows it to you on purpose that you may have it, for He is no Tantalus to mock us with the sight of a blessing beyond our reach. He waits to bless us. Lay that thought up in your heart—it may help you some day, if not now. You remember what God said to Jacob, "The land where you lie, to you will I give it." If you find any promise in this Book and you dare to lie down upon it, it is yours! If you can just lie down and rest on it, it is yours—for it was not put there for you to rest on it without

its being fulfilled to you! Only stretch yourself on any Covenant blessing and it is yours forever. God help us to do so!

II. But now, secondly, and very briefly, let us consider WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT AIMS AT. Well, He aims at this—Jesus says, "He shall glorify Me." When He shows us the things of Christ, His objective is to glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit's objective is to make Christ appear to be great and glorious to you and to me. The Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely glorious and even the Holy Spirit cannot make Him glorious except to our apprehension—but His desire is that we may see and know more of Christ—that we may honor Him more and glorify Him more.

Well, how does the Holy Spirit go about this work? In this simple way, *by showing us the things of Christ.* Is not this a blessedly simple fact that when even the Holy Spirit intends to glorify Christ, all that He does is to show us Christ? Well, but does He not put fine words together and weave a spell of eloquence? No. He simply shows us Christ. Now, if you wanted to praise Jesus Christ tonight, what would you have to do? Why, you would only have to speak of Him as He is—holy, blessed, glorious! You would show Him, as it were, in order to praise Him, for there is no glorifying Christ except by making Him to be seen. Then He has the Glory that rightly belongs to Him. No words are needed, no descriptions are needed. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

And is it not strange that Christ should be glorified by His *being shown to you?* To you, my dear Friend! Perhaps you are saying, "I am a nobody." Yes, but Christ is glorified by being shown to you! "Oh, but I am very poor, very illiterate and besides, very wicked!" Yes, but Christ is glorified by being shown to you! Now a great king or a great queen would not be rendered much more illustrious by being shown to a little Sunday school girl, or exhibited to a crossing-sweeper boy. At least they would not think so—but Christ does not act as an earthly monarch might. He reckons it to be His Glory for the poorest pair of eyes that ever wept to look by faith upon Him. He reckons it to be His greatest honor for the poorest man, the poorest woman, or the poorest child that ever lived to see Him in the Light in which the Holy Spirit sets Him! Is not this a blessed Truth of God?

I put it very simply and briefly. The Holy Spirit, you see, glorifies Christ by showing Him to sinners. Therefore, if you want to glorify Christ, do the same! Do not go and write a ponderous book and put fine words together. Tell sinners, in simple language, what Christ is. "I cannot praise Him," says one. You do not need to praise Him. Say what He is. If a man says to me, "Show me the sun," do I say, "Well, you must wait till I strike a match and light a candle—and then I will show you the sun"? That would be ridiculous, would it not? And for our candles to be held up to show Christ is absurd. *Tell* what He is. *Tell* what He is to you. *Tell* what He did for you. *Tell* what He did for sinners. That is all. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

I will not say more on this point except that if any of us are to glorify Christ, we must talk much of Him. We must tell what the Holy Spirit has

told us and we must pray the Holy Spirit to bless to the minds of men the Truths of God we speak by enabling them to see Christ as the Spirit reveals Him.

III. But now, thirdly, in both of these things—showing to us the things of Christ and glorifying Christ—THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A COMFORTER. Gracious Spirit, be a Comforter now to some poor struggling ones in the Tabernacle by showing them the things of Christ and by glorifying Him in their salvation!

First, in showing to men the things of Christ, the Holy Spirit is a Comforter. *There is no comfort like a sight of Christ.* Sinner, your only comfort must lie in your Savior, in His precious blood and in His Resurrection from the dead. Look that way, man! If you look inside, you will never find any comfort there. Look where the Holy Spirit looks. "He will receive of Mine and show it to you." When a thing is shown to you, it is meant for you to look at it. If you want real comfort, I will tell you where to look, namely, to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Oh," you say, "but I am a wretched sinner!" I know you are. You are a great deal worse than you think you are. "Oh, but I think myself the worst that ever lived." No, you are worse than that! You do not know half your depravity. You are worse than you ever dreamed you were! But that is not where to look for comfort. "I am brutish," one says. "I am proud. I am self-righteous. I am envious. I have everything in me that is bad, Sir, and if I have a little bit that is good, sometimes, it is gone before I can see it. I am just lost, ruined and undone!" That is quite true—but I never told you to look there. Your comfort lies in this, "He will receive of Mine"—that is, of Christ's—"and shall show it to you." Your hope of transformation, of gaining a new character altogether, of eternal life, lies in Christ who quickens the dead and makes all things new! Look away from self and look to Christ, for He alone can save you!

A sight of Christ is the destruction of despair. "Oh, but the devil tells me that I shall be cast into Hell! There is no hope for me." What does it matter what the devil tells you? He was a liar from the beginning. Let him say what he likes, but if you will look away to Christ, that will be the end of the devil's power over you! If the Holy Spirit shows you what Christ came to do on the Cross and what He is doing on His throne in Heaven, that will be the end of these troublous thoughts from Satan and you will be comforted.

Dear child of God, are you in *sorrow* tonight? May the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them to you! That is the end to sorrow when you see Jesus, for sorrow, itself, is so sweetly sanctified by the companionship of Christ which it brings you that you will be glad to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His Baptism!

Are you *in need* tonight, without even a place to lay your head? So, too, was He! "The Son of Man has not where to lay His head." Go to Him with your troubles. He will help you to bear your poverty. He will help you to get out of it for He is able to help you in temporal trials as well as in spiritual ones. Therefore go to Christ! All power is given unto Him in

Heaven and in earth. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Go your way to Him—and a sight of Him will give you comfort.

Are you *persecuted*? Well, a sight of the thorn-crowned brow will take the thorn out of persecution. Are you very, very low? I think that you have all heard the story I am about to tell you, but some of you have, perhaps, forgotten it. Many years ago when this great congregation first met in the Surrey Music Hall and the terrible tragedy occurred—when many persons were either killed or wounded in the panic—I did my best to hold the people together till I heard that some were dead. And then I broke down like a man stunned and for a fortnight or so I had little reason left. I felt so broken in heart that I thought that I would never be able to face a congregation again. And I went down to a friend's house, a few miles away, to be very quiet and still. I was walking round his garden and I well remember the spot and even the time when this passage came to me, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior." And this thought came into my mind at once, "You are only a soldier in the great King's army and you may die in a ditch. But it does not matter what becomes of you as long as your King is exalted. *He*—HE is glorious! God has highly exalted Him." You have heard of the old French soldiers when they lay dying. If the emperor came by when they were ready to expire, they would raise themselves up and give one more cheer for their beloved leader. "*Viva l'Empereur*!" would be their dying words. And so I thought, "He is exalted. What does it matters about *me*?"

And in a moment my reason was perfectly restored! I was as clear as possible. I went into the house, had family prayer and came back to preach to my congregation on the following Sabbath—restored only by having looked to Jesus and having seen that He was glorious! If He is to the front, what does it matter what happens to us? Rank on rank we will die in the battle if He wins the victory! Only let the Man on the White Horse win—Let the King who died for us and washed us in His precious blood be glorified—and it is enough for us!

But now, lastly, *when Christ is glorified in the heart, He acts as a Comforter, too.* I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that we would not have half the trouble that we have if we thought more of Christ. The fact is that we think so much of ourselves that we get troubled. But someone says, "But I have so many troubles." Why should you not have a great many troubles? Who are you that you should not have troubles? "Oh, but I have had loss after loss which you do not know of!" Very likely, dear Friend, I do not know of your losses, but is it any wonder that you should have them? "Oh," says one, "I seem to be kicked about like a football." Why should you not be? What are you? "Oh," said one poor penitent to me the other night, "for me to come to Christ, Sir, after my past life, seems so mean." I said, "Yes, so it is. But then, you *are* mean. It was a mean business of the prodigal son to come home and eat his father's bread and the fatted calf after he had spent his substance in riotous living." It was a mean thing, was it not? But then, the father did not think it mean! He clasped him to his bosom and welcomed him home. Come along, you mean sinners, you that have served the devil and now want to

run away from him! Steal away from Satan at once, for my Lord is ready to receive you! You have no idea how willing He is to welcome you! He is so ready to forgive that you have not yet guessed how much sin He can forgive! "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Up to your necks in filth, in your very hearts saturated with the foulest iniquity—yet, if you come to Christ He will wash you whiter than snow! "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." Come along and try my Lord!

Have exalted ideas of Christ! Oh, if a man will but have great thoughts of Christ, he shall then find his troubles lessening and his sins disappearing! I see you have been putting Christ on a wrong scale altogether! Perhaps even you people of God have not thought of Christ as you ought to do. I have heard of a certain commander who had led his troops into a rather difficult position. He knew what he was doing, but the soldiers did not all know—and there would be a battle in the morning. So he thought that he would go round from tent to tent and listen to what the soldiers said. He listened and there was one of them saying to his fellows, "See what a mess we are in now! Do you see, we have only so many cavalry, and so many infantry, and we have only a small quantity of artillery. And on the other side there are so many thousands against us! So strong, so mighty, that we shall be cut to pieces in the morning." And the general drew aside the canvas, and there they saw him standing and he said, "How many do you count *me* for?" He had won every battle that he had ever engaged in! He was the conqueror of conquerors. "How many do you count me for?"

O Souls, you have never counted Christ for what He is! You have put down your sins, but you have never counted what kind of a Christ He is who has come to save you! Rather do like Luther, who said that when the devil came to him, he brought him a long sheet containing a list of his sins, or of a great number of them and Luther said to him, "Is that all?" "No," said the devil. "Well go and fetch some more, then." Away went Satan to bring him another long list, as long as your arm. Said Luther, "Is that all?" "Oh, no," said the devil, "I have yet more." "Well go and bring them all," said Luther. "Fetch them all out, the whole list of them." Then it was a very long black list. I think that I have heard that it would have gone round the world twice. I know that mine would. Well, what did Luther say when he saw them all? He said, "Write at the bottom of them, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin!'" It does not matter how long the list is when you write those blessed words at the end of it! Then the sins are all gone!

Did you ever take up from your table a bill for a large sum? You felt a kind of flush coming over your face. You looked down the list. It was a rather long list of items, perhaps from a lawyer or a builder. But when you looked at it, you saw that there was a penny stamp at the bottom and that the account was receipted. "Oh," you said, "I do not care how long it is, for it is all paid." So, though your sins are many, if you have a receipt at the bottom—if you have trusted Jesus—your sins are all gone,

drowned in the Red Sea of your Savior's blood and Christ is glorified in Your salvation! May God the Holy Spirit bring every unsaved one here tonight to repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord bless every one of you, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 16.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* The temptation is when Christ is despised and rejected for our hearts to begin to sink and our faith to fail. Therefore did Christ warn His disciples that they "should not be offended."

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.* The best of men are but men at the best and they are very apt to fail when they find persecution hot against them—especially when even religious men of a certain kind count it to be a religious duty to persecute the people of God.

3. *And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me.* This verse reminds us of our Lord's prayer on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Persecution of God's people usually arises from ignorance of God the Father and God the Son.

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you.* "I was your Protector. By My Presence I so sustained your hearts that it did not matter what trouble you fell into. But now I am going away and, therefore, I give you this warning."

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your hearts.* We sometimes endure a needless sorrow for which the asking of a single question might remove it. Our Lord says to His disciples, "If you knew where I was going and understood My motive in going, your sorrow at My departure would be relieved."

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth It is expedient for you that I go away.* "It is for your profit to lose My Presence, precious as that has been to you."

7. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* The word, "Comforter," might just as well have been translated, "Advocate." The Holy Spirit is that Divine Advocate who pleads the cause of God in us and for us—and so comforts us. He it is who is now with us. If Jesus Christ were still upon earth in the flesh, He could only be in one place at one time. If He were in this assembly, He could not also be in Jerusalem or in New York. But the Comforter can be in all the gatherings of the Lord's people and with each individual Believer, the whole world over.

8-12. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment of sin, because they believe not on Me; of*

righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Teachers, learn wisdom from Christ! He did not try to teach His disciples everything at once, but, by teaching them one Truth of God, He prepared them for another Truth. Let us do the same with those whom we try to teach. Let us dispense to them the simpler Truths of God, first, and afterwards those that are deeper and more mysterious.

13, 14. *However when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.* That spirit which does not glorify Christ is not the Spirit of God! Hereby shall you discern between the spirit of error and the Spirit of Truth!

15, 16. *All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.* This is what our whole life is—"a little while." But in that little while there are little whiles of sadness and little whiles of gladness—little whiles in which we have Christ with us and little whiles in which we see Him, but find Him not. Blessed be God, we are going away from the land of these changing little whiles up to the Place where the sun shines in its strength forever and ever!

17, 18. *Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and, again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says.* Sometimes, when you are reading the Bible, you will come across a text of which you will say to yourselves, "What is this? We cannot tell what He says." But do not give up reading the Bible because you cannot understand it! There is a great deal that a father says which his child cannot comprehend, yet it is a part of the child's education to be with his father and to hear some things that he does not, at first, understand but, by-and-by, it all becomes clear. So, Believer, what you know not now you shall know hereafter.

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him.* They did not ask Him, but they desired to do so—and a desire is a prayer. Where our blessed Master is present, the very desires of His people are prayers, even though their lips remain closed.

19, 20. *And said unto them, Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.* Oh, what a blessed promise!

21-24. *A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,*

and your joy no man takes from you. And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. They had asked very little and they had never asked even that little in Christ's name—and there are but few Christians who do so even now. They ask for Christ's *sake*, which is a good plea, but to ask in Christ's *name* is still better! When you feel conscious that you have Christ's authority to use His name, you can put the King's own signature at the bottom of your petitions! There are some prayers to which a man dares not set Christ's seal, but when the prayer is such that Christ Himself might have offered it, then we may present it in His name and we may be certain that we shall receive what we have asked.

25-28. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name. And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* Here are four unfathomable depths—"I came forth from the Father"—there is Christ's eternal Pre-Existence. "And am come into the world"—there is His Incarnation. "Again, I leave the world,"—there is His death, Resurrection and Ascension into the Glory of God. "And go to the Father"—there is His exaltation to the Father's right hand."

29. *His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now You speak plainly, and speak no proverb.* Did you ever, when reading the Bible, come across a text that was opened up to you so sweetly that you cried out just as these disciples did "Lo, now You speak plainly, and speak no proverb"?

30, 31. *Now are we sure that You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You: by this we believe that You came forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?* Listen you who imagine that you are so strong in faith and every Grace, that you think you are almost perfect—"Do you now believe?"

32. *Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.* Ah, me! These were the men who said they believed in Him, yet, in His time of trial they fled like cowardly unbelievers! God help us and sustain us, or we shall do as they did!

32, 33. *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken unto you that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

—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 SAINT'S HERITAGE AND WATCHWORD
NO. 2908

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 5, 1854.

"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord."
Isaiah 54:17.

This is the fifth of November, a day notable in English history. The events which transpired on it ought never to be forgotten. On this memorable day the Catholics, foiled in all their schemes for crushing our glorious Protestantism, devised a plot horrible and diabolical enough to render them forever hateful among upright men. The vast Armada of Spain on which they had relied had been, by the breath of God, scattered and given to destruction. And now the cowardly traitors attempted by the foulest means, the end which they could not accomplish by open warfare. Under the Houses of Parliament the deadly powder was concealed which they hoped would be the deathblow to both houses and so annihilate the power of Protestantism. But God looked from Heaven, confounded their knavish tricks, laid their secrets bare and exposed their treachery! Hallelujah to the King eternal, immortal, invisible who guarded us and guards us still from the devices of Rome and Hell! Praise to His name, we are free from the Pope of Rome, to whom—

"Britons never will be slaves.
While for our princes they prepare,
In caverns deep a burning snare,
He shot from Heaven a piercing ray
And the dark treachery brought to day."

Nor is this the only event for which the fifth of November is notable, for in 1688 we as a nation experienced a deliverance equally as great. James II had attempted to revive the dying cause of Popery—and the hopes of Satan were great. But sturdy Protestants would not easily lose their dearly-bought liberties and, therefore, brought about the glorious revolution by which King William III ascended the throne—and from him the succession has been happily continued until the reign of our Queen for whom our earnest prayers shall rise—

"Such great deliverance God has worked,
And down to us salvation brought,
And still the care of guardian Heaven,
Secures the bliss itself has given."

Blessed be God that on this fifth of November we can record such deliverances! Our Puritan forefathers never suffered this day to pass over without a commemoration service. So far from this day being forgotten, it ought to be remembered, not by the festival of striplings, but by the songs of saints! I think I have now in my possession a record of sermons preached on the fifth of November by Matthew Henry. Many divines of his time regularly preached on this day. I think the true Protestant feeling of this country which has so lately revived and which has shown itself so strongly, will scarcely forgive me if I do not, this morning, return most humble and hearty thanks to that God who has delivered us from the curse and enabled us to stand as Protestant men free to preach the Gospel of Christ.

I notice, in my text, two things—the first is *the saint's heritage.* The second *the saint's watchword.*

I. First, THE SAINT'S HERITAGE.

Now, do not suppose that this morning I shall have time, or opportunity, or talents, or power, to enter into an investigation of all the saint's heritages, especially when you remember that—

"All things are ours—the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood."

Time would fail us to talk of all the possessions of the child of God. This world is his. Earth is his lodge and Heaven is his home. This life is his—with all its sorrows and its joys. Death is his—with all its terrors and solemn realities. And eternity is his—with its immortality and grandeur. God is his, with all His attributes. The saint has a prospective right to everything. God has made him the heir of all things, for we are co-heirs with Christ, joint-heirs with the Son of God! We have not time enough, in a life of 70 years, even to read over once the fair inventory of the saint's possessions! There is in it such an unfathomable depth, such an immeasurable height, such an intensity of value, such a wealth of preciousness that we would need to read it over an eternal number of times before we could ever be able to comprehend to the fullest, the love of God. So, you see, I am not about to describe the heritage of God's people at large. But I *am* going to speak of the one peculiar item of that bright heritage which is mentioned in my text—and that is *preservation.* "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." I shall speak of this as being the heritage, not only of the Church at large, but the personal and particular possession of every true Believer, every elect child of God!

First, then, there is the promise that *we shall have protection against the hand of men.* "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." Satan has always used the hand of man against the Church of Christ. The weapon of physical force has always been brought to bear against the Church of God. From the day when Cain, with his club, struck his brother Abel and laid him low, down to the time of Zacharias the son of Barachias and from that time until now, this weapon has been constantly used against the Church of God. There has never been a time when a weapon has not been forged against the Church of Christ. Yes, even at

the present moment, as I stand here and, with the eyes of fancy, survey our world, I see a fire blazing—fierce is the flame and high its pile of fuel! I see a monarch forging a weapon—a crowned tyrant longs to bring forth chains of iron for the liberties of Europe and smaller despots long to destroy the germ of all true liberty, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." I see the armies ready against the Lord of Hosts, ready to do battle against the servants of God. [Singularly enough, the battle of Inkermann was at this moment raging, November 5, 1854.] Still, here is our sweet comfort—they may forge the weapon, they may fashion the sword, they may shut the prison door, they may confine the prisoners, they may make their instruments of torture—but they cannot prosper, for God has said it. "He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire." "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." He will not let it do so!

Let us look back through history and see how God has fulfilled this gracious promise to His Church in past days. He has done it sometimes in this way—He has not allowed the sword so much as to touch His Church. At other times, He has allowed the sword to do its work and yet, out of evil, He has brought forth good. Sometimes, no weapon that has been formed against the Church has prospered because God has not permitted it so much as to touch His Church. Think of the overthrow of Pharaoh. Look yonder! There he is, at the head of all the chivalry of Egypt, pursuing the chosen race! The sea divides to give passage to the Lord's elect. Lo, they tread the pebbly bottom of the Red Sea while the waters stand like walls of snow-white crystal on the right and on the left! But the impious monarch, all unmoved by this mighty marvel, shouts, "On, on, soldiers of Memphis! Do you fear to tread where slaves are bold?" Look! They boldly dash between the watery heights—chariots and horses are in the sea, madly pursuing Israel. Ho, Israel! Fear not the uplifted spear, dread not the rattling chariot—they are marching to their tombs! Their weapons shall not prosper! Moses lifts up the rod of God—the parted floods embrace with eager joy and grasp the helpless foe within their arms—

"Over horse and over car,
Over every man of war,
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold
The loud thundering billows rolled!
'Mid the water dark and dread,
Down they sank, they sank like lead!"

Again, my Brothers and Sisters, behold another glorious proof of the promise. Haman had conceived a hatred to Mordecai and for his sake the whole race of the Jews must perish. How cunningly he lays his plots, how readily he obtains the consent of the king, how sure he is of his revenge! Even now, in imagination, he sees Mordecai swinging on the lofty gallows and all his kindred given to slaughter. Ah, you enemy, delight in your imagination, for it shall be disappointed! Rejoice in your design, but it shall be utterly confounded! There is a God in the courts of Heaven and an Esther in the palace of Shushan! You shall be hanged on your own gallows and the race of David shall revenge the deed of the Agagite

upon, his sons! O Israel, well may you rejoice at the Feast of Purim, for the weapon of the mighty is broken! Nor here, alone can we see the promise fulfilled, for time would fail me to tell of conquered Amalek and routed Midian. Scarcely can I speak of Philistia and her giants given to the beast of prey, or Edom slaughtered by the sword. Let the armies witness who fled at the fancied rumbling of chariots, or that host who in one night became the inhabitants of the realms of death! Let the warriors who rest with their rusted swords beneath their earthy pillows rise from their long sleep and confess the futility of their efforts! Yes, let monarchs now in the chains of Hell bear witness to their own utter confusion when the Lord appeared in battle for His chosen! March on, despot! Bid your slaves rise against the free! Crush the helpless and usurp the dominions of your neighbor—but know that the Lord is mightier than you are! Your Northern hordes are not invincible! And Britons, with the help of God, shall teach you that in vain you lift the hand of robbery! You contend with a nation in whose midst the elect of God are praying against you—and you shall know that God has said unto her holy seed, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

But now another view of the subject presents itself. Sometimes God has allowed the enemy to exult over us and the sword has been used with terrible effect. There have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen Church of Christ when persecution has cried "Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!" When blood has flowed like water over the land our enemies have triumphed. The martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree. The pastor was cut off and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture, awful suffering was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried and said, "O Lord, how long? Let it repent You concerning Your servants." The enemy laughed and said, "Ah, ah, so would we have it." Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter. And her princes were trodden down like mire in the streets.

O my Soul, how was it, in that sad day, when the enemy came upon her like a flood and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when You would not hear the cry of Your elect! It seemed as if Your ear was deaf. The plaint of the widow was unheeded. The groans, the agonies and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed and You did still allow the enemy to vex Your children. Persecution shook the land and set forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the Church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy God's Church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the Church had a wave of persecution pass over her, she rose out of it and lifted her fair countenance, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." She was all the more glorious for it all!

Every time her blood was shed, each drop became a man and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause of God and the Truth of God! Ah, those were times when instead of the Church being diminished and brought low,

God did multiply her and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil! The persecutor did not destroy the Church. The ship of Christ's Church never sails so well as when she is rocked from side to side by the winds of persecution and when, at every lurch, she is well-near overwhelmed! Nothing has helped God's Church so much as persecution—she has been increased and strengthened by it!

You will remember that this is not only the heritage of the Church at large, but also of every individual Believer. And now I can speak to some poor souls who are in this place of worship. O Brother, O Sister, there is a word for you this morning! "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." There are some dear Sisters who come into this House of Prayer under fear of brutal husbands. And there are sons and daughters who have cruel fathers. I know there are some here who meet with dire and terrible persecution because they come to the House of God. Little do some of us know, when we meet here, what our neighbor in the same seat has had to suffer through coming to this House of Prayer. I could unfold a tale that would ruffle up your spirits—a tale of persecution endured by some of the saints of God in this place. This is a word for you, my Friend—"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." The blow of a brutal husband shall not injure you—it may injure your body, but it cannot injure your soul! "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." Why should you fear men when God is on your side? Remember that Christ has said, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you."

Hold on, young man! Hold on, young woman! Still continue in the fear of God and you shall find that persecution shall work for your good! But mark you, persecutor—if you are here this morning—there is a chain in Hell, of hot iron that shall be bound around your waist! There are fiends that have whips of fire and they shall scourge your soul throughout eternity because you dare to put a stumbling-block in the way of God's children! Remember what the Lord Jesus said—"Whoever shall offend one of these little ones, who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The second portion of the saint's heritage is "every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." *Here is protection from the tongues of men*. Satan leaves no stone unturned against the Church of God. He uses not simply the hands, but what is more often a sharper weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow, sometimes, but we cannot endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which struck us to the ground, but we cannot so easily recover from slander that lays the character low. Yet the promise of the text is, "Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Look at the Church at large and see how she has condemned her adversaries. When she first came into the world, she had to oppose Judaism—but she has condemned it and its doctrines are now decadent. Then up started philosophers and they said that the Gospel was all foolishness because they found nothing of worldly wisdom in it. But what has become of the philosopher? Where is the Stoic who boasted of his wisdom? Where the Epicurean who lectured in the state of Greece? Where are they now? They are gone and their names are only used to describe things that have ceased to be! Then Satan invented Mohammedanism in order to oppose the Truth of God, but the Church of God has condemned that long ago. The Cross has made the crescent to decrease.

Where are the various systems of infidelity which have arisen, one after another? They are gone quite out of sight. Now and then we have felt rather alarmed because we have heard that some great people were going to prove that the Bible was not true and that our creed was not sound. I remember talking with an old man who said to me, "Ah, Sir, this geology will quite ruin man's belief in the Bible!" But, geology, instead of opposing the Gospel, furnishes many powerful confirmations of the facts of Revelation. Each one of the sciences has, in its imperfect condition, been used as a battering-ram against the Truth of God, but, as soon as it has been better understood, it has been made a pillar in Zion's citadel! Fear not, O sons of God, that the perversions of men of science can damage our cause! Lying tongues we shall condemn. O infidelity, abortion of the night, you have been condemned a thousand times! You are a changeable creature, changing your shape as the ages come and go. Once you were a laughing idiotic plaything for Voltaire—then a bullying blasphemer with Tom Paine! Then a cruel, blood-drinking fiend, fit mate for Robespierre, a speculating theorist with Owen and now a worldly, gross secularizing thing for impious lecturers and their profane admirers! I fear you not, Infidelity—you are an asp, biting at iron, depleting your spleen and breaking your fangs!

My Friends, did you ever, in imagination, walk the centuries and mark the rise and fall of various empires of unbelief? If so, you seemed to be on a battlefield and to see corpses all around you. You ask the name of the dead and someone replies that it is the corpse of such-and-such a system, or the carcass of such-and-such a theory. And, mark you, as surely as time rolls on, the now rampant style of infidelity will perish and, in 50 years, we shall see the skeleton of an exploded scheme and its epitaph will be, "Here lies a fool, called of old, a Secularist." What shall we say of Mormonism, the haggard superstition of the West? Or of Puseyism, the express image of Popery? Or of Socinian and Arian heresies, of Arminian perversions, or of Antinomian abuse? What shall we say of each of these errors but that their death-knell shall soon toll and these children of Hell shall sink back to their birthplace in the Pit. Yon old and crazy church upon the seven hills has dared to hurl its anathemas at the saints of the Lord—and she does still hold the wine-cup of abomination in her hands. And she is still robed in scarlet and her sway is over many waters—but she shall be condemned in judgment! Lo, the millstone in the hand of the

archangel hastens to its fall and Babylon the Great shall perish with a terrible overthrow! Then shall this cry go up from the Church of God, "Shout, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Sing, O you inhabitants of the earth, for the promise is accomplished and every opposing tongue is condemned!"

This promise is the personal heritage of each child of God—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." What a sweet thought that is to me, for there are many tongues busy about me. Some say, "He is a good man." Others say, "He is deceiving the people." Well, if God will convert more sinners and bring more into His Church, men may say what they like about me! I am not careful to answer any of the self-thought Infallibles in this matter. You never hear of a preacher who gathers a crowd, or who is doing any good, but he is sure to be slandered and vilified! But here is a promise for him—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." Then the more accusers, the more acquittals! The more slander, the more honor! So let the enemy slander us as much as he pleases!

But I know that there are some of my hearers who believe and love the Doctrines of Grace and, sometimes, you are called to dispute and contend them. I trust you are. I hope you love to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." I know what is the case with many of you—when you come to talk with an infidel, you do not know what to say. Has it not been so with you many a time? You have said, "I almost wish I could hold my tongue, for the man has confounded me." Yet remember, "Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." The last time you had that dispute, you thought that your adversary conquered, did you not? You thought wrongly! He might glory in his intellectual prowess. He might say, "Oh, that man is nothing to me." But leave him alone till he gets to bed—and when darkness is all around him, he will begin to think seriously. He conquered you in appearance, but now you master him! Wait till he is sick and then your words shall ring in his ears—they shall come up again from the grave, if he should survive you—and then you will conquer him. Do not be afraid to argue for the Truth of God. Do not think that infidels are wise men, or that Arminians are so exceedingly learned. Stand up for the Truth—and there is so much solid learning and real Truth to be found in the Doctrines that we uphold [Doctrines of Grace] that none of you need be ashamed of them! They are mighty and must prevail! The mighty God of Jacob, by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, make them triumphant!

There is one who has risen against me in judgment many a time and I daresay he has troubled many of the dear people of the Lord here—that is, Satan. He is always rising in judgment against us. Whenever we get into a little trouble, he comes and says, "You are no saint." If we commit a sin, he says, "You would not sin like that if you had been a child of God. You have no interest in the Covenant—you have deceived yourself." How many times Satan has risen against me in judgment and so risen that I have been fool enough to heed what he said! I have told him, sometimes, "You are a liar, and the father of lies," but, at other times, I have

believed his malicious accusations. It is no easy thing to stand against the insinuations of the Evil One. You, my Brothers and Sisters, are not ignorant of his devices. He has set conscience at you, the Hell-hounds of legal convictions have howled upon you and the drum of terrible doom has thundered in your ears! Then up has stood the fiend, himself, and denied your union with Jesus, claiming you as his own prey and portion! Ah, but how glorious was the moment when our Advocate entered the forum of conscience and assured us that He had pleaded our cause in the Court of King's Bench above! And, oh, when He showed us the adversary's brief spoiled by the nails of the Cross, we felt that the tongue of Satan was condemned and his calumnies hushed! Glorious Counselor, all praise be to Your adorable name!

Let the saints also know that they shall soon have a yet more public triumph over their cruel enemy. At the Day of Judgment, the foe of God and man shall be dragged from his cell, shall lift his bronze front scarred with thunder, receive his sentence and begin a Hell more terrible than all he has endured before. O saint, do you not know that you shall judge him? Know you not that you shall judge angels? You sons of God shall sit as co-assessors with His first-born Son and when He shall pronounce the doom of the old dragon, you shall solemnly say, "Amen," to the sentence. Rejoice, O poor tried one—you shall tread upon the lion and the dragon! Your foot shall be upon the head of your enemy and you shall know that the promise of this text is fulfilled in your own experience—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Now, Beloved, I think I have spoken sufficiently, for the present, on this glorious heritage of the saints of God. The weapons forged against us are not to prosper and the tongues raised against us are to be condemned.

II. Now I am to speak upon THE SAINT'S WATCHWORD. What is that? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord."

In ancient times, as well as at the present time, armies used to have their watchwords by which they might recognize one another in the dark. We need a watchword now. It is very difficult to tell the children of God unless we have certain signs. God Himself gives us the watchword—"Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." You can always tell a saint of God by this watchword. If he says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely believe that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. If he does not understand our shibboleth, he may not have lived in that country where they speak the pure language of Canaan and that may excuse defects in his language. He may differ from us in some points, but if he sincerely says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely conclude that he is not an enemy of the Truth. I mean "THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus."

We may understand this watchword in two senses. It may mean that *Christian justification in the eyes of the world is of God* and also that *their righteousness, their salvation, is of God*. There is to be a time when God's children shall come out clear of all slander, when falsehood shall be

swept away and they stall stand forth justified even by their enemies. Their slanderers shall have nothing to say against them then. They shall share in the admiration which an assembled universe shall be compelled to give to Him who does all things well. But this vindication will not be brought about by their own efforts. They have not been anxious to avoid reproach for Christ's sake. They have not wept and bemoaned themselves because they were counted the offscouring of all things. No, their righteousness—their entire clearing from the aspersions of malice and the calumnies of envy will come from Jehovah! The coat of arms of the Church is in the Lord's hands and He will wipe away every blot from it. The character of the saints, God, Himself, shall vindicate—and all liars shall have their portion in the Lake of Fire and brimstone. Let this be the motto on the flag on our lance! Let this be our cheering watchword—"Our righteousness is of the Lord."

Now for the second meaning. "Their justifying righteousness is of Me," says the Lord. If I wished to best you all—and might ask you only one question, I would ask this—"What is *your* righteousness?" Come along in single file. What is *your* righteousness "Oh, I am as good as my neighbors!" Go along with you, you are not my comrade. What is your righteousness? "Well, I am rather *better* than my neighbors, for I go to chapel regularly." Off with you, Sir! You do not know the watchword. And you next—what is *your* righteousness? "I have been baptized and am a member of the church." Yes, and so you may be, but if that is your only hope, you are still in the gall of bitterness! Now, you next. What is *your* hope? "Oh, I do all I can and Christ makes up the rest." Rubbish! You are a Babylonian, you are no Israelite! Christ is no make weight—away with you! Here comes the last. What is *your* righteousness? "My righteousness is filthy rags, except the righteousness which I have, which Christ worked out for me on Calvary, which is imputed to me by God, Himself, and which makes me pure and spotless as an angel." Ah, Brother, you and I are fellow soldiers! I have found you—that is the watchword—"Your righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." I do not ask whether you are Churchmen, or Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists! If you do but know this watchword—"Your righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." I can leave all those minor things if you can sing—

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

Tell me that you have any other trust and I will have nothing to do with you! Tell me that you can work out your own salvation without God's help and I will not acknowledge you as my Brother. But if you tell me that, from first to last, you rely only on Jesus, then I acknowledge you as my fellow soldier and I am glad to see you wherever I meet you!

But, to wind up, we have had the heritage of the saints and we have had the watchword of the saints, what more shall I say? I will say—How well God has kept His promise! Has He not? You must know that it is just 249 years ago—it will be 250 next year—the fifth Jubilee—since under the Parliament House the train was laid and the gunpowder ready to blow up the Houses of Lords and Commons and utterly to destroy the

nation! Ah, how Satan gloated over the thought that he would destroy the Church of God and exalt his darlings to honor in the places of those who loved the Lord! The plotters said, "The foundations will be destroyed and then what will the righteous do?" They thought that surely their end would be accomplished, but how sadly were they disappointed! They were discovered. Down went the soldiers and found out the plot and Popery has been prevented from spreading throughout Great Britain! Blessed be the name of the Lord, "No weapon that is formed against His Church shall prosper." We glory because we can put our finger upon the page of history and exclaim, "God is true, and past events are witnesses of His faithfulness!"

O Beloved, has the Holy Spirit given you an inwrought knowledge of the Truth of this promise of God? Have you experienced blessed deliverances from the right hand of the Most High? Many of you, I fear, have neither part nor lot in this matter—and you have true cause to lament your terrible loss in being unable to grasp these Covenant blessings. But some of us may now anticipate the hour when we shall obtain complete redemption with all the blood-bought family and then, ah, then how shall we with rapture review delivering Grace in all its thousand instances! Hark! Hark! I thought I heard sweet music! I thought I heard a song descending from the regions up above, borne down by gales whose breath is sweet as that which comes from the spice groves of Araby! I hear a sound, not earthly—it is—it must be celestial, for no mortal sonnets can compare with these! O river of harmony, where are the lips from which you flow? The heavens are opened! I see a host in white robes, with crowns on their heads and palm branches in their hands! Who are these? And where did they come from? These are they who have passed through great tribulation and who tell us, "We have whitened our robes in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are we without fault before the Throne of God, and we serve Him day and night in His temple." Holy ones, repeat your song! Saints of God, re-echo the chorus! Repeat it yet again, that these ears may hear it! What do you sing? "No weapon that is formed against us has prospered; every tongue that has risen against us in judgment we have condemned. This is our heritage, our righteousness is of the Lord." Now, saints below, take up the strain and sing it by holy, joyous, confident anticipation—

"No weapon has prospered, the foe is overcome!
No tongue has succeeded, the wise ones are dumb!
The Lord is our glory and each of the host
Shall yet shout 'Hosanna,' on Canaan's fair coast!"

Glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:14-28; 44:1-8.

Isaiah 43:14-16. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, which*

makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty water. Great events in history all have some connection with the Church of Christ. We may not always be able to see it, but we may rest assured that it is so. The rise and fall of empires have a great deal to do with the chosen people of God. So here He reminds them of what He did in the ancient days when He smote Egypt at the Red Sea and made a path for His people through the mighty waters.

17. *Which brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as flax.* There is a little blaze and a little smoke and then all is over with the flax. So shall it be with those who set themselves up against the Lord—He shall confound their wisdom and humble their pride.

18, 19. *Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing.* What God has done once, He can do again; but He can also make yet grander and more marvelous displays of His power and Grace than He has ever yet given!

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give water in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.* If then, O child of God, you are in sore distress—if all around you is comfortless as a howling wilderness, yet do not despair! God can make a way for you even there, and can supply your needs. He can open up a way in the wilderness and rivers in the midst of the desert! Joy and rejoicing may come to you even in the depths of your distress.

21. *This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.* He will not be disappointed in His people. He made them that He might get glory out of them and He will surely have it—none shall be able to prevent it.

22-24. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have You honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have brought 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.* Remember that this is the wearied Lord who is speaking, the Lord whose patience seems to be well-near exhausted by the provocations of His people—yet how wonderful is His message to them!

25, 26. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance. Let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified.* "If you have anything to say in your own defense, out with it! Come to Me and let the cause of this quarrel be removed. Let Me hear your plea if you have one."

27, 28. *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.* God justifies

himself for His heavy strokes upon Israel—He tells them that the reason lay in their own sin.

Isaiah 44:1-3. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD, that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you. Fear not O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshrun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.* "Think not that I am anxious to punish you for your sin. Only return to Me, and I will be delighted to bless you. I will help you out of your troubles. I will supply your needs and not only so, but I will bless your children, generation after generation."

4, 5. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with His hand unto the LORD, and, surname himself by the name of Israel.* God still has power over human hearts—He can bring back to himself His wandering children.

6. *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.* He gathered up all into Himself as He is the First and the Last, where is there space for any other god? He, therefore, would have all our hearts. He would have us love, adore and serve Him and Him alone.

7. *And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him 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 these to them.* If these idols are gods, let them prophesy and tell what is to happen in the future! But they cannot even speak to one another.

8. *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? Indeed, there is no other God; I know not any.*

—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.

JOB'S SURE KNOWLEDGE
NO. 2909

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1904.

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"For I know that my Redeemer lives."
Job 19:25.

I DARESAY you know that there are a great many difficulties about the translation of this passage. It is a very complicated piece of Hebrew, partly, I suppose, owing to its great antiquity, being found in what is, probably, one of the oldest Books of the Bible. Besides that, different persons have tried to translate it according to their own varying views. The Jews stiffly fight against the notion of the Messiah and His Resurrection being found in this verve, while many Christian commentators see here everything that we can find in the New Testament and translate the passage as though Job were as well instructed in this matter as we are now that Christ "has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." Others say that while there is, no doubt, a reference to the Person and the Resurrection of Christ, yet it is not so vivid as some seem to think.

Personally, I am quite satisfied with the translation given in our Authorized Version, yet it has occurred to me that possibly, Job, himself, may not have known the full meaning of all that he said. Imagine the Patriarch driven into a corner, badgered by his so-called friends, charged by them with all manner of evils until he is quite boiling over with indignation and, at the same time, smarting under terrible bodily diseases and the dreadful losses which he has sustained—and, at last, he bursts out with this exclamation, "I shall be vindicated one day. I am sure I shall. I know that my Vindicator lives. I am sure that there is One who will vindicate me and if He never clears my name and reputation as long as I live, it will be done afterwards. There must be a just God in Heaven who will see me righted and even though worms devour my body until the last relic of it has passed away, I do verily believe that, somehow, in the far-off ages, I shall be vindicated."

He throws his faith forward to some tremendous era which he anticipates and he declares that there will be found then, as he believes there is alive even now, a Goel, a Kinsman, an Avenger who will stand up for him and set right all this wrong. He cannot conceive that God will permit such gross injustice to be done to a man who has walked as he has walked, to be brought so low and then to be stung with such unfounded

accusations. He is positive that there must be a Vindicator for him somewhere and he appeals to that Last Dread Tribunal which he dimly sees in the far-off future and he believes that someone will be found to stand up successfully for him there.

If that is the case, you will see that Job was driven, perhaps beyond his former knowledge, by his very pains and trials. He may but dimly have perceived a future state, but his condition revealed to him the necessity for such a state. He felt that if the righteous suffer so much in this life, often apparently without any just cause—and if the wicked prosper—then there must be another state in which God will set right the wrongs of this and rectify the apparent inequalities of His Providence here. Job realized that and, possibly, his deep griefs may have been the channel of another Revelation to him, namely, that there was a mysterious Divine Being concerning whom that dark prophecy had been handed down from the Garden of Eden, itself, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He felt sure that for those who were wronged as he had been, there must be an Advocate provided. He had before complained that there was no Umpire—no "Daysman"—to stand between them both, but now he asks for an Advocate and he feels that there must be one, yes, he *knows* that there is and he declares that somewhere or other, there is an Advocate who will, some day or other, set right all that concerns him, let things go now as they may! So possibly Job was seeing more than he had ever seen before of that mysterious One who pleads the cause of those who are oppressed and shows Himself strong on their behalf at the right hand of God!

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the matter, but shall use the passage in the full Evangelical sense. Job may have known all that we now know concerning Christ, for he may have had special Revelations and manifestations. We do not find all that we know in his Book, yet he may have meant all that I shall say in this discourse. If he did not mean it, I trust that we shall, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit!

I. I shall speak first upon this point—JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID HIS MISTAKEN FRIENDS.

These men were miserable comforters, but Job had a real Comforter. They were estranged from him, but he had a true Friend left, so he said, "I know that my Goel lives." That is the Hebrew word. I suppose you all know that it means the person nearest akin to him who, because he was nearest akin, was bound to take up his cause. If a man was slain by misadventure, the goel pursued the one who had slain him and endeavored to avenge his death. If a person fell into debt and was sold into slavery because of the debt, his goel, if he was able, had to redeem him—and hence we get the word, "redeemer." Or if estates became mortgaged through poverty, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem them, if possible, and so, again, we get the idea of redeemer. But the word, "goel," is more comprehensive than the word, "redeemer," so we will begin with its first meaning.

Job, in the midst of his false friends, had *One whom he called his Kinsman*. "I know," he said, "that my Kinsman lives." We interpret that word, "Kinsman," as meaning our Lord Jesus Christ and we sing—

"Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
Arrayed in majesty and blood,
You are our life, our souls in Thee
Possess a full felicity."

I want you, just now, to think of Jesus Christ as your Kinsman if you are really in Him, for He is, indeed, the nearest akin to you of any—bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." Now, your own flesh and blood, as you call them, are not so near to you in real kinship as Jesus is, for, often you will find flesh and blood near akin by birth but not by sympathy. Two brothers may be, spiritually, very different from one another and may not be able to enter into each other's trials at all. But this Kinsman participates in every pang that rends your heart. He knows your constitution, your weakness, your sensitiveness, the particular trial that cuts you to the quick—for in all your afflictions He was afflicted. Thus He is nearer to you than the nearest of earthly kin can possibly be, for He enters more fully into the whole of your life! He seems to have gone through it all and He still goes through it all in His constant sympathy with you.

Christ's kinship with His people is to be thought of with great comfort because it is voluntary. We have some, perhaps, who are akin to us, yet who wish they were not. Many a time, when a rich man has poor relations, he is half ashamed of the kinship between them and wishes that it did not exist. Shame upon him for thinking so! But our Lord Jesus Christ's relationship to us is no accident of birth—it was voluntarily assumed by him! He would be one with us because He loved us. Nothing could satisfy Him till He had come to this earth and been made one flesh with His Church. "For this cause," it is said concerning marriage, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery," said Paul, "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And, verily, so it was with Christ, as the poet sings—

"'Yes,' says the Lord, 'with her I'll go
Through all the depths of care and woe
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear.'"

This He did because He would be one flesh with His people and that is a very near kinship which comes as close as that, and which willingly does so—not by force, but by voluntary choice.

And further, this is a kinship of which Jesus is never ashamed. We have known or heard of the prosperous man who has been ashamed of his poor old mother and of the educated young man who has looked down with scorn upon the very father who has toiled and slaved in order to give him the advantages of such an education. It is disgraceful that there should ever be such ingrates, but it is written concerning our great Kinsman, "He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one;

for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He declares to the whole universe, concerning those persecuted ones—those who are ridiculed as being fools, "They are My brethren." The Prince of Glory, whose fingers are adorned with stars of light like rings of priceless value, calls the poor bedridden woman who is a child of God, His sister! And He calls the humble, toiling, laboring man who walks with Him, His brother! And He is not ashamed to do so. Think, Beloved, with most intense gratitude, of this great Kinsman of yours who is so near of kin to you—voluntarily near of kin and not ashamed to acknowledge the kinship!

Remember, too, that your Kinsman lives in this respect—that He will always be your Kinsman! The closest ties of earthly relationship must, to a great extent, end in death, for there are no husbands and wives, as such, in Heaven. There cannot be, "for in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven." There are other ties, of a spiritual kind, that will far outshine the best of bonds that linked us together here, but, when all other ties are broken, Jesus will always be our Kinsman, our Brother! We shall find the fraternal relationship better understood, more fully enjoyed and more clearly manifested up there than it can ever be down here. When all other relationships are growing dim, this blessed eternal kinship will shine out the more brightly! So I want all of you who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ to interpret my text in this way—"I know that my Kinsman lives"—and to feel how honored you are to have such a Kinsman as Christ is! Ruth was highly privileged in having such a kinsman as Boaz who was not content for her to glean in his fields, but who took her as his wife. And your great Kinsman intends that you should be betrothed to Him forever and He will bring you to His heavenly home at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

There was a second meaning to the word, "goel," arising out of the first—*Job's Kinsman would become his Vindicator*. It was the kinsman's duty to defend the rights of his needy relative, so Job intended here to say, "I know that my Vindicator lives." And the Lord Jesus Christ is the Vindicator of His people from all false charges. It is not easy for Christians to live in this world without being slandered and misrepresented. Certainly, those of us who live in the full blaze of public life can hardly utter a word without having it twisted, tortured and misconstrued. We are often represented as saying what we loathe even to think—yet we must not be surprised at that. The world loves lying—it always has done so and it always will. Even in private life you may meet with similar cruel treatment—there are some of God's best children who lie under reproach by the year together. The very things which they would not tolerate for a moment are laid to their charge and they are thought to be guilty of them—and even good people hold up their hands in pious horror at them though they are perfectly innocent all the while!

Well, Beloved, always remember that your Vindicator lives! Do not be too much concerned to clear your own character. Above all, do not attempt to vindicate yours in a court of law, but say to yourself, "I know that my Vindicator lives." When He comes, "then shall the righteous

shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." His people may now be under a cloud, but, when He appears, the cloud shall break and their true glory shall be seen! The greater the censure under which any of us have unjustly lived on earth, the greater will be the joy and the honor which will be vouchsafed to us in the day when Christ shall clear our character from all the shameful aspersions that have been brought against us! All will be cleared up in that day, so leave the accusations alone, knowing that your Vindicator lives.

There is another most comforting thought—that our Vindicator will clear us from true charges as well as false ones. As for the false charges, what do they matter? It is the *true* ones that really concern us—can Christ clear us from them? Yes, that He can! Remember how the Apostle John writes, "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." You see, it is not merely if we have been *said* to sin when we did not, but if we *really* sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father." O blessed Advocate, how do You clear Your people of the sin which they have actually committed? Why, in this way—He took it up Himself—the awful load of their guilt—and suffered the full penalty for it! So there He stands before the Eternal Throne to plead their cause and, as He does so, He says, "Those sins committed by My people—I have taken them upon Myself and suffered in the place of all who will believe in Me." O blessed Kinsman, how glorious are You in Your Grace, in that You have so completely undertaken our cause that You have been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in You!

Yes, Beloved, Jesus will plead the merit of His precious blood and His spotless righteousness and, before that powerful pleading, our sins and our transgressions shall sink beneath the flood and shall not be remembered against us any more forever!

In that day, too, our Vindicator will defend us against all the accusations of Satan. Our great adversary often assails and attacks us here—and the Lord says to him, as He did concerning Joshua the high priest, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" We may tell the devil, when we stand foot to foot with him and are sore beset, that our Vindicator lives and we may quote to him that grand promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," because our Vindicator, who is to bruise the serpent's head, still lives! The old serpent may nibble at your heel for a while, as he did at your Master's, but you, in the strength of your Lord, shall bruise his head! And whatever other adversary of your soul there may be at any time, you can rest in quiet confidence. Even if that adversary is permitted to prevail over you for a while, say to him, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

So you have two meanings of the word goel—my Kinsman, my Vindicator—lives. I hope you who are greatly tempted and tried and you who are persecuted and oppressed will catch that second meaning and commit your cause unto God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will re-

pay, says the Lord." Be slow to anger! Fret not yourselves because of the wicked man that prospers in his evil way and think not of being revenged upon your oppressors! In patience and quietness possess your souls knowing that your time of vindication will surely come, for your Vindicator lives!

Then the third meaning of the word goel certainly is, "Redeemer," so Job could say, "*I know that my Redeemer lives*." As I have already said, the next of kin in the process of vindicating his poor kinsman was accustomed to redeem him from bondage, or to redeem any part of his estate that might be under mortgage. So, let us next think of how the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us from bondage. Having broken the Law of God, we were in bondage to that Law. We had received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But we who have believed in Jesus, our Kinsman, can say that He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, and that we are no longer in bondage. We were also in bondage under sin, as Paul wrote, "I am carnal, sold under sin," but Christ has come and broken the power of sin in us so that its reigning power is subdued—and though it still strives to get the mastery and often makes us to groan within ourselves, even as Paul did, yet do we, with him, thank God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!

There are two redemptions—redemption by price and redemption by power, and both of these Christ has worked for us—by price, by His Sacrifice upon the Cross of Calvary—and by power, by His Divine Spirit coming into our heart and renewing our soul. Ought we not unceasingly to bless the Lord who has redeemed us from under the Law, having paid the penalty for the commands which we had broken and who has also redeemed us from the power of sin? "I know that my Redeemer lives," then I know that I am a free man, for if the Son makes us free, then are we free, indeed! I know that He paid the price for my soul's eternal redemption—then may my soul continually exult in Him and rejoice in the liberty with which He has made me free!

But, as I have already reminded you, the redeemer was also accustomed to redeem the estate as well as the person of his kinsman. We had lost everything. Father Adam had put everything under a heavy mortgage and we could not even meet the interest on it—but the whole estate is free from a mortgage now, even to Paradise itself! Does someone ask, "Is there not any mortgage even upon Paradise?" I answer—No, for Christ said to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." So it is clear that He has entered Paradise and claimed it on His people's behalf. Jesus Christ has said, in the words of the Psalmist, "I restored that which I took not away." Bankrupt debtors, through the Lord's Sovereign Grace you are no longer under any liabilities because of your sin if Christ is accepted by you as your Goel and Redeemer! He has restored the estates to you which your first father, Adam, had lost. And He has made you heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ through the wondrous redemption which He worked for you on the Cross of Calvary!

Suck the honey, if you can, out of these three glorious Truths of God and you will be able to do so in proportion as you can personally use the

words of the text, "'I know that my Redeemer lives.' I know that He lives who will vindicate my character and rectify my wrongs. I know, too, that He lives who has redeemed me from sin and Hell—and even though I die, I know that He will redeem me from the power of the grave and that He will enable me to say, 'O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?'"

Dwell on the remembrance that you have such a Divine Helper and then let us pass on to another thought at which I will only briefly hint as I proceed to another part of my theme.

II. The second point is this—JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY.

Job had lost everything—every stick and stone that he possessed. He had lost his children and he had lost his wife, too, for all practical purposes, for she had not acted like a wife to him in his time of trial. Poor Job—he had lost everything else, but he had not lost his Redeemer! Notice, he does not say, "I know that my wife and my children live," but he said, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Ah, "my Redeemer"—he has not lost Him, so he has the best of all possessions still left! Looking up to Him by faith, with the tears of joy standing in his eyes, he says, "Yes, He is my Redeemer and He still lives. I accept Him as mine and I will cling to Him forever." Can you, beloved Friends, not merely rejoice in Christ as the Redeemer, but also as *your* Redeemer? Have you personally accepted Him as your Redeemer? Have you personally trusted Him with your soul, wholly and really? And do you already feel in your own heart a kinship to this great Kinsman, a trust in this great Vindicator, a reliance upon His great Redemption? Another man's redemption is of no value to my soul—the sweetness lies in the little word, "my"—"my Redeemer." Luther used to say that the marrow of the Gospel is found in the pronouns and I believe it is—"My Redeemer." Say, with me, each one of you for himself or herself—

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.
My soul looks back to see
The burdens You did bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree
And hopes her guilt was there."

If you really do rely upon Christ's atoning Sacrifice and so take Him as your Redeemer, you may not only hope your guilt was there, but you may *know* that it was! There, poor man, you may not have a penny in your pocket, but if you can truly say, "my Redeemer," you are infinitely better off than a millionaire who cannot say that! You who know not where you will have a lodging tonight, if you can truly say, "my Redeemer," you need not envy the very angels of God, for in this respect, you are ahead even of them, for they can call Him, "Lord," but not "Redeemer"! He is not so near akin to them as He is to you, "for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." He took your Nature and mine, Beloved, for Christ became a Man!

So Job had something real and valuable left even when he had lost all his property.

III. Thirdly, Job seems to lay stress upon the word, "lives"—"I know that my Redeemer *lives*." This teaches us that JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY.

All his children were dead. We cannot easily estimate the full force of that blow upon the Patriarch's heart. The loss of one child is a very painful event, even when the child is a very little one and the parents have many others left. But it is a far worse bereavement when the children who are taken away are grown up, as Job's were. They were evidently a very united family who used to meet in each other's houses for mutual fellowship. They seem to have been a very happy family and they were certainly a family under very gracious influences, for Job was accustomed, after their days of festival, to offer sacrifices for them lest they should have sinned against the Lord. Altogether, it was a fine family—seven sons and three daughters—and now they were all gone at once! To lose all one's family at once like that is a heavy stroke that none can measure but those who have felt it. All were gone!—The whole ten at once! That was sad for poor Job, but it was most blessed that he was able to say, "Though my children are all dead, 'I know that my Redeemer lives.' He is not dead and in Him I find more than all that I have lost."

Look at your Lord, dear Friend, if you are mourning, just now, the sons of loved ones and see whether He is not better to you than ten sons and daughters! See whether there is not in His heart room enough for that affection which has been so rudely snapped, to grow again. The tendrils of your soul need something to cling to and to twist around—then let them wrap around Him! Rejoice that He lives in a dying world. If you walk through the cemetery, or stand by the open grave, how blessedly these words seem to fall upon your spirit—like the music of angels—"These are dead, but 'I know that *my Redeemer lives*'—lives on, lives in power, lives in happiness, lives with a life which He communicates to all who trust Him. He lives and therefore I shall live with Him! He lives and therefore the dead who are in Him shall live forever." O blessed Truth of God!

You will yourself die soon, dear Friend. No, I must correct myself—you will not *die*, for it is not death for one who knows the Savior to die. You will fall asleep in Him one of these days at the very hour that God has appointed—and when you open your eyes, it will not be in the narrow death chamber—you will not be on the bed of sickness. I think you will be startled to find yourself amid such new surroundings! "What is this I hear?" you will say. "Such music as this has never charmed me before! And what is that I see?" But you will not need to enquire, for you will know *that* face at once! You knew, while on earth, that Jesus still lived, but you will know it better then—when you lay aside these heavy optics that do but dim our sight and get into the pure spirit state and then see HIM! Oh, the bliss of that first sight of Christ! It seems to me as if that would gather up an eternity of delight into a single moment! That first glimpse of Him will be enough to make us swoon away with excessive

rapture! I do verily think that some saints whom I have known have done just that—swooned away with the excess of joy that they have felt in their departing moments. I have, sounding in my ears just now, the voice of a dear Brother by whose bedside I sat for a little while before I came to this service. He said to me, "I shall be Home tonight, Pastor. I wanted to see your face once more before I went, but I shall be Home tonight and see the face of Jesus!" I hope you will all be prepared to die after that fashion. The godly old Negro said, "Our minister is dying full of life." That is the way to die—full of life! Because Jesus lives, we shall also live and we may well die full of life because of our union to Him!

IV. The last thought I want to leave with you is this—JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS.

He said, "I *know* that my Redeemer lives." Why, Job, I should have thought you would not have known anything for certain now! I should not have liked to insure Job's farm animals, or the houses in which his children met together to feast. Nothing seemed to be certain with Job but uncertainty—yet there *was* one thing concerning which he felt that he could put his foot down firmly and say, "'I *know.*' The winds may rage and the tempests roar, but they cannot shake this rock. 'I know.' 'I know.' 'I know!'" Beloved, is everything uncertain with you in this world? Of course it is, for it is so with everybody! But does it appear to be more uncertain with you than it does with anybody else? Does your business seem to be slipping away and every earthly comfort is threatening to disappear? Even if it is so, there is, nevertheless, something that is certain—something that is stable—Jesus your Redeemer lives! Rest on Him and you will never fail. Let your faith in Him be firm and confident—you cannot be too fully established in the belief that Jesus, who once died, has left the grave to die no more and that you, in Him, must also live eternally! Something may be wrong with you for the next few days or weeks, but all is right with you forever and "all's well that ends well."

There may be some rough water to be crossed between here and the fair havens of eternal happiness, but all is right there forever and ever! There may be losses and crosses, there may be tumult and shipwrecks, but all is right forever with all who are in Christ Jesus! "Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship"—but all who are in Christ Jesus shall escape "safe to land." There are innumerable uncertainties, but there is this one certainty—"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Spring on this Rock, man! If you are struggling in the sea, just now, and waves of sin and doubt beat over you, leap onto this Rock—Jesus lives! Trust the living Christ and, because He lives, you shall also live! I could cheerfully take my place with Job if I might be able to say as confidently as he did, "I know that my Redeemer lives."

And if you, as a poor sinner, are trusting wholly and only in Christ, then He is your Redeemer and you are saved forever! If He is the only hope that you have and you cling to Him as the limpet clings to the rock, then all is right with you forever, and you may know that He is your Re-

deemer as surely as Job knew that He was his! The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOB 19.

Verses 1, 2. *Then, Job answered and said, how long will you vex my soul and break me in pieces with words?* They struck at him with their hard words as if they were breaking stones on the roadside! We ought to be very careful what we say to those who are suffering affliction and trial, for a word, though it seems to be a very little thing, will often cut far more deeply and wound far more terribly than a razor. So Job says, "How long will you vex my soul and break me in pieces with words?"

3. *These ten times have you reproached me: you are not ashamed that you make yourselves strange to me.* He means that they had reproached him several times over—and hints that they ought to have been ashamed to act so strangely, so coldly, so harshly towards him.

4. *And be it indeed that I have erred, my error remains with myself.* "I have done you no harm. The error, if error there is, is within my own bosom, for you cannot find anything in my life to lay to my charge." Happy is the man who can say as much as that!

5, 6. *If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach: know now that God has overthrown me, and has compassed me with His net.* Job seems to say, "I did not bring this trouble upon myself—it is God who has laid it upon me. Take heed lest in reproaching me because of my trouble, you should also reproach God." I suppose that we cannot, all of us, see into the inner meaning of these words, but if we are in very sore trouble and those who ought to comfort us are bringing cruel accusations against us, we shall read the language of Job with no small sympathy and satisfaction.

7. *Behold, if I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.* Poor Job! When our prayer is not heard, or we think it is not, then the clouds above us are indeed dark. You who are passing through a season of unanswered prayer—do not imagine that you are the first to travel that dreary way! You can see the footprints of others on that desolate sandy shore. Job knew what that experience meant. So did David and so did our blessed Lord. Read the 2nd verse of the 22nd Psalm, and hear Jesus say, "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

8. *He has fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and He has set darkness in my paths.* God *had* done this and done it to Job whom He called "a perfect and an upright man." Then how can you and I expect to escape trial and difficulty when such a man as the Patriarch of Uz found his road blocked up and darkness all around him?

9, 10. *He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He has destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and my hope has He removed like a tree.* That is, torn up by the roots and carried

down the stream to be forgotten by the people who once knew it and rejoiced in its welcome shade.

11. *He has also kindled His wrath against me, and He counts me unto Him as one of His enemies.* Does God ever act like that towards His own children? Yes, there are times when, without any anger in His heart, but with designs of love toward them, He treats His children, outwardly, as if He were an enemy to them. See the gardener going up to that beautiful tree. He takes out a sharp knife, feels its edge to be sure that it is sharp and then he begins pruning it here, gashing it there and making it to bleed in another place as if he were going to cut it all to pieces! Yet all that is not because he has any anger against the tree, but, on the contrary, because he greatly values it and wishes it to bring forth more fruit than it has ever done. Do not think that God's sharpest knife means death to His loved ones—it means more life and a richer, fuller life.

12. *His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.* Troops of trouble, troops of Chaldeans and Sabeans, troops in which Job counted the stormy winds as terrible allies of the Most High—all these had come up against Job and he seemed to be like a country that is beaten down and devoured by powerful invaders.

13. *He has put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintance are verily estranged from me.* He looks on those so-called "friends" of his and, remembering the bitter things they had said, he tells them that they are estranged from him.

14, 15. *My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.* What a long way a child of God may be permitted to go in trouble! Ah, Brothers and Sisters! We do not know how those who are most dear to God's heart may suffer all the more for that very reason—"for whom the Lord loves He chastens."

16, 17. *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of my own body.* He mentioned to his wife those whom death had taken away and asked her to speak kindly to him, but even she had hard words to throw in his teeth!

18-20. *Yes, young children despised me; I arose, and they spoke against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaves to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.* There is no skin upon the teeth, or scarcely any, and, therefore, Job means that there was next to nothing of him left, like the skin of his teeth.

21. *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O you my friends; for the hand of God has touched me.* How full of pity it is that he has thus to beg for sympathy! This strong man—this most patient man—this perfect and upright man before God has to ask for sympathy! Do you wonder that it was so? HE, who was far greater than Job, ran back thrice to His sleeping disciples as if He needed some help from them, yet He found it not, for He had to say to them, "What? Could you not watch with Me one

hour?" Let this be a lesson to us to try and possess hearts of compassion towards those who are in sorrow and distress.

22. *Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh?* "If God smites me, why do you, who are round about me, do the same? Is it not enough that God seems to be turned against me? Why should you also be my enemies?"

23, 24. *Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were engraved with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!* Inscriptions have been found, engraved in the rocks, that may have been done in the time of Job and it was common, in ancient days, to write on tablets of lead or brass. So Job desired that what he was saying might be recorded for future reference, for he was persuaded that he was being harshly dealt with and unjustly judged.

25. *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.* "For I know." What a splendid burst of confidence this is, right out of the depth of his sorrow, like some wondrous star that suddenly blazes upon the brow of the blackest night, or like the sudden rising of the morning sun!

26-28. *And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins are consumed within me. But you should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?* Job seems to say, speaking about himself, though in the third person, "He is a devout man, can you not see that? He has faith in God, my Friends, can you not perceive that? Why, then, do you persecute him so?"

29. *Be you afraid of the sword: for wrath brings the punishments of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment.* Now Job carries the war into the enemy's camp and he says, "You charge me with all sorts of sin and yet you cannot deny that the root of the matter is in me. Would it not be much wiser for you to be yourselves afraid lest God should cut you off for falsely accusing me and slandering me in the time of my sorrow?" There we may confidently leave Job, for the man who can truly say what he has said about his Redeemer will come out all right at the last.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—419, 326
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—25.

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THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE
NO. 2910

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1904.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 17, 1876.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in Heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God and the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." Revelation 14:14-20.

I AM no Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet. Neither do I profess to be able to explain all the prophecies in this blessed Book. I believe that many of them will only be explained as the events occur which they foretell. Yet there are some things which are plain even to the most superficial reader. It is plain, for instance, that it is certainly foretold that the power of antichrist shall be utterly and eternally destroyed and that Babylon, that is to say, the Papal system, with all its abominations, shall be cast like a millstone into the flood to rise no more forever. It is also certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as their King, and that they will return to their own land, "and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." It is also certain that our Lord Jesus Christ will come again to this earth and that He will gloriously reign among His ancients and that there will be a thousand years of joy and peace such as were never known on this earth before! It is also certain that there will be a great and general judgment when all nations shall be gathered before the Son of Man sitting upon the Throne of His Glory—and His final word concerning these upon His left hand will be, "These shall go away into

everlasting punishment" and, concerning those upon His right hand, "but the righteous into life eternal."

How all these great events are to be chronologically arranged, I cannot tell. This I know—for I have read a multitude of books upon this subject, and of making them there is practically no end—all the authors seem to me to be wonderfully wise in confuting one another, but not to be so successful in establishing their own theories! Therefore I am content to believe what I see to be clearly taught in the Scriptures and to leave to abler minds than my own the arrangement of the various events in some sort of historical sequence. This, however, seems to me to be clearly revealed in the Scriptures—that there is to come—we know not when—a solemn winding up of all the events of this world's history. Whatever else may happen, or may not happen, the Apostle Paul plainly declared that God "has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained. Therefore He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead." Even though we cannot comprehend some things that are foretold by John, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel, we know that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." And that "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 is good or bad." Judgment must certainly come, even to the house of God, for Peter says that there it shall *begin*! And if it shall begin there, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?"

That there will be a Day of Judgment appears to be clear even to human reason, for, apart from Revelation, or, perhaps, assisted by some dim relics of it, all nations—I think I may say all, for no exceptions are known to me—have believed in a judgment. They have called it by different names and they have described it in various ways, but they have all believed, more or less clearly, in a great Throne of Justice, before which wrongs will be rectified, sin will be punished and righteousness will be rewarded. This has seemed so self-evident, even to the crudest thoughts of the lowest of mankind, that, in some shape or other, the most unenlightened nations have believed it! And it strikes one, at once, as being most reasonable, for, in this world, how often does infamy triumph! How often is oppression linked with power to destroy innocence and virtue! What are the groans, sighs and wails that I hear and what are the tears that I see but the outbursts of men who are being crushed beneath the awful burden of lifelong injustice? The best of men are, all too often, trodden down as the very mire of the street, while the worst are sitting proudly in the high places of the earth! If there is a God at all—and we know that there is—there must be a time and a way of rectifying all this in another state! And so there is, as David says, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judges in the earth."And, therefore, verily there must be a time of judgment for the *ungodly*—even common reason seems to teach us that!

Moreover, there is within us all a conscience which Shakespeare says, "does make cowards of us all." And well I think that it may do so since

we have all sinned and turned from the path of right. Let man do what he will with that conscience—unless there is an extraordinary restraint put upon it—it bears testimony to the great fact that the judgment is coming on apace! We have known men stifle or silence this voice till they have come to a sick-bed, or have been at sea in a storm—yet why have they been so alarmed at the approach of death? Death itself is not to be feared, but it is—

"The dread of something after death—
The undiscovered country, from whose boundary
No traveler returns"—

that makes a man cling even to an ignominious and shameful life rather than hurry himself, all unprepared, before the bar of God! Men who have, when in health, denied this, have, as they have lain dying, proved that they believed it by the cold clammy sweat that has stood upon their brow at the very thought of passing into the spirit world! They have known that there is a God—a God who must do right—and knowing that they have done wrong they have been afraid to fall into the hands of the living God!

But we are not left to the faint taper of human reason, or to the flickering candle of conscience—we have the full sunlight of Divine Revelation! Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, has told us, in many different ways, sometimes by parable, and sometimes by plain speech, that there is a day assuredly coming in which all mankind shall stand before His bar. And the Apostle John, in the visions which we are about to consider, had a view—not exactly of the Judgment itself—but of a parable or picture of that Judgment. May the Holy Spirit help us to look into it with Divinely-opened eyes and may He graciously impress the Truth of God concerning the Judgment upon all our hearts!

Before we consider my main subject, let me call your attention to what John says about the coming of the Judge. "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle."

Observe then, first, *the Judge's Throne*. On that great Judgment Day, He will come sitting upon a cloud. What can this metaphor mean? Surely it must mean that His Judgment Seat will be far more glorious than the thrones of mere mortal monarchs. They may sit upon thrones of ivory. They may exalt themselves upon thrones made of gold and bedecked with myriads of gems shining like the eyes of the morning, or the stars of the midnight sky—but their thrones can never be compared in splendor with the Judgment Seat of Christ! A Great White Throne shall come sailing along the sky and on it shall sit the King of kings, and Lord of lords—the Judge of All—who has the right to sit in judgment, whose decisions will be impartial and Infallible and whose sentences will assuredly be carried out! He asks not for any throne that this world could supply. He borrows no leave to judge from Parliament, or Pope, or prince. He is Judge by Divine Right, as from God, Himself, and as the Mediator, appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead!

His mysterious Throne is also said to be "a white cloud." The word expresses not so much the color of whiteness as the dazzling brilliancy of a white substance—dazzling because of its perfect purity. A Throne as of alabaster shall that white cloud be to Him—a throne as of transparent glass, pure as crystal—a Throne that shall be without spot or blemish—a Throne whose judgment no bribe can ever influence—a Throne concerning which it may be said that the Judge seated there never fears the face of man or devil, nor will He ever do any man or devil an injustice, but will "lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet."

The Judge's Throne, then, shall be unique for its splendor and unearthly purity. And He will be seated upon a cloud which will be so elevated in the sky that all can see it. If Christ were to be seated upon a throne set up at Jerusalem or at Rome, only a part of the world's vast population would be able to behold Him, but on that tremendous day there shall be an audience chamber large enough to hold the quick and the dead of all climes and all times! And Christ shall be there, above them all, "and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." On some calm summer evenings, as the sun has been setting, I have seen a cloud, wafted by the wind in the very face of the sun and the sun has shone upon it, lighting it up with such glory as only Heaven could give! And I have said to myself, "So shall it be in that Day when the Son of Man shall appear, seated upon a white cloud as His last Throne of Judgment."

Now turn your eyes for a little while from the Judge's Throne to *His Person.* "Upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man." And well may John say "like unto the Son of Man," for it is none but He, "THE Son of Man." Man has had many sons, but no other like this "Son of Man!" He is the truest Man who ever lived—the most manly of all men—the only One in whom manhood has reached its perfection! And in that day every eye shall see that though He is "very God of very God," yet is He also just as truly Man. They shall behold the nail-prints in His hands and His feet, and the marks of the spear in His side. And they shall see that it is even He whom they called, "the Nazarene," and whom wicked men nailed to the Cross of Calvary. It is HE who shall come to judge the quick and the dead—the gentle Jesus, "meek and lowly in heart," still full of love and abundant in mercy, for those attributes can never depart from our Lord Jesus Christ! Yet they will be consistent with the sternest justice and the most unflinching administration of the Law of God. It will go ill, in that day, with those who have despised the Lamb of Calvary, for they shall find that He is also "the Lion of the tribe of Judah!" None are more terrible in justice than those who are tender in mercy. Bring to me the gentlest spirit that ever lived and begin to tell the tale of the Bulgarian massacres—and I will guarantee you that in proportion to the tenderness will be the indignation! They who have no heart cannot display real indignation—but where there beats a true heart of love, there must be righteous wrath against that which is unloving—holy anger against that which is unjust and true. So shall it be with Him who will sit upon the white cloud. With a perfectly balanced mind, calm and absolutely impartial,

gentle, yet terrible, He will sit upon that Throne of spotless purity, "and every eye shall see Him." My eyes shall see Him and your eyes shall see Him—and the eyes of everyone who has been born of woman shall see Him on that day!

We have glanced at the Judge's Throne and at His Person. Now let us note *His adornments*. John mentions that He saw "on His head a golden crown." That is to signify that He is a Sovereign and, indeed, as I have already reminded you, He is King of kings and Lord of lords—and He is to be the Judge of All by virtue of His Divine Authority and Power. How different it will be to see Him with a crown of gold upon His head from what it was to see Him wearing that terrible crown of thorns which the cruel soldiers plaited and thrust upon His brow! The word used here does not usually refer to the diadem of power, but to the crown *won in conflict*—and it is very remarkable that it should be said that when Christ comes to judge the world, He will wear the garland of victory—the crown which He has won in the great battle which He has fought. How significant of His final triumph will that crown of gold be about that brow that was once covered with bloody sweat when He was fighting the battle for our salvation! As His saints catch a glimpse of that fillet of gold, they will remember His victorious words, "It is finished!" And the very sight of that golden crown will fill their hearts with ineffable joy and delight, for they will recollect that He triumphed on the Cross for them and that He has vanquished all their foes and now He has come to claim them as the reward of His struggles and the spoils of His victory!

Give one more look at the Judge upon His Throne and you will see that He carries "in His hand a sharp sickle" or reaping-hook. This is His scepter and it signifies that He has come to finish His last great work which will be sharp, swift and decisive. When He came to fight the battle of Truth, "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," but now it is hand-work rather than mouth-work with Him. There will be no ministry of mercy now, no further proclamation of the Gospel, but, with a sharp sickle, Christ will come to reap! The sowing time will be over and the reaping time will have come. What a sight that will be! "For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." On that last tremendous day when the earth will be rocking and reeling to and fro in terror at His coming, there will be a fulfillment of that verse in the last chapter of this Book—"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he who is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he who is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

I. Now follow me while we look, first, at THE HARVEST and may the Spirit of God render these great Truths of God exceedingly impressive to us! The first thing to be done, at the coming of the Lord, is to gather to Himself His own people—the wheat which He Himself sowed—the precious grain which He watered with His bitter tears and His bloody sweat. "Another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him

that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Notice that *this reaping comes first* and I think it comes *first in order of time*. If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to be two resurrections and the first will be the resurrection of the righteous, for it is written, "but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power." Sometimes, in Scripture, the resurrection of the just and of the unjust is represented as taking place simultaneously and, at other times, they are represented as having an interval of a thousand years between the two. Yet a thousand years are but as one day to God and it may be that the whole period is included in the Day of Judgment. Still, it strikes me that we have sufficient warrant from Scripture to say that in the order of time, the harvest comes before the vintage, as Paul says, "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 ever be with the Lord." After that, I gather that He will come to judge and to condemn the wicked.

But, certainly, if not first in order of time, it is here put *first in order of importance*, for it is the gathering in of the wheat to which Christ especially looks forward. It is this on which His soul is set with ardent longing. Judgment is His strange work, His left-handed work, but, "He delights in mercy" and He will put this work first when He comes to "judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His Truth." He has such regard for His saints that "when He makes inquisition for blood, He remembers them." His eye is always fixed upon them and even on the Day of Judgment, the great event to Christ shall be the clearing of the righteous from every accusation that may be brought against them—the complete and final justification of as many as have believed in Him!

We can see, from reading this passage, that those to be left after the righteous are gathered in, are very clearly indicated. In this world, in the present state, there is a mixture of good and bad. Here, the tares and the wheat grow close together in the same field and, as a general rule, no man can tell the tares from the wheat. If any of us were to try to root up the tares, we would be almost sure to also root up the wheat. But, in that Day, the righteous and the wicked will be easily distinguished from one another. Nobody ever mistook an ear of wheat for a cluster of grapes and when Christ comes, the distinction between the righteous and the wicked will be as clearly manifested between a field of wheat in the time of harvest and a vineyard when the grapes are ripe. It is plainly declared that in that Day, God's wheat will be ripe for the heavenly garner—"Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." When the Lord Jesus comes, every child of God will be found to be ripe for Heaven. There is a great deal of greenness and sourness in us while we are in the blade and in the ear—but when we are dried—as the word might be translated—when the wheat has become mellowed by the ripening influences of autumn—then shall we be as

sweet, ripe corn for the Lord of the Harvest to gather into His garner! Some of you do not feel very ripe at present, but you may rest assured that you will not be harvested until you are fully ripe. The Lord will not reap one ear of His corn green and He has a secret way of preparing His people for Heaven when He has prepared Heaven for them. The righteous will be perfectly ripe in that day! "The time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Notice, also, that they are all to be gathered in and that this great task is to be accomplished by the crowned King, Himself. I want that fact to be specially noted by you, so let me again read the 16th verse. "And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." With the golden crown upon His brow, He that is like unto the Son of Man will stoop from His Throne of cloud and reap His saints—gathering them all to His bosom in one glorious sweep of His strong right arm! It does not say that Christ will send an angel to do this reaping. His love to His chosen is so great that He will not entrust this task to any angel, but will do it all Himself! He alone knows how much that ripe corn has cost Him. Those precious souls were espoused unto Him from eternity and they were redeemed by Him with His own heart's blood! They are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones, so He gathers them unto Himself and does not think it beneath His dignity to be the Reaper of this golden grain Himself! Do you not delight in that thought—you who love the Lord? Does not your heart rejoice in knowing that in that Great Day when you stand like ripe corn, Christ shall come, sitting upon a white cloud and having on His head a golden crown and, with the sharp sickle in His hand, He will gather you unto Himself with the glad joy of the reaper?

It is another metaphor that we find in the Book of Malachi, but it has the same meaning—"They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." None can tell, not even those who have had the greatest sympathy with Christ in the sowing, what will be His joy in the reaping! Or what shall be our joy, too, when we enter into the joy of our glorified Lord! The harvest, even on earth, is a happy time—hear how the reapers sing and shout as they carry the golden sheaves into the garner! But what rejoicing and what shouting there will be when we, as shocks of corn fully ripe, are taken Home to the heavenly garner! Well did we sing, just now, in anticipation of that last harvest home—

"Hallelujah!
Welcome, welcome, Son of God!"

May you and I, dear Friends, all be garnered among the wheat in that great harvest day!

II. Now, for a little while, we must have the very heavy task of looking at THE VINTAGE.

The vintage represents the destruction of the wicked. "And another angel came out of the temple which is in Heaven, he also having a sharp sickle." You see, it is not the crowned Christ who comes to do this work of judgment, but an angel. "And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the

sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe." I want to speak to you very calmly, yet very solemnly, about this last vintage, because it may concern some of you. If you do not escape from the wrath to come, it *will* concern you—awfully and terribly concern you!

Notice, first, that *this vintage comes after the harvest.* As I have told you, I think it will be so in the order of time. After Christ shall have gathered His saints unto Himself, then shall He summon the wicked to appear before His Judgment Seat. Then shall follow their terrible condemnation and even if it is not second in the order of time, it will be second in the order of importance. Dreadful as is their doom, our Lord Jesus Christ does not look upon that as the principal event of that Last Great Day. His own words are, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous come forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." As I said before, the wicked will be clearly distinguished from the righteous in that Day. Nobody will mistake them then. They may be mistaken here, for they may go to the same place of worship, they may sing the same hymns and, in many respects, they may be like the children of God. We may easily mistake tares—such tares as Christ mentioned—for blades of wheat, but again I remark that there is no possibility of mistaking a cluster of grapes for an ear of corn! So, in that Day, there will be no way of evading the Judge's Infallible Judgment—there will be no miscarriage of justice before the bar of God!

Observe, next, that the *condemnation of the ungodly is called for by the angel of fire.* "Another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire." Ah, me! What does this mean? Has God appointed some holy spirits to watch over the instruments of terror with which He will execute the fierceness of His wrath? Was that the angel, "which had power over fire," who launched the thunderbolts in Egypt on that dread night when the first-born in all the land were slain unless they were sheltered under the sprinkled blood? Was that the angel, "which had power over fire," who smote the hosts of Sennacherib? Was that the angel, "which had power over fire," who opened the furnaces of Hell and caused fire and brimstone to descend on guilty Sodom and Gomorrah? It may be and that this same angel shall come forward, at the last, to demand that justice shall be executed upon those who have despised God and rejected Jesus Christ whom He has sent!

It appears also, from the parable, that *the wicked will be fully ripe for punishment.* That is a very strong expression in the 18th verse—"Gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; *for her grapes are fully ripe."* The righteous are said to be ripe—some of them, perhaps, only just ripe—but the wicked are fully ripe, for sin has a wonderfully ripening effect upon men. They add iniquity unto iniquity until they have filled up the measure of it. The Greek word used here means that they have reached their *acme*—they have come to the highest point of sin! Are any of you here fully ripe? Why, I think that one sin makes a man ripe for judgment, but

to go on, year after year, despising Christ and rejecting His Gospel must make man what we call "dead ripe." When a man goes on to profanity, blasphemy and infidelity, surely he must be "fully ripe." So will all be in that great Day of the gathering of the vintage of woe! And, just as the clusters of the vine cannot resist the force of the hand that plucks them, or the sharp knife that cuts them off, so shall the wicked, in that day, be utterly defenseless, hopeless and helpless! And he that reaps them with his sharp sickle, shall find no difficulty in cutting them all off. Again I remind you that it will not be Christ who will do this work—an angel will do it, not the crowned King seated on the white cloud! They would not have anything to do with Him, so He will have nothing to do with them except to deliver them over to the angel that has power over fire and His brother executioner!

What a terrible sight that judgment will be! As John looked upon it in his vision, I feel sure that his very bones must have trembled and the marrow in them must have melted as he saw that angel with his sharp sickle quickly reap all the clusters of the vine of the earth and cast them into the great winepress of the Wrath of God. O Sinner, this is but a faint picture of the doom of the lost, yet the picture itself is too terrible for me to try to describe or explain! What will happen, in that great Day, when you shall be reaped and cast into the great winepress of the Wrath of God, or, as it may be read, "the great winepress of an angry God"? Ask yourself, my Hearer, this solemn question, "Shall I ever be cast into that great winepress?" If you continue to reject the mercy of Christ, what else can happen to you?

Note, further, that *this winepress is "outside the city"*—not in the New Jerusalem—not in Heaven—but "outside the city." That reminds us of another winepress, or olive press, which was "outside the city" and which was called Gethsemane where He who shall, by-and-by, be seated on the white cloud, Himself suffered even unto agony and bloody sweat. These people would not plead His sufferings on their own account—they would not have Him to reign over them and, therefore, they must go into the great winepress of the angry God. Perhaps, in that dread day, if any of you are there—which may God in mercy prevent!—you will remember that wondrous passage in the prophecy of Isaiah in which Christ says, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." And as you would not have the salvation which He worked out in that winepress, you must be cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God!

"And the winepress was trodden outside the city." This represents the awful suffering of lost souls, the eternal punishment that will then begin. And, as the red juice spurts from the trodden grapes, so did John, in his terrible vision, see the blood of men come flowing forth, "even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." That metaphor and measurement are meant to show how terrible is the wrath of God against the ungodly. Perhaps someone here says, "That is too terrible a theme to talk about." Then, what must it be to *endure* it? Somebody will object to my words upon this awful topic. No, Sir, be criti-

cal of the Scriptures, not of me! I do not explain the idea, but I tell you what John saw in vision. "It was only a vision," someone says. I know it was, but the reality will be far more terrible! There can be no possible exaggeration of the wrath of God! I beseech you, my dear Hearers—though I know not, and never wish to know much about this dreadful subject—remember that what we do know about the doom of the lost is enough to make one's hair stand on end and one's heart almost to cease to beat! So I beseech you, do not risk that doom for yourselves! Escape for your lives! Look not behind you, but flee to the one Refuge which God has provided. Whoever will entrust His soul to Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved! Look to Him who wore the crown of thorns and repose your soul's entire confidence in Him! And then, in that Last Great Day, you shall see Him seated on the white cloud, wearing the golden crown and you shall be gathered, with the wheat, into His garner!

But if you reject Him, do not think it wrong that you should be cast with the grapes into the winepress of the Wrath of God and be trodden with the rest of "the clusters of the vine of the earth." I beg you to take Christ as your Savior this very hour lest this night you should die unsaved! Lay hold of Jesus lest you never hear another Gospel invitation or warning. If I have seemed to speak terribly, God knows that I have done it out of love to your souls and, believe me, that I do not speak as strongly as the Truth of God might well permit me to do, for there is something far more terrible about the doom of the lost than language can ever express or thought conceive!

God save all of you from ever suffering that doom, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 14.

Verse 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.* The great question for us is—shall we be among the number? If we have the Father's name engraved upon our hearts, we may conclude that we shall, one day, have it written on our foreheads, and that we shall be among that chosen company.

2, 3. *And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the Throne of God, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.* Notice how loud their singing was—it was like many waters and great thunder. But notice, also, the sweetness of it, for it was melodious as the music of well-skilled harpers harping with their harps. Note, too, the freshness, the vivacity of it—"they sang as it were a new song." Shall we be there to sing that new song? If so, we must be "redeemed from the earth," not with a general, but with a *particular redemption*, which lifts us up from the rest of our fellow creatures. And

we must also have attended the saved rehearsals, for none can sing in Heaven but those who have learned the song and none can learn it but those who are "redeemed from the earth."

4, 5. *These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes, these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the Throne of God.* Now we have another vision.

6, 7. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made Heaven, and earth, and the sea and the fountains of waters.* This vision represents the spread of the Gospel. It is generally referred to the Reformation period, when, all of a sudden, the Truth of God, which had so long lain hidden in old musty books, was proclaimed in every marketplace. Beneath many a "Gospel oak" the good news was told out—the good news concerning Christ—as if an angel were flying through the midst of Heaven. This preaching of the Truth of God led to the commencement of the downfall of Rome, which is here called, Babylon, and which is ultimately to fall to utter and everlasting ruin.

8. *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.* That is spiritual fornication, as we understand it in the Old Testament—man's idolatry—the setting up of visible objects of worship instead of the invisible God. And what is there, in all the world, that is so idolatrous as the so-Called "religion" of Rome? She multiplies her idol gods to great excess—her crosses and her crucifixes, her saints and her "sacraments" and her relics—her "old cast clouts" and her "old rotten rags." The Papacy is the most pagan of all the paganisms that have ever existed on the face of the earth—but it is to come to an end, for the mouth of the Lord has said so.

9, 10. *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead, or on his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.* How clear, therefore, we ought to keep out of this idolatrous system! For even if we have not the mark of the beast on our foreheads by an open profession of loyalty to it, yet if we have the mark on our hands by being the partakers of Rome's sins, we shall also be partakers of her plagues concerning Romanism in all its forms! The great message to be proclaimed today is, "Come out of her, my people—come away from her, as far as the poles are asunder—that you be not partakers of her sins and that you receive not of her plagues."

11, 12. *And the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his im-*

age, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Truly Rome has tried "the patience of the saints." What country is there in Europe which has not been dyed crimson with the blood of the martyrs? The rack, the stake, the brook, the dungeon, the fires—all sorts of cruelties have been practiced upon those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Let the valleys of Piedmont speak! Do they not cry aloud to our God for vengeance? Let the St. Bartholomew massacre bear witness before the living God! Let the stakes of Smithfield say, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

13. *And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.* It matters not where they die, or under what ignominy they die—whether branded with the name of heretic, or cast out as the offscouring of all things, yet blessed are they and their works follow them to Heaven to bear witness to their faith! And they spiritually continue to live on earth to propagate the gracious Seed for which they, by His Grace, laid down their lives!

14-18. *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle, and reap: for the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in Heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.* After the glad harvest comes the sad vintage. After the gathering in of the righteous, there will be the gathering in of the wicked.

19, 20. *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the Wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—364, 345, 363.

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

"CASES OF CONSCIENCE"
NO. 2911

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1862.

"For my iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me."
Psalm 38:4.

I HAVE a special purpose before me this evening. I shall endeavor to describe the state of the sinner's heart when it has been awakened, when conscience is set at work, when sin and the judgment of God upon it occupy the mind's attention—that period which John Bunyan describes in his, "*Pilgrim's Progress*," as being spent between the City of Destruction and the Wicket Gate—that state of mind in which a man is found when he flees from his former sin and desires to escape from the wrath to come, but has not yet found out the way of salvation so as to realize his own pardon and forgiveness through the great Atonement made upon the Cross.

In fulfilling this intention, I propose, first, *to speak of the terrors which frequently accompany conviction of sin.* Secondly, *to describe the cases of some who, while really convicted of sin, are, nevertheless, strangers to those terrors.* And then *to address a few words of advice both to those who are sorely broken by cruel fears and those, on the other hand, who are more gently brought to Christ.*

I. There is A GREAT AND APPALLING TERROR OF MIND WHICH FREQUENTLY ACCOMPANIES CONVICTION OF SIN. The experience which I shall try to describe has not been that of all those who are brought to Christ. I must make, as it were, a broad outline—an open sketch without filling it up—a picture in which many, though certainly not all, may be able to read the story of their own passage through the Slough of Despond.

Usually, when Divine Grace comes into the heart, one of the first things that attends it is *a sort of indefinable fear.* The man does not know how or why it is that he has such a fear. He felt safe enough before, but

now the very ground under his feet seems to be rotten. He played with sin, thinking it was only a trifle, but, suddenly, he is made to tremble at it. He finds that the serpent has a sting and he is afraid of it. Sometimes, by night, he will be scared with visions in his dreams and, by day, something more vivid than visions will appear before him. He now begins to believe that there is a Hell, that there is a just God, that sin must be punished, that he has sinned and that, therefore, he must die! He does not know that he is to do, but he feel that something must be done, either by himself or by somebody else, for his soul is truly afraid. To a greater or less extent, he has first the fear of punishment which afterwards, through the Grace of God, grows into a fear of sin!

Then, as this fear increases, *a kind of disquietude and unrest* lays hold of the man. David tells us his own experience and his prayer when he was in such a state as I am trying to describe. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath: neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure. For Your arrows stick fast in me, and your hand presses me sorely. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger. Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." That is the case with a man under conviction of sin—he is restless and ill at ease. Those things which he once counted as pleasures now seem to him to be exceedingly wearisome. If he still seeks the amusements which once charmed him, they only sicken him now—he cannot bear to look at them. He has such a sad heart within him that he does not want to have songs sung to him, for they seem to be out of place to such a man as he feels himself to be. The Psalmist's words describe him just now. "Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near unto the gates of death."

The companions of such a man cannot understand what is the matter with him! They think that he is suffering from a fit of melancholy. So, indeed, he is, but I pray that it may not be a mere fitful spasm, but that it may continue and that it may be increased and intensified until he is "dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The man's melancholy will then give place to "unspeakable joy and full of glory." He then begins to be a quiet stay-at-home. He tries to find rest there but, somehow, even his own family does not afford him the peace it once did. His wife thinks that something strange has come over him and if she is not herself converted, it must be quite incomprehensible to her. But if she should ever be led forth on the same pilgrimage, she would understand that this is a part of the footsteps of the flock—one of the first of the footsteps of the straying sheep when the Shepherd comes to fetch them back.

This disquietude and unrest of spirit will grow, by-and-by, into *a burdensomeness of heart*, just as Bunyan describes Christian with a burden on his back which made him sigh and groan. You remember how he pictures the pilgrim—"I saw a man clothed with rags standing in a certain place, a book in his hand and a great burden upon his back. I looked and saw him open the book, and read therein. And as he read, he wept and trembled and, not being able to contain it any longer, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'" The man of whom I am speaking comes to just such state as this. He has no visible burden upon his shoulders, yet he has upon his heart a load so heavy that it threatens to crush him to the very dust and to drive him to utter despair! It may be that through the persuasion of his former companions, he is led to indulge in sin as he was known to do, but if so, in the sin he is wretched and after the sin he is far more miserable than he was before! He may sing, but even while he is singing, he will be like the man who could amuse others with his funny sayings while his own heart was heavy within him. And this becomes the man's constant state of mind—not only can he find no rest, night nor day, but all the while he has to carry his heavy burden wherever he may be! And he cries to the Lord with David, "Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

With some men this state of mind will continue until they come, at last, to *utterly loathe themselves*. They might even adopt the language of David in the Psalm from which I have taken my text. "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease and there is no soundness in my flesh." There was one who said that he wished he had been a frog or a toad—anything rather than a man—when he realized how sinful he had been! So detestable did he appear in his own sight for having sinned and wantonly sinned against such light, against such love, against such long-suffering—for having rejected Christ, grieved the Holy Spirit and despised the precious blood which alone can cleanse from sin! All these things come up before the man's mind and he thinks that no doom is too bad for him. "No," he says, "I once thought that it was an unjust thing for a man to be cast away to all eternity, but now I feel that whatever You do with me, O God, it will be impossible for You to be too severe! I deserve all that Your Infinite Justice can bring upon me. I will be quite willing to sign my own death warrant and to set my seal to my own condemnation and say that it is just."

Loathing thus himself and his life, his sin and his pleasures—and loathing even his very existence—the man, if left to himself, will often

undergo such terror of conscience that *even his body will begin to feel it.* His mortal frame, sympathizing with his immortal spirit, will grow sick. There have been some with whom I have myself had to deal, who have had sore sickness through conviction of sin and, for a little season, it did seem as if the only hope for them to be able to live at all was for them to find immediate pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ. There have been some, I doubt not, who have almost been bereft of their senses when they have seen sin in its true colors. Thank God, dear Friends, if you have never come to this! But if you have, thank God for it. There are thousands who have passed through that experience and yet, through the thickest darkness, have come into the brightest Light of God!

The man who is the subject of this conviction will also have *a perpetual consciousness of feebleness* as David says in the eighth verse of this Psalm, "I am feeble and sorely broken." The strong man suddenly becomes weak as a little child. The very wise man, the keen critic, the severe judge of others suddenly becomes gentle, tender-hearted, soft in spirit. He does not now sit in judgment upon any other man, for he has enough to do in standing before the bar of his own conscience—and he dreads lest he should soon be judged and condemned by his God! He used to talk, in days gone by, a great deal about the dignity and might of man but now he knows more about human depravity and weakness. At one time he used to say, "I can believe in Christ whenever I like. I can be saved whenever I please!" Salvation seemed to him a very easy matter in those days but now it seems to him to be the hardest thing in the world to believe in Christ! His cry now is—

"But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Your feet to lie."

He does not find fault with sermons as he used to do. If they do but reach his heart and bring to him even a little comfort, he is pleased and thankful. He is glad enough, now, to eat his food off the poorest platter if he can but get food for his soul. He feels that if the Lord would but send him His pardon, even if it came by a limping messenger, he would not trouble about the messenger, but he would prize the pardon that he brought! He is brought very low—the high-soaring spirit lies in the dust and out of the dust cries—"Lord, save me, or I perish!"

Beside and beyond all this, his soul gets to be in a terrible agony of desire. It has come to this with him—that he must have mercy, that he must be saved! He feels as if he could not take a denial—that it were better for him to die than to continue to live in such a state as that in which he finds himself. He can use the words of our hymn—

"Wealth and honor I disdain,

Earthly comforts all are vain—
These can never satisfy—
Give me Christ, or else I die!"

He has the same sort of look that you may have seen on the faces of starving people when, at last, a roast is set before them. It is bread they need—bread! So this spiritually starving man feels that he must have provision for his soul or he will expire. There is something terribly startling in the cry of, "Fire!" at the dead of night. But the cry of, "Bread! Bread!" seems to come from the very vitals of humanity and to reach the very center of our hearts. So will it be with this man's prayer at last. It is not a matter of, "maybe," with him—he cannot bear to look upon salvation in the light of a *perhaps* or a *maybe*—he feels that he *must* have it, that he cannot take a denial! He agonizes, groans and cries to God, "Lord, save me! Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner!"

We have known some who have gone even further than this until, at last, *their prayer has been mingled with despair rather than with faith.* They have prayed to God for deliverance. They have, in some sense, looked to Christ upon the Cross. Yet they have not seemed able to believe that there could be power in Him to save them. Some of us have known what it was to have the great Judge of All put on the black cap and pronounce sentence of death upon us. We have gone into the condemned cell and waited there—really expecting to be led out to execution—and to hear the Lord say to us, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." I cannot tell you what is the intense delight of a heart that has been prostrate in the dust when it receives full remission, free forgiveness! It mounts as high, then, as it was known to descend into the depths!

I will mention only one more characteristic of this man under conviction of sin—*he probably feels himself a solitary person.* David says in this Psalm, "My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague and my kinsmen stand afar off." The man under conviction of sin feels that he is quite alone, that he has no one in the world to help him. I have frequently noticed that young people in this condition have been afraid to mention to their own parents, or to their minister, what they feel. If we try to probe them a little, to find out what is the matter, they are very reluctant to tell us because it seems to them that they are the only persons who ever felt as they do. I believe that almost all those who come to Christ think that they are very singular people—very odd people. I know I thought that there never could be any other sinner as bad as I was—and that none could ever have felt the horror of great darkness that I felt! Little did I think that the path I was then treading, instead of being trodden

by one solitary pilgrim, was the beaten track of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims!

II. Now, secondly, I shall endeavor to show you that IT SHOULD NOT BE A CAUSE OF DISQUIET TO ANY OF YOU IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN SPIRITUALLY EXERCISED TO THE SAME EXTENT AS OTHERS.

Dear Friends, all the distress that is felt by the mind when under conviction of sin is not the work of the Spirit of God, though some of it is. I cannot draw the line and say exactly how far it is the Spirit's work but, certainly, there is a portion of this horror and distress which does *not* come from God. Therefore, learn this lesson—that it is not necessary for you to traverse the whole ground of every other sinner's experience in passing from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son!

No doubt *part of the horror I have been describing comes from Satan*. He does not want to lose those who have been his subjects. He sees that one who was once a very contented slave begins to feel his chain irksome and longs to escape from the cruel servitude and, therefore, Satan brings out his great whip to frighten him, tells him that he must not attempt to escape, or he will flog him for his past sins. So the poor wretch crouches down at his feet and Satan says, "Now is my only chance to prevent him from escaping. Servants of the infernal powers attack him, vex him, torment him, insinuate every doubt and every fear and every blasphemy that you can! This is our only opportunity! He will be out of gunshot soon—it is now or never with us. Let us leave no stone unturned to break his heart and ruin him before he gets peace through Christ." No doubt that evil spirit who "worries whom he can't devour," has very often tried to trouble poor sinners because he knew that they were about to escape from his domain. It is not necessary, Brothers and Sisters, and it is not desirable that you and I should know all this horror! That which comes from Satan we should think ourselves happy to escape.

Another part of this agony, no doubt, *arises from ignorance*. If some of those poor weeping souls knew more, they would sorrow less and suffer less. In John Bunyan's, "*Grace Abounding*," you can trace very clearly that very much of the conflict that he had to endure was the result of his utter ignorance. He knew very little about spiritual things. At first he had but one book, "*The Poor Man's Pathway to Heaven*." He does not appear to have attended much on the ministry in his early days, so he had not learned much about the Kingdom of Heaven and he was in a state of great darkness when he found his way to Christ. But I do not think that you and I, Beloved, who have been from our youth up instructed in the things of God—if we know the plan of salvation, if we know that simple

faith in the precious blood will save us—should desire to pass through these extraordinary agonies and racking of conscience and heart.

Besides, a part of this experience may also come *from constitutional tendencies*. There are some who seem to have been born on the darkest nights of the whole year and, on every possible occasion, they look rather at the spots on the sun than at the sun itself. Their observations are rather directed to the whirlpools and the barren deserts than to the gently-flowing rivers and green pastures! They have a very keen apprehension of the snakes and other reptiles, but not of the flowers and the birds. They were born in gloom and they seem to carry the gloom of their nativity to their graves—and it seems very natural and very likely, since the Spirit of God does not change our physical constitutions, though He does change our moral nature—that there should be in such people, coupled with that conviction which is the work of the Spirit, a tendency to certain fears and trembling which spring only from the flesh and are not the work of the Spirit of God.

These few remarks may help to put some here who have been praying to experience these terrors, upon the right track. They will not, I hope, pray for such a thing anymore! Am I addressing any who think they are not saved because they have not known such terrors as some others have experienced? Let me remind you, dear Friends, that there are many of the true children of God who have never known these horrors! I suppose there are many in this church, over which I am overseer, who have not experimentally known these terrors. They know what repentance of sin is, but the horror of great darkness they have not known. Certainly, in Scripture, we have not many of such cases recorded. I do not think that Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, ever went through such an experience as David did in this matter. It may be that the Apostle Paul did, for he had scales upon his eyes—and it may be that the blindness of his body was but a picture of the darkness of his mind. But I do not think that Peter, James and John and those other disciples whom Christ called while they were fishing, or engaged in other occupations, knew much about this kind of experience. They knew what repentance of sin was—mark that—and that is the Spirit's work beyond any doubt. But they do not appear to have known that terror which springs from the flesh, or rises from the pit of Hell.

Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, since many of the children of God have not felt these horrors, do not look upon those who have felt them as models for your imitation! And do not condemn yourself because you have not gone through an experience similar to theirs. While it is quite certain that some good people have known these terrors, you must

remember that there may have been special demons in their case, why it was so with them. What a blessing it has been to others that John Bunyan, who seems to be my chief illustration tonight, passed through such an experience, for, if he had not done so, he could not have written his, "*Grace Abounding*" and "*Pilgrim's Progress*." But you and I do not expect to write a "*Pilgrim's Progress*." We have not that special work to do! But Bunyan had and, therefore, we do not need the peculiar training through which he had to pass.

Certain metals that will have to endure an extraordinary strain have to pass through an annealing process. But other substances which are not put to so severe a test need not be prepared in the same stern fashion. The Apostle Paul traces many of his deep troubles and holy triumphs to the qualifications with which he was fitted for ministering to the saints. "Whether we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." Beyond a doubt there are some servants of God who have a great work to do in deep waters. In the course of their lifetime they are to contend with Satan in a very special fashion—so the Lord gives them a special training that they may become good soldiers of Jesus Christ from the very commencement of their career. None of you may have to do the work of Luther or Calvin—you will not all have to go forth to address multitudes, as Whitefield did—and you do not, therefore, need the peculiar training which was necessary for them.

But I again remind you that you must have that which is the work of the Spirit! Repentance and abhorrence of sin you must have! But that which is beyond this, which God employs as a disciplinary training for some of His servants, is not necessary for all of you to have. If you had felt such horrors as others have experienced, you might not have been in your right senses now. The Lord, who tempers the wind to the shorn sheep, has tempered the Spirit's convictions to you. Possibly you are of a feeble constitution and you could not safely pass through what some strong men have endured. Your spirit may be so tender, your mind may be so susceptible, that it would have been broken if it had been subjected to the rough handling that others have had. You know that a physician, when he seeks to cure a number of patients, treats them in various ways. He gives a good dose of medicine to a strong soldier and lets it work its way. But if he has to deal with a feeble girl, he gives her only a small dose, lest the larger quantity should kill her. So our Lord, when He is curing us of the evil disease of sin, acts differently in different cases and, with some of us, He works very gently.

It is not necessary for me to say any more upon this point except to remind you that *these horrors and terrors are not essential to salvation, or else they would have been commanded*. Faith and repentance, the essentials to salvation, are commanded—"Repent and be baptized, every one of you." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The things that are essential to salvation are put very plainly in the Scriptures. I do not read anywhere in the Word of God, "Be tempted of the devil and you shall be saved." I do not read, "Feel a horror of great darkness and you shall be saved." I do not find the Lord commanding you to despair in order that you may be saved. So far from these things being essential to salvation, they are often stumbling blocks in the way of sinners seeking the Savior—and devices of the devil from which may God deliver us!

To doubt, for instance, whether Christ can save me is a heinous sin! To think that my case is so bad that God cannot blot out my sin is to doubt His Omnipotence and to do Him grievous dishonor. For me to despair of receiving the mercy of Christ is to do despite to that generous and self-sacrificing Savior who bled to death on Calvary's Cross! To think that He is either unable or unwilling to forgive us is to add to our former offenses—and that which is, in itself, sinful cannot be a help to salvation! That which is, in itself, the very climax and culminating point of human guilt—to doubt the love, kindness and mercy of God—cannot, in any sense, be a desirable thing in any child of God! To repent is one thing, but to despair is quite another matter. To dread sin and to loathe it is one thing—but to doubt the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin is quite another.

III. Now, having handled these two points, let me close with WORDS OF ADVICE TO BOTH THESE CLASSES OF PERSONS WHOM I HAVE BEEN DESCRIBING.

Dear Friends, you who are frightened and alarmed, vexed and troubled, I know what you are saying, "Oh, that we could escape from this misery!" There is another friend, over yonder, who has never had these fears and he is saying, "I wish I had them, for, if I had them, there would be some hope for me." If you do not have them, you want them—and if you do have them, you want to get rid of them! There is no pleasing you either way. But good physicians do not seek to please their patients, but to cure them! It is not their aim to make the medicine palatable, but to make it efficacious. So, the Lord does not study our wishes, but gives us what is best for us—and we are very foolish to wish to have it otherwise.

Let me remind you who are in terror because of sin that the only way to escape from that terror aright is to flee at once to Jesus! As a good old woman, who had long been accustomed to reading "*The Pilgrim's Progress*," wisely said, "No doubt Mr. Bunyan described what he went through before he found Christ, but he did not picture the way of salvation as he might have done. Evangelist ought to have said to the pilgrim, 'Do you see that Cross yonder? And do you see Jesus, the Son of God made flesh, and bleeding and dying there? Look to Him and you shall be saved! Trust Him and your sins shall all be put away at once.' That is the true Gospel which gives peace to troubled hearts." So I say to you, poor troubled Friend, and to you who are not troubled, flee to Christ! Trust the Son of God to save you and He will save you! Trust Him to put away all your past guilt and He will do it. Trust Him to keep you in the future and He will vouchsafe you His promised aid. Trust Him with the enormous load of your sin and He will take it upon His shoulders and roll it into the Red Sea of His atoning blood! Trust Him with the foul disease of your evil habits—and with the touch of His healing finger you will be made whole! Say not, "I am too miserable to rest on Him," but rest on Him, however miserable you may be. Say not, "I am not in a fit state to come to Christ," for whatever state you are in, you are fit to come to Christ. He needs no fitness in you except that, just as you are, you trust in "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so! I will not argue with you about your doubts and fears, your, "ifs," and your, "buts." This is God's commandment to you, poor Sinner—"Trust in Christ." So, do not dare to disobey it, but may the Holy Spirit compel you to obey it, for then shall you go on your way rejoicing because your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you!

To you who have not felt such terrors as I have been describing, what shall I say? Do not displease the Lord by seeking for them. Do not begin fretting and complaining because you have not been tried as others have been. If a child cries because he has not been whipped, he ought to have full satisfaction! If a young man should go to a physician and complain that he was afraid he would not continue to live because he had not had the measles, or whooping cough, or scarlet fever, what would the physician say to him? The most likely reply would be, "Be thankful, Sir, that you have not had those maladies." If you cry because you have not had to smart under the Lord's rod, it may be that you will have your desire granted to your cost! The Lord may say, "That sinner might have gone straight to the Cross, but he would not. He wanted to go through the Slough of Despond, so he shall go through it—and he shall flounder about in it with the frogs croaking in his ears and the filth rolling into his

mouth for many a day—until he knows better than to dictate to his Heavenly Father." If you have not gone to Sinai with Mr. Worldly Wiseman to hear its thunder and to see its lightning, be thankful that you have not! Flee from all these things to Christ, without asking Him for a preparatory training in the terrors and horrors which some have had to experience! Trust in Christ and you shall find salvation at once!

I was reading, the other day, the preface to the hymn of a very excellent writer. There is a passage in the memoir in which the author says that "he stuck by a *feeling* religion, and a feeling religion stuck by him." Well, dear Friends, I am afraid that many of you find that "a feeling religion" does stick by you—but I believe that is one of the worst kinds of religion in the whole world! It is a *believing* religion that saves the soul! And those who are so dependent upon feelings are in the seventh Heaven of delight one day and in the depths of despair the next! They go up and down so quickly because they are built upon the sandy shifting foundation of their own emotions! Be not so foolish, Beloved! Build on what Christ did, on what Christ was, on what He is and what He suffered! Building so, you shall find Him "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"—and your hope, faith and comfort shall abide with you—since they are founded upon the immovable Rock of Ages!

I have tried to preach the Gospel simply tonight. Remember, Souls, that the Word is not preached in vain. We are either, "a savor of life unto life," or, "of death unto death" to our hearers. Which is it to you, dear Friends? Is it a savor of death unto death to you, O impenitent Sinner? And is it to you, O penitent Soul, a savor of life unto life? By this test shall you tell which it is—if you now, from your heart, trust Christ, in obedience to the Lord's command, then has the Gospel saved you and you may go in peace. "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." "Arise, take up your bed and go to your house." Go your way, for the Lord has had mercy on you! Glorify Him in the family and tell others, wherever you can, what great things the Lord has done for you!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 38; ISAIAH 53.

I am going to read two portions of Scripture. In the first—the 38th Psalm—we shall hear a suffering servant of Jehovah crying out to his God.

Psalm 38:1. *O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath: neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure.* "If You do rebuke me, do it gently, O my Lord! If

You do chasten me, let not Your displeasure wax hot against Your servant."

2. *For Your arrows stick fast in me, and Your hand presses me down.* God may aim His arrows even at His own children and He may lay His hand very heavily upon those whom He deeply loves.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* David was under the afflicting hand of God even with regard to his bodily disease. He could have borne the pain if it had been merely physical—but there was a sense of sin mixed with it which made it sting him in his very soul.

4, 5. *For my iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.* David had some painful old sores. I mean old sins and they seem to have broken out again and again. And when he wrote this Psalm, he was groaning in his spirit at the remembrance of them. His faith was at a low ebb and his feelings were of the most bitter and sorrowful kind.

6. *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.* Yet he was a true child of God all the while, for this is, according to its title, "A Psalm of David," concerning whom the Lord said, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will." God's flowers do not have sunlight 24 hours in the day. They have their night seasons when it is not only dark, but it may also be heavy with the cold dew, or trying with a sharp frost.

7, 8. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the turmoil of my heart.* That is an expressive word that David uses—"I have roared." He felt as if his prayers were more like the agonized cries of a wounded beast than the intelligent supplications of a human being—least of all, of a man of God. And sometimes, when the spirit is greatly bowed down, it cannot express itself in words, but has to be content with groans, cries, sobs and tears.

9. *LORD, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hid from You.* What a sweet, sweet Truth that is! Happy is that man who, in the time of deepest darkness, can still grasp that Truth of God and hold it fast. "Lord, my groaning is not hid from You! I could only roar out my complaint, or groan it out, but You could hear it just as well as if I had ordered my words aright before You."

10, 11. *My heart pants, my strength fails me: as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me. My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague; and my kinsmen stand afar off.* "Relatives and friends

alike all get away from me as far as they can, for they cannot bear to be in such sorrowful company."

12, 13. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth.* Although David was a tried man, he was, at least at that time, a wise man. God did not leave His servant to act or to speak foolishly and, Beloved, when men are unjustly rebuking and reproaching you, there is nothing more wise than to act as if you did not hear them! It is the very acme of wisdom if you can keep quite quiet and not answer them—refusing to make any apologies or extenuations—or even showing any sign that you have so much as heard what they have said!

14, 15. *Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in You, O LORD, do I hope.* What sublime faith there is here! It is easy to have faith in sunshiny weather—to have faith when you have the least need of it. There are plenty of people who fancy they are believing in God when everything is going well with them. It is one thing to believe when you are lying at anchor in a peaceful harbor—it is quite another matter to believe when you are at sea in a storm. David hoped in God when trouble had come upon him wave upon wave—"For in You, O Lord, do I hope."

15. *You will hear, O LORD my God.* "Even if I do not hear You, You will hear me and if no man shall hear me, You will hear my prayer and answer my supplication."

16-20. *For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity. I will be sorry for my sin. But my enemies are vigorous, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are my adversaries; because I follow what is good.* We need never be afraid of any man's opposition when the reason for his being our adversary is that we "follow what is good," as our translators quaintly express it.

21, 22. *Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my Salvation.* Now we shall see, as we read that wondrous 53rd chapter of Isaiah, not a man of God in trouble, but the Son of God in trouble! And we shall see Him, also, as a deaf man that hears not, "and as a dumb man that opens not His mouth."

Isaiah 53:1-9. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness and*

when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. 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. 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. 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 is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. 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. Those wicked men were His enemies because He did "follow what is good." They that rewarded Him evil for good were His adversaries even as they are ours.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him.* We might say the same of that tried child of God whose utterances we read just now—"It pleased the Lord to bruise Him."

10, 11. *He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.* What gracious Gospel words these are, even though they were recorded under the old dispensation! Oh, how you who are full of iniquity ought to catch at these Inspired declarations which so clearly set forth the substitutionary work of Christ on behalf of the guilty! If you realize your need of such a Savior as He is, how these words ought to gladden Your heart!

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.*

—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.

COMFORT FOR TRIED BELIEVERS
NO. 2912

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1904.

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

THIS verse immediately follows the warning to "him that thinks he stands" to "take heed lest he fall." None of us know what stuff we are really made of until we are tried and tested. It is a very easy thing to imagine yourself to be strong, but it is a very different matter to find that you have sufficient strength when you actually need it. It has even been found possible, in these modern days, for some Brothers and Sisters to believe themselves to be perfect—to believe that sin is entirely conquered within them—but I will guarantee you that you will find that the *practice* of perfection is not nearly so common as the *profession* of it—and nothing like so easy. And I will venture to go even further and say that if you watch those in whom sin is said to be dead, you will find that if it is dead, it is not buried—and that it smells remarkably like other dead things which ought to be buried! It is possibly worse than when it was alive, for it has become alive again in an even worse sense with a double putridity. Let no one of us imagine himself to be perfect, or to be immune against the temptations of Satan or even the grosser vices to which the flesh is prone. It may only need for you to be attacked at a certain point and in a certain way and you will be overcome even as others have been. Your wisest way is to believe yourself neither to be wise nor strong and, therefore, to lie humbly at His feet who can make you both wise and strong—and to look away from yourself up to Him who will keep the feet of His saints. It ought to cool the hot blood of self-conceit in any man to remind him that although he thinks that he stands, it is simply because he has not been tempted as others have been who have fallen! Or if he has been tempted in a way which overthrew them, while he has stood fast, yet, if the temptations were still further increased and he were left to himself, he would find that at the last the fierce wind from the Pit would sweep him off his feet even as it has swept off other men who thought that *they* could never be moved.

After the Apostle Paul had, by this warning, rebuked the boastings of these who thought they were standing securely, he thought of the far larger number of persons who never think that they can stand, but who are in constant terror lest they should fall. They say they are not the people of God yet, in almost the next breath they say they are afraid that they will lose what they just said they did not have! They sometimes hope that they are saved, yet they quickly doubt if it is so with them—and they are troubled with the fear that even though they are saved, they may yet fall and perish! Their feelings are a strange mingle-mangle of incorrect caution and incorrect doubt! And Paul seems to me in this verse to give them a cordial by which their fainting spirits may be revived. And I would like to pass it on to any of you who also need it. You may be tried in two senses—trial will come, and the trial will often be a temptation, while the temptation will always be a trial

I. Now comes in the comfort—and the first comfort, even in great trouble, is that WE HAVE NOT, AFTER ALL, BEEN TRIED IN ANY VERY UNUSUAL WAY—"There has no temptation (or trial) taken you but such as is common to man."

You may think, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you have been tried more than others, but it is only your lack of knowledge of the trials of others which leads you to imagine that your trials are unique. There are many others besides you in the furnace and in quite as hot a part of it as that in which you are now placed. Note what Paul says—"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." It is a *human* temptation, not a superhuman one, which has assailed you. That is to say, one which can be withstood by men—not one that must inevitably sweep them away. You have never been tempted with an angelic temptation. Satan has tempted you, young man, but not with the same temptation with which he allured the angels who kept not their first estate. There may be other orders of intelligence for whom there are other forms of temptation because their intellects are superior to yours—but God has allowed you to be assailed in a way which is suitable as a test to you as a man. The trials that have come upon you have been moderated to your capacity as a man. The Lord knows that you are but animated dust, so He has not permitted you to be treated as if you were made of steel or iron. He has, Himself, dealt with you as an earthen vessel—a thing of clay in which He has caused life to dwell. He has not broken you with His rod of iron as He would have done if He had struck you with it.

"But I am very sorely tempted," says one. Yes, perhaps you are, but the Lord has given you the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness to let you see that you have not been tempted more than they were. "Ah," says another, "but I find myself placed in a very peculiar position where I am greatly tried. I have to labor hard and I have much difficulty in earning my daily bread—and I am beset with trials of many kinds." Well, dear Friend, even though what you say is perfectly true, I am not certain that your position is any more likely to bring temptation than was that of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "Ah," you say, "but they

had not to work to earn their bread. The manna came to them every morning and they had only to gather it to eat it. They were not engaged in commercial transactions. There were no markets in the desert—no Corn Exchange, no Stock Exchange, no Smithfield, no Billingsgate—no taking down the shutters in the morning and putting them up again at night—and going a great part of the day without any customers. They were separated from all other nations and were in a peculiarly advantageous position."

Yet, dear Friends, you need not wish to be placed in such a position because, advantageous as it was, in some respects the Israelites there were evidently tempted to all sorts of sins and fell into them very grievously. Having often read the story of their 40 years' sojourn in the wilderness, you know their sad history. With so favorable a position granted to them under the Lord's own special guardianship and enriched with many choice mercies, we might have expected that they would have been free from temptation—or, at any rate, that they would not have fallen into its snare! Yet it was not so, for the devil can tempt in the wilderness quite as well as in the city, as we know from the experience of Christ, Himself! The devil would tempt you even if your bread was given to you every morning instead of your having to earn it. He would tempt you if you had no business to attend to and never had to go into the world to meet with your fellow men. In fact, the story of the Israelites teaches me that it is best for you to work and best for you to be poor—and best for you not to make money as fast as you would like—and best for you to be surrounded by cares of various kinds. I think I judge rightly that the people of God, the saved ones, do not fall into such gross sins as the Israelites did in the wilderness. So that the saints' position, though it may appear worse than that of Israel, is really better.

To what, my dear Brothers and Sisters, are you tempted? *Are you tempted to lust after evil things*? They lusted after the meat that was not suitable to the climate, nor good for their health—and they despised the manna which was the very best food they could have! Do you ever get a craving for what you ought not to desire? Are you growing covetous? Do you long for ease? Do you wish for wealth? Do you love pleasure? Well, dear Friends, this temptation has happened to others before it happened to those people in the wilderness! You are not the first to be tempted in that fashion and if Divine Grace has helped others to overcome the covetous desire and the lusting of the spirit, it can help you to do the same! But, mark also that if others have fallen through such temptations and perished in the wilderness, you, too, apart from Divine Grace, will do the same! Therefore have you urgent need to cry to the Strong for strength lest you also should fall even as they did.

Are you tempted to idolatry? It is a very common temptation to make an idol of a child, or of some particular pursuit in which you are engaged. Is there anything in the world that is so dear to you that the very thought of losing it makes you feel that you would rebel against God if He took it away from you? Remember what John was inspired to write. "Lit-

tle children, keep yourselves from idols." But if you are tempted to idolatry, do not forget that this is a thing that is common to men. In the wilderness the Israelites were tempted to set up a golden calf and to worship it—and even to practice other idolatrous rites which were too foul for me to describe. They were tempted to idolatry, so it is not an uncommon temptation. And if you are also tempted in a similar fashion, you must cry to God for Grace to resist and to overcome the temptation.

Are you tried, sometimes, even with that terrible temptation which is mentioned in the verse where Paul says, *"Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed"?* Has strong passion sometimes suggested to you that which your soul abhors? Have you been, at times, forced to the very brink of that dread abyss of uncleanness till you have had to cry with the Psalmist, "My feet were almost gone! My steps had well-near slipped"? Ah, this temptation, also, is not uncommon to men! And even those who live nearest to God and are the most pure in heart sometimes have to blush before the Lord that such evil suggestions should ever come into their minds.

And have you, too, been *tempted "to tempt Christ*, as some of them were also tempted and were destroyed by serpents"? They wanted God to change His plans and purposes concerning them. They found fault with Him and said that He had brought them into the wilderness to destroy them. Do you feel that your present troubles are too severe—that they should not have been sent to you—at least not as many and as heavy as they are? If so and if you feel that you have a cause for complaint against the Most High—and that you want Him to change His methods of dealing with you so as to suit your whims and fancies—alas, sad as such a state of mind is, it is only too "common to man."

And possibly you may also have been *tempted to murmur*, "as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." I must withdraw that word, "possibly," for I am greatly afraid that many professing Christians *do* murmur and that they do not always realize what a gross sin it is to murmur, seeing that it is an act of distinct rebellion against God. But, should you at any time feel a murmuring spirit rising up within your heart, you must not say, "This is a trial which nobody else has ever experienced." Alas, it is a very human temptation which is exceedingly "common to man."

So, summing up all that I have been saying and looking around this congregation and upon all of you who know the Lord—although it would be impossible for me to recount all the different forms of temptation and trial through which you have gone, yet this is a matter of fact—"there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." We are all in the same boat, Brothers and Sisters, as far as temptation and trial are concerned. We are all warring the same warfare. Your duty may call you to one part of the field and mine may call me to another part, but the bullets whiz by me as well as by you. There is no nook so quiet but it has its own special dangers and there is no Valley of Humiliation so lowly but it has its peculiar temptations. Sins are everywhere! They sit down with

you at your board and they go with you to your bed. Snares are set for you in your home and in the street—in your business and in your recreations. Snares are not absent from your pains and they are abundant in your pleasures. Everywhere and under all circumstances, we must expect to be tried—this experience is common to men! The remembrance that it is so ought to be somewhat of a comfort to us in every time of trial and temptation.

II. But secondly, in our text we have a far better source of comfort than that—it is this—"BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL." There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able."

"God is faithful." Oh, how I love those words! They sound in my heart like heavenly music. "GOD is faithful." You are not faithful, my Brother or Sister—at least I know I am not, in the full sense of the term, faithful—full of faith and faithful. "But"—oh, that blessed "*but*"—"*but* GOD is faithful"! "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful"—always true to every promise He has made—always gracious to every child whom He has adopted into His family—"a very present help in trouble"—preserving us from sinking in our seas of trouble and delivering us from the trouble when it has accomplished the purpose for which it was sent.

"God is faithful"—faithful to that first promise of His which came into your soul when you yielded yourself to Jesus and He whispered to your heart, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Do you remember that promise? And has not the Lord been faithful to it? "God is faithful" also to that promise which He made of old concerning His Son, Jesus Christ—"He shall see His seed." He has seen His seed in you and He will see you to be His seed forevermore.

"God is faithful" to all His promises! And in your experience, my Brother or Sister, He has been faithful to the promises which met your case in all your changing circumstances. Has He not been faithful? Can you put your finger upon a single page of your diary and say, "God was unfaithful this day"? Your friend who ate bread with you has lifted up his heel against you, but has your God forsaken you? Even your own children have been unkind and ungrateful to you, but has the Lord ever treated you ill? Where you had the most hope among your earthly friends and acquaintances, you have had the most disappointments—but has Jesus ever been a wilderness to you? "All men are liars," you have said in the bitterness of your spirit when you have trusted in them and they have failed you in the time of trial! But have you ever found Christ false to His Word? Can you not join your testimony with that of all the saints above and the saints below and say with Paul, "God is faithful"?

Even if any of you are looking forward to a dreaded sickness, or to a painful operation, or to business losses which may sink you from your present comfortable position to one of great trial and poverty—think of this blessed Truth of God—"God is faithful." The whole world may reel to and fro like a drunken man, but the Rock of Ages stands secure! The shooting stars of temporary prosperity may die out in everlasting night,

but God is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "God is faithful." Whatever your future trials are to be, put this short sweet sentence into your mouth and keep it there as a heavenly lozenge which shall sustain you at all times. Make it also into a jubilant refrain and, as you go on your way, sing again and again, "God is faithful." Trials and temptations will assail you, "but God is, faithful." Friends will fail and forsake you, "but God is faithful." Wealth may be lost and property may vanish, "but God is faithful." What more do you need than this, soldiers of Christ? Here you have breastplate, helmet, sword, shield, spear—yes, the whole panoply of God!

III. The third comfort for a tried and tempted Believer arises from GOD'S POWER, for Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able."

God, then, has power to limit temptation! It is clear, from the Book of Job, that Satan could not tempt or try the Patriarch except by Divine permission and, even then, his power was limited. Nor can he tempt us unless God allows him to do so. Although the devil had great power over the elements, so that he brought disaster upon poor Job, yet there was a very definite limit to his chain, even when the Lord let him loose, to a certain extent. And when God set up his barriers, Satan could not go beyond them. You remember that the Lord first said to Satan, concerning His servant Job, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand." When the devil again intruded himself among the sons of God, the Lord let out more links of his chain, but there was still a most emphatic limit to his power over the Patriarch, "Behold, he is in your hands, but spare his life." The devil would have liked to kill Job outright, but he could go no further than the Lord allowed him to go and God still has unlimited power over the devil and over every form of temptation or trial that can ever come upon you.

If the Lord appoints for you 10 troubles, He will not suffer them to be increased to eleven. If He ordains that you shall be in trouble for six years, you will not be in it for six years and a day, but when the allotted time has expired, you shall come out of it. Nothing can resist the might of the Omnipotent Jehovah, "who make the clouds His chariot: who walks upon the wings of the wind." He can put a bit in the mouth of the tempest and rein in the rushing steeds of the storm—and the fiercest of your trials and temptations must feel the force of His overruling and restraining hand! When you are on the dunghill, remember that God is on His Throne. Well did the Psalmist sing, "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice." But much more may His own people rejoice because His sovereignty is pledged to defend them! Why, if all the armies of the devil were let loose upon a single saint who felt himself to be weak as a worm and the Lord said to them, "I am his defense and you shall not touch him," they could not touch him! And he would be able to say with the utmost confidence, "Greater is He that is for me than all that can be against me." The adversaries of the righteous may rage as much as they will, but they

will have to spend their strength in raging—for that is all they can do against God's people without His express permission!

Not a hair of their head can be scorched by the fires of persecution unless the Lord allows it. The waters of the Red Sea cannot drown them—they march between the watery walls dry shod. The lions cannot devour them—Daniel enjoyed a good night's rest even in the lions' den. Even the waves of the sea become the servitors of the saints, for, "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights," in preparation for future service for God. All His people are kept by His almighty power! How greatly this ought to comfort you who are sorely tried! Every twig of the rod of correction has been made by God and every stroke of it is counted by Him. There is not a drop more gall in your cup than the Lord has ordained. He has weighed, in the scales of the sanctuary, every ingredient of your medicine and mixed it with all His Infallible skill so that it may produce the cure of all your ills. Should not this make you rejoice in the Lord all the day long, and in the night seasons as well?

IV. Fourthly, not only should tried Believers rejoice in God's power, but they should also rejoice in GOD'S JUDGMENT, for Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able."

Who beside God knows how much we are able to are? Our consolation arises from the fact that God knows exactly how much we *can* bear. We have no idea, ourselves, what we can bear. I have many a time heard a person say, "If such-and-such a thing were to happen, it would break my heart and I would die." Well, that very thing has happened, but the person concerned did not break his heart and he did not die! On the contrary, he behaved himself as a Christian in a trial should. God helped him wondrously and he played the man, became more than conqueror and was the brighter and the braver, ever afterwards, for all the affliction through which he had passed. Brother, your own strength, in some respects, is greater than you think and, in other respects, it is less than you think—but God knows just how much you can bear, so leave yourself in His hands!

I have known some people who have wished for trouble—it is a great pity that anybody should be so foolish as that. I remember one who used to think that he was not a child of God because he had not had much trouble. He used to fret all day long because he had nothing really to make him fret! I once heard a woman in the street say to her child who was screaming lustily, "If you cry for nothing, I'll give you something to cry for." So, when a man wants trouble, he will probably get it, but it is a very silly child or man who asks for the rod! Be content to have as little of it as you really must—you will have quite enough of it before you get to Heaven. Do not ask for it—you will have it in due time. God knows, to an ounce, just what His children and His servants can carry and He never overloads them. It is true that He sometimes sends them more trouble than they could have carried by themselves, but then, as He increases the weight of their burden, He also increases the strength of the back upon which He places it!

I have often admired the loving-kindness of the Lord to many of my own flock and have noted the great joy that our young Christians have had for a number of years. I have observed how remarkably God has preserved them from temptation without and from trials within. The Lord does not send His young children out to battle. He does not intend such little boats as these to go far out to sea. He will not overdrive these lambs. Yet the advanced Christians are just as happy as the young people are and they are stronger and more fit for stern service and more able to sympathize with others who are in trouble because of what they have, themselves, passed through. As they have grown stronger, God has given them more fighting to do for Him, while the raw recruits have been kept at home to be drilled and disciplined. You know that when there is a desperate fight being waged and the issue of the battle seems in doubt, the commander orders "the old guard" to the front. That is part of the privilege of being an old guardsman—to go into the hottest place on the field of battle. And it is one of the privileges of the advanced children of God to be tempted more than others and to suffer more than others. If I could have any trial or temptation which, otherwise, would fall upon a young Brother who has only known the Lord a week or two, I would gladly say, "Let me have it." It might stagger him and I would be sorry for him to be staggered by it, so I will willingly endure it. You tried Believers must not imagine that God does not love you as much as He did in the days of your spiritual youth when He did not test you as He does now. He loves you quite as much as He did then and He trusts you even more than He did then because He has made you stronger than you used to be! He gives you the honor and privilege of marching with the vanguard of His army, or leading the forlorn hope, or standing foot to foot with old Apollyon!

God knows exactly how much temptation or trial you can bear and He will not suffer the trial to go beyond that point. But, mark you, it will go right up to that point, for there is no such thing in the world as faith that runs to waste! For every grain of faith that God gives, He usually gives the equivalent trial of some sort or other, for, if faith could ever be in excess, it would degenerate into fanaticism, or some other unholy thing. If the Lord supplies us at our back door, as it were, with His good treasure, we are to dispose of it in our front shop in our holy trading for Him.

V. Fifthly, our text seems to intimate that GOD HAS IN STORE SOMETHING TO GO WITH OUR TEMPTATIONS—"He will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

You know how you treat your own child. There is a dose of nasty medicine to be taken and the little one does not like it. The very sight of the spoon and cup makes him afraid. But mother says, "Now, Johnny, take this medicine and then you shall have this lump of sugar, or this fruit, to take away the taste of it." And when God sends a trial or trouble to one of His children, He is sure to have a choice sweetmeat to go with it. I have heard a child say, "I do not mind taking the medicine so long as I get the sugar." And I have known some of the Lord's people say, "We will willing-

ly bear sickness, pain, bereavement, temptation and persecution if we may but have our Savior's Presence in it all." Some of us will never forget our experiences in sickness when our pain has been sharpest and worst—it has also been sweetest and best at the same time! What do I not personally owe to the file, the anvil and the hammer in my Master's workshop? I have often said, and I say again that the best piece of furniture in my house is the cross of affliction. I have, long ago, learned to prize it and to praise God for it—and for that which has come to me with it—for I have often found that with the trial the Lord has made a way of escape and that I have been able to bear it.

Even with the temptation to sin, the Lord often sends to the tempted soul such a Revelation of the sinfulness of sin and of the beauty of holiness, that the poison of the temptation is quite neutralized. Even with temporal trials, the Lord often gives temporal mercies. Sometimes, when He has been pleased to take away a man's wealth, He has restored to Him His health and so the man has been a distinct gainer. I have known several instances in which that has occurred. And when one dear child has been taken away out of a family, there has, perhaps, been the conversion of another of the children which has been a wonderful compensation for the trial. And oftentimes trouble has been attended with an unusual delight in the Lord. The Word of God has been peculiarly sweet at such a time and the minister has seemed to preach better than he ever did before—his message exactly fitting your condition just then. You have been surprised to find that the bitterness which came with the trouble has passed away almost before you were aware of it! And, as death is swallowed up in victory, like one bitter drop in a glass of water, so your trouble has been diluted with sweet wine and you have swallowed it and have scarcely tasted its bitterness. Thus the Lord, by His Grace, and Presence, and comfort, has made you so glad that you have hardly known that you have been in such trouble because of the superabounding mercy which came with it! Ought not that comfort us and make us ready for whatever the Lord pleases to send to us or to permit to come upon us?

VI. Now notice, in the last place, that GOD MAKES A WAY OF ESCAPE FOR HIS PEOPLE—"He will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

I will read that over again. "He will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape"—"that you may get out of it?" Oh, no!—"That you may not have to endure it"? Oh, no!—"*That you may be able to bear it.*" That is a curious way to escape, is it not? Here is your way of retreat blocked up and the opposing army is in front of you—yet you are to escape. You say to the Lord, "Which way am I to run?" But the Lord replies, "You must not run away. Your way to escape is to cut a road right through your adversaries." That is a singular way to escape, but it is the most glorious way in the whole world. The best way for an army to escape is by conquering its foe. It is not the best way for the pilgrim to go, to the right into the dark mountains, or to the left into the thick forest to escape from

his enemies—the best way for him to escape is to go straight forward, despite all his adversaries—and that is the only right way for you to escape.

Now, beloved Brother or Sister, you may, at this moment, be expecting some very heavy affliction and you have been asking the Lord to make a way of escape for you. You have said, "Oh, that I might not have to come to that hour of trial!" But you *will* have to come to it. "But cannot that dear one's life be spared?" I hope it may, but it is possible that it may not. "Then how am I to have a way of escape?" Your way of escape is not to avoid the trial, but *to be able to bear it*. What a mercy it is that God, though He will not let His people escape trial, will really let them escape, for this is a way of escape for them and the best way of escape, too! It is a way of escape from all the sin of the temptation and from all the evil of the trial—you must have the trial, but you will only have the beneficial part of it! Brother, you must be plunged into that sea of sorrow, but it will not drown you, it will only wash and cleanse you. Sir, you must go into that fire—your Lord has so ordained it—yet you are going to escape the fire. Do you ask, "How can that be?" Why, thus—none of your gold shall be destroyed, only the dross shall be consumed and you shall be all the purer for passing through the fire! So again I say that this is the very best way to escape, for if we could escape in any other way, we would lose all the benefit of the trial!

What shall I say, then, in closing, but this, Brothers and Sisters? Are you troubled just now and are you inclined to despair? Take wise counsel—the storms that are beating about your boat are only such as beat about your Master's vessel and the ships and boats in which His Apostles sailed across the sea of old. The storms are not Supernatural—they are not beyond what believers in Jesus are able to bear. Put your vessel's head to the wind like a brave sailor! Do not try to avoid that fierce blast. Sail in its very teeth, for there is a power within you which can overcome all the winds and the waves, for is not the Lord, Himself, with you as your Captain? And is not the Holy Spirit with you as your Pilot? And have you not a faithful God to trust to in the stormiest night you will ever know? True, your foes are many and mighty, but face them like a man! Have no thought of turning back and flinging away your shield, but resolve, in the mighty power of faith, that since the Lord has said that, "as your days, so shall your strength be," to the end you shall endure and that, with Job, you will say, "Though He slay me, yet, will I trust, in Him."

It will not be easy to keep that resolve, yet the Lord deserves that we should keep it. Think of yourself, beloved Brother, in the worst conceivable condition and then know that there is no sufficient reason, even in such a condition as that, for you to doubt your God! Suppose you were brought to your last penny, yet remember that there was a time when you were not worth a penny—a time when you could not put food into your own mouth and could not put on your own garments. You were cast upon God in your first childhood and He took care of you then—and if you grow to be a child again and the infirmities of age increase and mul-

tiply, He who was so good at the beginning will be quite as good at the end! Remember His ancient promise, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you." Such a promise as this, if God the Holy Spirit will bless it, will make the most tried Believer rejoice in the Lord and go on his way defying every foe who may be in his path!

What I cannot understand is what people do who have not a God to trust to. I often go to see poor sick people, full of aches and pains, and it charms me to hear them talk of the goodness of the Lord to them. In talking, this week, with one of our Brothers who is very sick and ill, he spoke with such holy joy and boasting of the Lord's goodness to him that I could not help saying that it would take a great many infidel arguments to make me doubt the power of true religion after I had listened to him! I like to see God's tried people dying full of joy, praising and blessing the name of the Lord who is their All-in-All in their most trying hour! It is not so with all of you—then what do you do when trial comes without a God to help you? You have not much of this world's goods and you have to work hard, yet when you die, you have no Home to go to, you have no hope of going to Heaven. Oh, you poor No-Hopes!

"Oh," says one, "we are not all poor! Some of us are quite well-to-do." But you are poor, for all that, even if you have all your heart can wish for here. If you have not a God, where do you carry your troubles and your griefs, for I am sure that you have some? O my dear Friend, may the Lord make you feel that you cannot do without Him! And when your heart has come to this resolve, "I cannot do without my God, I will not try to do without Him. I feel that I must have Him," then you shall have Him! He waits to be gracious and He has said, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." May you seek Him now and find Him—and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13.

Verses 1-4. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.* You see, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the possession of privileges is not everything. Paul would not have us to be ignorant that all those who were with Moses in the wilderness had privileges of a very high order. Did they not all pass through the Red Sea and so escape from their powerful and cruel foes? Did they not all drink of water which gushed forth from the flinty Rock? Were they not all fed with manna from Heaven? Yet their privileges did not save them, for while they had the five privileges mentioned in these four verses, they fell into the five great sins

of which we are about to read. And so their privileges, instead of being a blessing to them, only increased their condemnation!

5, 6. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples.* Or warnings, for just as they were overthrown in the wilderness, so may we be, notwithstanding all the Gospel privileges which we enjoy, if we are not true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! If the life of Christ is not in our souls, all the privileges of the Church of God cannot save us. "These things were our examples."

6-11. *To the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for example.* The Apostle has told us that before, but he tells it to us again, to warn us, by these beacons, lest we come to a similar destruction to that which fell on those ancient unbelievers.

11, 12. *And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* We also are to take heed lest we fall, especially those of us who think we are standing securely! You have seen how terrible was the fate of those unbelievers in the wilderness who never entered into Canaan, but left their carcasses in the desert! Now Paul urges us, with such beacons to warn us, to take heed lest we also fall as they did.

13. *There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.* O Lord, fulfill Your gracious purpose unto Your servants! Hold us up, lest we fall! We are very weak! Keep us, for your dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

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

DAVID'S FIRST VICTORY
NO. 2913

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him, but there was no sword in the hand of David."
1 Samuel 17:50.

A CAREFUL reading of the whole chapter will well repay your pains. I have selected a verse for convenience, but I need the entire narrative for a text. If you are well versed in the history, we shall have no need of any preface or translation. So we shall proceed at once to regard David in his conflict with Goliath and his victory over him, first, as *a type of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And, secondly, as *an example for ourselves.* As that which is a type of the head always bears a relationship to the members and, as the members of Christ's mystical body now are and shall yet more fully be like Him, it is but one thought, after all, that we shall be following out in the meditation that lies before us.

I. Let us begin by calling your attention to the fact that David in this matter WAS A TYPE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The early fathers of the Church were very great in opening up typical analogies. So full, indeed, were they in their expositions and so minute in their details, that at length they went too far and degenerated into trifling. Origen, for example, very notably exceeded what can be regarded as wise interpretation in giving spiritual meanings to literal records. And others who essayed to go yet farther than that great master of mysticism, very soon did much damage to the Church of God, bringing precious Truths of God into serious discredit. The study of the types of the Old Testament has scarcely regained its proper place in the Christian Church since the days in which those gracious men, by their imprudent zeal, perverted it. We cannot, however, bring ourselves to think that a good thing ceases to be good because it has, at some time, been turned to an ill account. We think it can still be used properly and profitably. Within certain limits, then—limits, we suppose, which there is little danger of transgressing in these mechanical, dry times—the types and the allegories of Holy Scripture may be used as a handbook of instruction—a *vade mecum* of sound Doctrine.

By the common consent of Evangelical Christians, David is seen to be an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ. With regard to this particular

transaction let us note, at the outset, that before he fought with Goliath, David was anointed of God. Samuel had gone down to Bethlehem and poured a horn of oil upon his head. The parallel will readily occur to you. Thus has the Lord found out for Himself one whom He has chosen out of the people. With His holy oil has He anointed him. Upon Saul's head a small amount of oil was poured—upon David's head a full horn of oil. This may, perhaps, be designed to contrast the brevity and scant renown of Saul's reign with the length, power and excellence of the reign of David. Or, being interpreted *spiritually*, it may denote that the Law, the old Judaism of which Saul is the type, had but a limited measure of blessing, while that of the Gospel, which David represents, is characterized by its abounding fullness. Jesus, the antitype of David, is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows! Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. The Spirit was not given by measure to Him.

David was anointed several times. He was anointed, as you read in the chapter preceding our text, "in the midst of his brothers"—anointed, as you find in 2 Samuel 2:4, by his brethren, the men of Judah—and anointed again, as you will observe in 2 Samuel 5:3, by all the elders of Israel. We will not go into that, now, but it will suffice us to note that our Lord was anointed of God, is anointed of His saints and shall be anointed of the whole Church. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him and it was in the power of that Spirit with which He was anointed of the Father, that He went forth to fight the great battles of His Church. At His Baptism, coming up out of the Jordan, He was anointed by the Spirit as it rested upon Him, descending out of Heaven like a dove—and straightway He went, as He was driven into the wilderness, and held that notable forty-days' conflict with the arch-fiend, the great adversary of souls! His battles were in the spirit and power of the Highest, for the might and majesty of the Eternal Spirit rested upon Him.

See how the correspondence goes on. Our Lord was sent by His Father to His brethren. As David was sent by Jesse to his brethren with suitable presents and comfortable words in order to commune with them, even so, in the fullness of time, was our Lord commissioned to visit His brethren. He remained concealed for a while in the house of His reputed father, but afterwards He came forth and was distinctly recognized as the Sent One of God, bearing countless gifts in His hands, coming on an mission of mercy and of love from God to those whom He was not ashamed to call His brethren. We have read how David was treated. His brethren did not receive him lovingly. They answered his unaffected kindness with unprovoked rudeness—they laid bitter things to his charge. How truly does this answer to the manner in which our Lord, the Son of David, was abused! He came unto His own and His own received Him not. Though He came to them with words of tenderness, they replied to Him with words of scorn. For His blessings they gave Him curses. For the bread of Heaven they gave Him stones and for the benedictions of Heaven they gave Him the spite of earth, the maledictions of Hell!

Never was a brother, "the first-born among many brethren," so ill-used by the rest of the household! Surely that parable of the wicked husbandmen was fulfilled toward Him. We know it is written that the owner of the vineyard said, "They will reverence my son," but, contrariwise, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Jesus was roughly handled by His brethren whom He came to bless. David, you will remember, answered his brethren with great gentleness. He did not return railing for railing, but with much gentleness he endured their churlishness. In this he supplied us with but a faint picture of our beloved Master, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." His only reply, even to the strokes which were to effect His death, was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Yet for all that, no word of anger dropped from His lips. He might have said, "Is there not a cause?" He spoke little, however, in His own defense. Rather He went about His life-work as zealously as if all who saw Him had approved of Him. So David, being thus rejected of his brethren, became a type of Christ.

We pass on to observe that David was moved by an intense love of his people. He saw them defied by the Philistines. As he marked how they were crushed in spirit before their formidable enemies, a fervent indignation stirred his soul, but when he heard the terms of defiance, he felt that the God of Israel, Himself, was compromised in this quarrel. The name of Jehovah was dishonored! That braggart giant who stalked before the hosts defied the armies of the living God! No wonder that the warm and devout heart of the brave young shepherd was moved with a mighty heaving! The passion of a warrior kindled in his breast at the sound of that profane voice of the uncircumcised Philistine who could trifle with the honor of Jehovah, the God of Heaven and of earth! A further motive was present to stimulate his patriotic ambition. How could David's bosom fail to glow with strong emotion when he was told that the man who would vanquish and slay that Philistine should be married to the king's daughter? Such a prize might well quicken his ardor. And with all these motives acting upon him, his determination to go forth and do battle with the champion of Philistia was prompt and resolute.

Now in all this he plainly foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved His own—He was always ready to lay down His life for the sheep. But He loved his Father. "Know you not," He had said of old, "that I must be about My Father's business?" "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." And then there was the joy that was set before Him that He should have the Church for His spouse—that at the peril, not to say the price of His life, He should obtain her—that He should see of the travail of His soul in her and should be satisfied. She was to be lifted up to His royalties and to share His crown and throne. The New Jerusalem, the mother of us all, was to be unto Jesus the gift of God as His reward! And this inspired Him, so he went forth and entered upon the battle for our sakes.

Let us pause and bless His name that He ever should have loved the people and that the saints should have been in His hands! Let us bless Him that the zeal of God's house did eat Him up—that He consecrated Himself so fully to the great enterprise! Above all, let us humbly and gratefully bless Him that He loved us and gave Himself for us. As a part of His Church whom He had betrothed unto Himself forever, we are partakers in all that He did! It was for us that He fought the fight, for us He won the victory, for us He has gone to Glory. And He will come, by-and-by, to take us up to behold that Glory and be with Him where He is. While we see the type in David, let us take care not to forget to adore Jesus, Himself, who is here mirrored forth to our minds in the achievement of our salvation.

I might, indeed, instance many further details in which David yet further became a type of our Lord. The whole narrative being full of minute particulars supplies us copiously with points of analogy. But there is one thing I would have you specially observe.

Goliath is called, in the Hebrew, not "champion," as we read it in the English, but the *middleman*, the *mediator*. If you put the whole case fairly before your own minds, you will readily see the fitness of the word that is used. There is the host of the Philistines on the one side and there is the host of Israel on the other side. A valley lies between them. Goliath says, "I will represent Philistia. I stand as the middleman. Instead of all the rank and file coming forth personally to the fight, I appear as the representative of my nation—the mediator. Choose you a mediator who will come and contend with me. Instead of the battle being between the individuals of which the respective armies are composed, let two representative men decide in, duel to the death, the question in debate." Now, it is exactly upon that ground that the Lord Jesus Christ fought the battles of His people. We fell representatively in the first Adam, and our salvation is now by another Representative—the Second Adam. He is the Middleman, the "one Mediator between God and men." In His love to us and His zeal for the Glory of God, we may view Him as stepping forward into the midst of the arena which divides the camps of good and of evil, of God and of the devil—and there facing the defiant adversary—He stands to contend in our name and on our behalf if we are, indeed, His people, that He may decide for us the quarrel which never could have been decided by us. Personally, we should, beyond a doubt, have been put to the rout. But His one single arm is enough to win the victory for us and forever to end the conflicts between Heaven and Hell!

Mark well our warrior chief as He goes forth to the fight. The son of Jesse rejected the weapons with which Saul sought to arm him—he put the helmet on his head, the mail about his body and was about to gird the sword upon his loins, but he said, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." In like manner the Son of David renounced all earthly armor. They would have taken our Lord by force and made Him a king, but He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Swords enough would have leaped from their scabbards at His bidding! It was not only Peter

whose too-hasty sword smote the ear of Malchus, but there were many zealots who would have been all too glad to have followed the star of Jesus of Nazareth as in former days. And yet more frequently, in later days, the Jews followed impostors who declared themselves to be commissioned by the Most High for their deliverance. But Jesus said, "Put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

One of the temptations of the desert was not only that He should have the kingdoms of the world, but that He should have them by the use of such means as Satan would suggest. He must fall down and worship Satan—He must use the carnal weapon which would be tantamount to worshipping him. Jesus would not have it. To this day the great fight of Jesus Christ with the powers of darkness is not with sword and helmet, but with the smooth stones of the brook! The simple preaching of the Gospel, with the shepherd's crook of the great Head of the Church held in our midst—this it is that lays low Goliath and shall lay him low to the last day! Vain is it for the Church even to think that she shall win the victory by wealth, or by rank, or by civil authority! No government will assist her. To the power of God alone she must look. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of Hosts. Happy will it be for the Church when she learns that lesson! The preaching of the Cross which is "to them that perish foolishness," is, nevertheless, to us who believe Christ, "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

See, then, our glorious champion going forward to the fray with weapons of his own choosing—and those such as human wisdom despises because they do not appear to be adapted to the work! With great strength and power, nevertheless, did he go forth, for he went in the name of God. "You come to me," said David, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts." Such, too, is the predominating influence which renders the Gospel Omnipotent! Christ is God's Propitiation. God has "set Him forth to be a propitiation for sin." Christ is appointed of God, anointed of God, sent of God. And the Gospel is God's message, attended with God's Spirit. If it is not, then it is weak as water—it must fail. But since the Lord has sent it and He has promised to bless it, we may rest assured it will accomplish the ends for which it was ordained. "I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts! "These words might serve as a slogan for all those who are sent of Christ and represent Him in the dread battle for precious souls. This was Christ's watchword when, for our sakes and on our behalf, He came to wrestle with sin, to bear the wrath of God and to vanquish death and Hell! He came in the name of God!

Mark you well that David did smite Goliath and he smote him effectually not in the loins, or on the hand, or on the foot—but in a vital point he delivered the stroke that laid him low. He smote him on the brow of his presumption, on the forehead of his pride! I suppose he had lifted up his visor to take a look at his contemptible adversary, when the stone sank in, which let out forever the boastful soul. So, when our Lord stood

forth to contend with sin, He projected His atoning Sacrifice as a stone that has smitten sin and all its powers upon the forehead. Thus, Glory be to God, sin is slain. It is not merely wounded, but it is slain by the power of Jesus Christ!

And remember that David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. Augustine, in his comment on this passage, very well brings out the thought that the triumph of our Savior Jesus Christ is here set forth in the history of David. He, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." "He death by dying slew"—cut off the giant's head with his own sword. The Cross that was meant to be the death of the Savior was the death of sin! The Crucifixion of Jesus, which was supposed to be the victory of Satan, was the consummation of His victory over Satan! Lo, this day I see, in our conquering Hero's hand, the grizzly head of the monster, Sin, all dripping with gouts of gore! Look at it, you that once were under its tyranny! Look at the terrible lineaments of that hideous and gigantic tyrant! Your Lord has slain your foe! Your sins are dead—He has destroyed them! His own arm, single-handed and alone, has destroyed your gigantic enemy! "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed and magnified be His holy name!

And when David had thus achieved the death of Goliath, he was met by the maidens of Israel who came forth and sang in responsive verse, accompanied with the music of their timbrels and joyous dancing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." So he had his triumph. Meanwhile, the hosts of Israel, seeing that the Philistine giant was dead, took heart and dashed upon the adversary. The Philistines were frightened and fled, and every Israelite that day became a victor through the victory of David. They were more than conquerors, through him that had loved them and won the victory for them. So let us now think ourselves to be victors. Our Lord has won the victory. He is gone to His Glory. The angels have met Him on the way. They have said, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." And they that have been with Him have answered to the question, "Who is this King of Glory?" They have said, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

And this day the feeblest Believer triumphs in Christ! Though we should have been beaten, nor could we have hoped for victory—yet now through Jesus Christ our Lord, we chase our enemies! We trample sin under our feet and we go from strength to strength through His completed victory. There is much for you to think of here. Will you think this over for yourselves? It is better I should not do all the thinking for you. You will find the analogy capable of much amplification. I have given you only, as it were, a sort of charcoal outline—a rough draft. Make a picture of it at your leisure and it may prove a beneficial study and a profitable meditation.

II. With much brevity let us now revert to David as AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERY BELIEVER IN CHRIST.

Above all things, it behooves us, dear Brothers and Sisters, to consider that if we are ever to do anything for God and for His Church we must be anointed with holy oil. Oh, how vain it would be for us to grow zealous with a sort of creature carnal fanaticism and to attempt great things in sheer presumption which can only issue in utter failure! Unless the Spirit of God is upon us, we have no might from within and no means from without to rely upon. Wait upon the Lord, Beloved, and seek strength from Him alone! There cannot come out of you what has not been put into you. You must receive and then give out. Remember how the Lord Jesus describes it—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And again, in another place, "He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

You cannot do David's work if you have not David's anointing! When you remember that your Divine Master tarried for the heavenly anointing, you can hardly expect to do without it! Be not so foolish. Christ went not to His public ministrations till the Spirit of God rested upon Him. The Apostles tarried at Jerusalem and went not forth to preach till power were given to them from on high. The point, the pre-requisite, the *sine qua non* with us, is to have that power. Oh, to preach in that power—to pray in that power—to look after wandering souls in that power! Your Sunday school work, your home missionary work, your evening form of ministry for Christ must be done in that power! Get to your knees! Get to the Cross! Get to your Master's feet! Sit still in faith and hope until He shall have given you the strength that shall qualify you to do the Master's work, in the Master's way, to the Master's praise!

David, too, stands before us as an example of the fact that our opportunity will come if our efficiency has been bestowed, without our being very particular to seek it. David fell into position. The place he was fitted to occupy, he was Providentially called to fill as a great man in Israel. Little did he guess, when he went with the load of bread, and corn, and cheese, that he was, before long, to be distinguished beyond all other men in Palestine! Yes it was so. Beloved, do not be in a hurry to look out for your sphere. Be ready for your sphere—your sphere will come to you. I speak to many dear young Brothers who are studying for the ministry. Be prepared for any work rather than be looking out for some particular work. God has His niche for you. You will land on your feet—depend upon that. Be ready. Your business is to be ready. Have your tools well sharpened and know how to handle them. The place will come to you, the best place for you, if you are not so much looking after that which meets your taste, as after that which proves you to be a vessel fit for the Master's use! David finds his occasion. He has received the Spirit, first, which is the main thing—and then he has found the occasion which calls out his credentials.

I gather from David's example that when we feel a call to do something for God and for His Church, we need not wait until those whom we hold in respect coincide with us as to the propriety of entering upon the service. Had David said—"Well, I shall wait till Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah, my elder brothers, are all perfectly agreed that I am the man to fight Goliath"—I suspect he would never have fought with Goliath at all! Great deference is due to the judgment of our seniors, but greater respect is due to the motions of the Spirit of God within our heart. I would to God there were more regard shown for those inward monitions among Christians than there is known to be in these times. If you have a thought put into your heart, or a charge laid upon your conscience, obey it, man! Act up to it, though no one else perceives it or encourages you. If God has shown you His counsel, at your peril hide the presage or shrink from the performance! What? With the fear of God in our hearts and a commission from God in our hands, shall we halt and hesitate and become the servants of *men*? I would rather die than have to come into this pulpit to ask your leave, or to get any man's consent as to what I shall preach!

God speaks, by His Spirit, what He has to say to me and, by the help of His good Spirit, I will deliver it to you as I hear it from Him. May this tongue be silent before it becomes the servant of man! David was of that mind. He felt he had something to do and though he could listen to what other people had to say, yet they were no masters of his. He served the living God and he went about the business entrusted to him undaunted by any judgment they might form of him. He that speaks for God should speak honestly. Let others criticize and sift the chaff from the wheat. He must expect that. But as for himself, let him give out that pure wheat as he believes it to be and fear no man, lest he comes under the condemnation of the God of Heaven! Go, my Brother, about your business, if God gives it to you to do. If I upbraid you, what of that? I am but a man. Or if all those in whose good esteem you would gladly stand, turn upon you with hard suspicions and cutting censures, they are but men and to God alone is your allegiance due! Go about your Master's work as David did, with dauntless nerve but modest demeanor. He would be an evil servant who, after once getting His Master's orders, should leave them unperformed and excuse himself by saying, "I met one of my fellow servants and he said he thought I might be too bold in my adventure and, therefore, I had better not attempt it." To your own Master you will stand or fall! Take care that you stand well with Him!

Learn from David, too, to return quiet answers to those who would roughly put you aside from your work. Generally it is better to return no answer at all. I think David spoke not so well by word as by deed. His conduct was more eloquent than his language. As he came back from the fight, holding up the giant's head, I could hope that Eliab saw him and that Abinadab and Shammah came out to meet him. If they did, he might simply have held up the trophy and allowed its ghastly visage to reply for him. It is not, they would think, after all, because of his pride or

the evil of his heart, or from an idle curiosity to see the battle that he has come. They would perceive that he had come to do God's work in his own way—that God had helped him to gain the victory, rout the foe and relieve the fears of Israel—and that through the man whom they despised the Lord had made His own name glorious!

Learn again, from David's example, the prudence of keeping to tried weapons. I have often heard it spoken of as an unlikely thing that David could kill the giant with a stone. I think those who talk so miss the point. What missile could be handier or better suited for the occasion? If the fellow was tall, a sling would carry a stone high enough to reach him. And if he was strong, very strong, the sling would give such impetus to the stone that David could assail his adversary without getting within his reach. It was the best weapon he could have used. Oriental shepherds, if those of olden time were like those of modern days, had practice enough to make them proficient in slinging stones. They spend many hours both alone and with their fellows over feats of the sling. It is generally their best weapon for the protection of their sheep in the vast solitudes. I do not doubt that David had learned to sling a stone to a hair's breadth and not miss. As for the sword, he had never had one in his life, for there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan, save that which was found with Saul and Jonathan, his son. We are told as much as that in the 13th Chapter. The Philistines had so completely disarmed the whole populace that they had not got any such weapons. With the use of them, therefore, David could not have been familiar. And as to the coat of mail—a cumbersome, uneasy, comfortless equipment—the wonder to me is how the knights of old did anything at all in such accoutrements! No marvel that David put the thing off. He felt most at ease in his own shepherd's garb.

Of course we are not going to infer that unsuitable instruments are desirable. We teach nothing so romantic or absurd! It well becomes us to use the most suitable tools we can find. As for those stones out of the brook, David did not pick them up at hazard—he carefully chose them, selecting smooth stones that would exactly fit in his sling—the kind of stone he thought best fitted for his purpose. Nor did he trust in his sling. He tells us he trusted in God, but he went to work with his sling as if he felt the responsibility to be his own. To miss the mark would prove his own clumsiness—to hit his target would be of God's enabling. Such, my Brothers and Sisters, is the true philosophy of a Christian's life. You are to do good works as zealously as if you were to be saved by your good works—and you are to trust in the merits of Christ as though you had done nothing at all! So, too, in the service of God, though you are to work for God as if the fulfillment of your mission rested with yourselves, you must clearly understand and steadfastly believe that, after all, the whole matter, from first to last, rests with God! Without Him, all you have ever planned or performed is unavailing.

That was sound philosophy of Mahomet's when the man said, "I have turned my camel loose and trusted in Providence." "No," answered he,

"tie your camel up and then trust in Providence." Do the best you can and trust in God. God never meant that faith in Him should be synonymous with sloth. Why, for the matter of that, if it is all God's work and that is to be the only consideration, there is no need for David to have a sling! No, there is not any need for David at all. He may go back, lie on his back in the middle of the field, and say, "God will do His work—He does not need me." That is how fatalists would talk, but not how Believers in God would act! They say, "God wills it, therefore I am going to do it"—not, "God does it and, therefore, there is nothing for me to do." No, "Because God works by me, therefore I will work by His good hand upon me. He is putting strength into His feeble servant and making use of me as His instrument, good for nothing though I am apart from Him. Now will I run to the battle with confidence and I will use my sling with the best skill I have, taking quiet, calm, deliberate aim at that monster's brow since I believe that God will guide the stone and accomplish His own end."

When you are bent on serving God, give Him your best. Keep not back anything of nerve or muscle, anything of skill or wisdom you can dedicate to the enterprise. Say not, "Anything will do. God can bless my lack as well as my competency." Doubtless He can, but undoubtedly He will not! Be careful to do your best. David in his old age and his riper experience would not offer to God that which cost him nothing. Do not attempt to render unto God slovenly service and flatter yourselves that he will bless it. *He can bless it*—but that is not the way in which He usually deigns to work. Though He often takes rough tools, He fashions them and polishes them for His use. He can convert rude men into able ministers of the New Testament. Think not, however, that His Grace will excuse your presumption. But go with the instruments you have proved. When any of you working men attempt to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, do not try the fine arguments that are often used to combat infidels. You will never manage them! They will be sure to embarrass you!

Tell your neighbors and friends what you have felt and handled of the Word of Life. Declare to them those things that are written in the Scriptures. These texts are the smooth stones that will suit your sling. Keep to these things. Why, they tell us nowadays, that we ought to take up those arguments which are invented by modern philosophers—examine them, study them—and come forward on the Sabbath and at other times to answer them—that we should use historical research and logical acumen to rebut infidel calumnies! Ah, Saul's armor does not fit us. They that like it may wear it, but, after all, to preach Christ and Him Crucified—to tell out the old, old story of eternal love and of the blood which sealed it, the manner of Redemption, the Truth of God's unchangeable Grace—this is to use those stones and that sling which will surely find the forehead of the foe!

Next, observe that from the work which David began, he ceased not till he had finished it. He had laid the giant prone upon the soil, but he was not satisfied till he had cut off his head. I wish that some who work for

Christ would be as thorough as this young volunteer was! Have you taught a child the way of salvation? Do not leave off till that child is enrolled in the fellowship of Believers! Have you faithfully preached the Gospel to any congregation of people? Continue to instruct, counsel and encourage them until you see them established in the faith! Or if you have refuted a heresy, or denounced a vice, follow up the assault until the evil is exterminated! Not only kill the giant, but have his head off! Never do the work of the Lord imperfectly. Never spare, in pity, any device of the devil. Bad habits and besetting sins should be leveled with a decisive blow. But let not that be enough! Give them no chance of recovering their strength. With humble penitence and earnest resolution—in reliance on God and detestation of the foe—see to it that the head shall be taken from the sin as well as the stone sunk in its forehead! In so doing you may look for help you had not reckoned on. You have no sword with you—you have not wanted to cumber yourself with one, even as David had no need to carry a sword in his hand, for Goliath was carrying a sword with him which might well serve for his own execution. Whenever you serve God, you strive against error—and remember that every error carries the sword with which it will be slain!

In maintaining the cause of the Truth of God, we need not be surprised if the fight is long. But we may always count on the pride of the adversary turning to his own hurt. The conflict will be shortened by himself. When the invaders, most of all, relied on the alliances they had formed, it often happened that Israel won the day through the Moabites and the Assyrians falling out among themselves. Very frequently it has been God's plan to let His adversaries turn upon each other and end the fight to His servants' comfort! Behold the giant's head taken off with his own sword! Let it be before your eyes for a sign. It matters not, Brothers, though we should be in the minority on certain eminent matters, as we undoubtedly are. The question for you is, are you right? Are you right? The right is sure to win! Have you the Truth of God on your side? Have you the Bible on your side? Have you Christ on your side? Well, you may belong to a despised community. You may be associated with a very few and a very poor people. Flinch not—let not your heart quail. Had you no strength with which to overcome the adversary excepting that which is promised by God, you have quite enough!

But there lies in ambush, in the camp of your adversary, an assistance and an aid to the Truth of God that you have not, perhaps, thought of. The old dragon stings himself to death! As vice consumes the vitals of the man who indulges in it, so does error, in the long run, become its own destroyer! Full often the Truth of God shines out the more brightly from the very fact that an error has beclouded the world with its dense shadows. Go on, then! Strive with coolness and courage! Be not daunted by the comely face, the princely figure, or the battle array of your antagonist! Let not his vaunting words deter you. Call on the name of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, and use, even in God's battles, those weapons which you have tested and proved. But take care to go through with

God's work—do it thoroughly, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith—and so, Beloved, you may expect to go from strength to strength and bring glory to God!

I would we were all on the Lord's side—that we were all the soldiers of Christ. Do any here confess that they are not? Are there any of you who feel sin lying heavily upon you and yet you gladly would be at peace with God, in fellowship with Jesus? Beloved, Jesus has never yet rejected one that came to Him! It has never yet been said that His blood was not able to cleanse the vilest soul! Go to Him! You cannot give Him greater joy than by going to Him and confessing your sin and seeking His mercy. He wants to be gracious. He slays sin, but He takes pity on sinners. He is ready to pardon them. He is the enemy of Goliath, but He sits on Zion's hill, glad to welcome the very poorest of the poor that come to Him. If you are the worst sinner that ever lived, He is still able to save to the uttermost! If you have no hope and no confidence—if you feel as though sentence had gone forth that you should die forever, your fears are not due to God's counsels. He has not spoken the bitter things you have imagined against yourself! Give ear to what He has said—"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."

Oh, to be on Christ's side maintains the heart in calm and inflames the soul with joy, notwithstanding the pain that now tortures your nerves, or the shame that mantles your cheeks! But ah, to be on the other side—to be an enemy of Jesus—is a woe that blights all present joy and promises all future curses! The future, the future, the future! This is the worst of all to be dreaded. "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." The Lord give you, every one of you, to be thus timely wise, 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.

A MOURNFUL DEFECTION
NO. 2914

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1877.

"Will you also go away?"
John 6:67.

No mischief that ever befalls our Christian communities is more lamentable than that which comes from the defection of the members. The heaviest sorrow that can wring a pastor's heart is such as comes from the betrayal of his most familiar friend. The direst calamity the Church can dread is not such as will arise from the assault of enemies outside, but from false brethren and traitors within the camp. My eminent predecessor, Benjamin Keach, though arrested, brought before the magistrates, imprisoned, pilloried and otherwise made to suffer by the Government of the times for the Gospel doctrines that he preached and published, found it easier to brook the rough usage of open foes than to bear the griefs of wounded love, or sustain the shock of outraged confidence. I should not think his experience was very exceptional. Other saints would have preferred the rotten eggs of the villagers to the rooted animosities of slanderers. Troy could never be taken by the assaults of the Greeks outside her walls. Only when, by trickery, the enemy had been admitted within the citadel was that brave city compelled to yield. The devil himself was not such a subtle foe to Christ as was Judas, when, after the Supper, Satan entered into him. Judas was a friend of Jesus. Jesus addressed him as such. And Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Him. But Judas it was who betrayed Him! That is a picture which may well appall you—that is a peril which may well admonish you.

In all our churches, among the many who enlist, there are some who desert. They continue awhile and then they go back to the world. The radical reason why they retire is an obvious incongruity. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." The unconverted adherents in our fellowship are no loss to the church when they depart. They are not a real deficit, any more than the scattering of the chaff from the threshing floor is a detriment to the wheat. Christ keeps the winnowing fan always going. His own preaching constantly sifted His hearers. Some were blown away because they were but chaff. They did not really believe. By the ministry of the Gospel, by the order of Providence, by all the arrange-

ments of Divine Government, the precious are separated from the vile, the dross is purged away from the silver so that the Good Seed and the pure metal may remain and be preserved. The process is always painful. It causes great searching of heart among those who abide faithful—and occasions deep anxiety to gentle spirits of tender, sympathetic mold.

I trust, dear Friends, that you will not think I harbor any ungenerous suspicions of your fidelity because my text contains as pointed and so personal an appeal to your conscience. There is more of pathos than of passion in the question as our Lord puts it—"You will not go away, will you?" He addressed the favored twelve. I put it to myself. I put it to those who are the officers of the Church. I put it to every member without exception—Will you also go away? But should there be one to whom it is peculiarly applicable, I do not desire to flinch from putting the question most personally to that one—"What? Are *you* going? Do *you* mean to turn back? Do *you* mean to go away?"

I. Let us approach the enquiry sideways. "Will you *also* go away?" "Also" means "as well as other people." WHY DO OTHERS GO? If they have any good reason, perhaps we may see cause to follow their example. Look narrowly, then, at the various causes or excuses for defection. Why do they renounce the religious profession they once espoused? The fundamental reason is lack of Grace, a lack of true faith, an absence of vital godliness. It is, however, the outward reasons which expose the inward apostasy of the heart from Christ of which I am anxious to treat.

Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord's own day, who depart from Christ because *they cannot bear His Doctrine*. Our Lord had more explicitly than on any former occasion declared the necessity of the soul's feeding upon Himself. They probably misunderstood His language, but they certainly took offense at His statements. Hence there were those who said, "This is an hard saying; who can bear it?" So they walked no more with Him.

There are many points and particulars in which the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man. How can we attribute such a purpose to God? Why should He devise a goal to suit the whims of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, but He never intended to gratify their depraved tastes. Rather does He lay the axe to the root of the tree and cut down human pride. When God's servants are led to set forth some humbling Doctrine, there are those who say, "We will never assent to that." They kick against any Truth of God which clashes with their prejudices. What do you say, Brothers and Sisters, to the claims of the Gospel on your allegiance? Should you discover that God's Word rebukes your favorite pleasure, or contradicts your cherished convictions, will you forthwith take the huff and go away? No, but if your hearts are right with Christ, you will be prepared to welcome all His teaching and yield obedience to all His precepts. Only prove it to be Christ's teaching and the right-minded professor is ready to receive it. That which is transparent on the face of Scripture he will cordially accept, as he says, "To the Law and to

the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." As far that which is merely inferred and argued from the general drift of Scripture, the true heart will not be hasty to reject, but patient to investigate, like the Bereans who "were more noble than the Jews of Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Oh, that the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly! God forbid that any of us should ever turn aside, being offended because of Him, His blessed Son, His holy example, or His sacred teaching! May we be always ready to believe what He says and prompt to do what He commands! Remember, Brothers, that the Gospel commission has three parts to which the minister has to attend. We are to first go and preach the Gospel. "*Go you, and disciple all nations.*" The second part is, "*baptizing them.*" And the third part is, "*teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you.*" As willing disciples of Jesus, let us press forward, paying attention to His voice, following in His footsteps, and counting His revealed will as our supreme law. Far be it from us to go back from Him because we are offended at His Doctrine!

Others there are who desert *for the sake of gain.* Many have been entangled in that snare. Mr. By-Ends originally went on pilgrimage because he thought it would pay. There was a silver mine on the road and he purposed to survey it and see whether silver might not be obtained there as well as at the golden city beyond. He came, if I remember rightly, of a family that got its living by the waterman's business, looking one way and pulling another. He was apparently striving for religion, though all the while he had his eye on the world. He was for holding with the hare and running with the hounds! So, when he came to a point where he must part with one or the other, he considered which would, upon the whole, be the more profitable and gave up that which appeared to involve loss and self-sacrifice—and kept to that which would, as he called it, "help him in the main chance," and assist him to get on in the present life. Sincerely do I trust there is no one among us but who despises Mr. By-Ends and all of his class! If you would make money—and there need be nothing sinful in that—do let it be made honestly. Never let riches be pursued under the pretense of religion! Sell your wares and find a market for your merchandise, but do not sell Christ, nor barter a heavenly birthright for a worthless bribe! Put what goods you please into your shop window, but do not put a canting, hypocritical expression on your face, or "wear a holy look," with a view of turning godliness into gain.

Some leave Christ, and go away, *terrified by persecution.* Nowadays, it is supposed that there is no such thing, but that is a mistake, for though martyrs are not burned at Smithfield and the Lollards' Tower is a place for show (a memorial of times long ago), yet the harassment, the cruelty and the oppression are far enough from being obsolete! Godless husbands play the part of petty tyrants and will not permit their wives the enjoyment of religion, but make their lives bitter with a galling bondage! Employers full often wreak malice on servants whose piety towards God

is their sole cause of offense. Worse still, there are working men who consider themselves intelligent who cannot allow their fellow workman liberty to go to a place of worship without sneers and jeers and cruel mocking! In many cases the mirth of the workshop is never louder than when it is turned against a believer in Christ! They count it rare fun to hunt a man who cares for the salvation of his soul. They call themselves, "Englishmen," but certainly they are no credit to their country! Look at the base-born, ill-bred cowards—yonder is an atheist—he is raving about his rights because the magistrate will not believe him on his oath! He claims liberty of conscience to be a heathen, but denies his comrade's right to be a Christian! Look at that little party of British workmen—they belong to the Sabbath Desecration Society. They are petitioning Parliament to open museums and theatres on Sundays and at the same time they are hounding to death a poor fellow who prefers going to Chapel! They air their own self-respect by the words they utter, while they betray their self-abasement by the scorn they vent on those who presume to sing a hymn. They hail the drunkard as a chum and rout the sober man as a fiend! I wonder that there is not more honorable feeling, more good faith and true fellowship among our skilled workmen than to permit one man being made the butt of a whole community!

God give you Grace to bear such persecutions as these! If they cut you to the quick, may you learn to bear them with equanimity and even to rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for the Savior's sake! Some of us have had to "run the gauntlet" for many years. What we have said has been constantly misrepresented. What we have endeavored to do has been misjudged and our motives have been misunderstood. Yet here we are, as happy as anybody out of Heaven! We have not been injured by any or all the calumnies that have been heaped upon us. Our foes would have crushed us, but, blessed be God, He cheered us often when we were cast down. The Lord give you, in like manner, strength of mind and courage of heart to bear the trial manfully! Then you will care no more for the laughter and the sneers of men than you do for the noise of those migratory birds high overhead which you hear on an autumn evening as they are making their weary journey to a distant clime. Take heart, Brothers and Sisters! Fear God and face your accusers. True courage grows strong on opposition. Never think of deserting the army of Christ! Least of all should you play the coward because of the insolence of some ill-mannered bully. Let not your faith be vanquished by such scoffing. Alas, that so many a cowardly spirit has gone away for the sake of carnal ease—and deserted Christ—when he has become the drunkard's jest and the derision of fools!

There are some people who forsake true religion *out of sheer* lightheartedness. I know not how to account for some men's defections. If you take up the list of shipwrecks, you will notice some that have gone down through collisions and others through striking upon rocks, but sometimes you read of a vessel, "Foundered at sea." How it happened, no, one knows—the owner himself cannot explain it! There are some professors

who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck under such apparently easy circumstances—so free from trial, so exempt from temptation, that we have not seen anything to awaken anxiety on their behalf—yet all of a sudden they have foundered. We are startled and amazed. I remember one who fell into a gross sin, of whom a Brother unwisely said, "If that man is not a Christian, I am not." His prayers had certainly been sweet. Many a time they had melted me down before the Throne of Grace and yet the life of God could not have been in his soul, for he lived and died in flagrant vice and was impenitent to the last! Such cases I can only attribute to a sort of lightheartedness which can be charmed with a sermon or a play—take a pew at the Chapel or a box at the opera with equal nonchalance and eagerly follow the excitement of the hour, "everything by turns and nothing long." "Unstable as water, they shall not excel."

On the spur of the moment, they profess Christianity, though they do not espouse it. And then, without troubling themselves to renounce it, they drop off into infidelity. They are soft and malleable enough to be hammered into any shape. Made of wax, they can be molded by any hand that is strong enough to grip them. The Lord have mercy upon any of you who may happen to be of that type! You spring up soon and suddenly you wither. Hardly is the seed sown before the sprout appears! What a wonderful harvest you promise! But, ah, no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than, because there is no depth of soil, the green shoot withers away. Pray God that you may be plowed deep, that the iron pan of rock underneath may be broken right up, that you may have plenty of subsoil and root-hold, that the verdure you produce may be permanent. Lack of principles is deadly, but the lack is far too common. Never cease to pray that you may be rooted and grounded, established and built up in Christ so that when the floods come and the winds blow, you may not fall with a great destruction—as that house fell which was built upon the sand!

But, oh, what multitudes are tempted aside from following Christ and His Church *by evil companions*! They do not avoid the society of the wicked and as a man is known by the company he keeps, we soon discover the direction in which they are drawn. The more intimately we know them, the more readily we perceive their propensities. Have a care, then, with whom you associate. Never confide in those persons of whose principles you have good cause to stand in doubt. Above all, let me admonish you young people not to be "unequally yoked together." Marriage without the fear of God is a fearful mistake. Those ill-assorted unions between Believers and unbelievers rob our churches of more members than any other popular delinquency that I know of! Seldom—I might almost say *never*—do I meet with a woman professing godliness who becomes joined in wedlock to a man of the world but what she goes away. She ceases to follow Jesus and we hear no more of her. Absorbed in the pursuits, the pains and the pleasures of the life that now is, she is sucked under the stream and drawn into the vortex. In the romance of her courtship, she glibly said, "I shall win him," but, in the reality of their

conjugal bonds, he could coolly say, "I have won you." Probably the stronger nature wins the day. In this case, however, a precept of the Gospel is violated and the penalty of disobedience is incurred. It is much easier for the one who professes religion to give up the faith, after laying down the Cross, than for another who has no religion to take up the Cross and follow the Savior in whom he has never yet believed! I counsel you, young man or woman, who contemplate a marriage on the basis of capricious attraction, without reference to the sanctity of the relationship before God, to communicate your intention to your minister and renounce your membership in the Church before you say your vows! Voluntarily give up all profession of religion! Do not wait to be excommunicated! Do not sneak away without giving an account of yourself. You had better count the cost and pay the price of your own presumption. Should your unwarranted but sanguine hopes succeed and your earnest endeavors to gain the conversion of your helpmeet be successful, that would be an uncovenanted mercy! If God chose to give it to you, it would not even *then* excuse you for tempting Him by your waywardness, or provoking Him to jealousy by your willfulness! There is an express command, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I appeal to every Christian man or woman who has been converted since marriage—Do you not find it exceedingly difficult to keep up your courage when one pulls one way and one another? And does it not cut you to the quick to think that your union is but temporary—that however dear you may be to each other now, you will be parted at the Judgment Seat of Christ—parted to meet no more? The Lord make us careful about our associates, about those among whom we stand, by whom we sit, with whom we walk!

And oh, how many leave Christ *for the sake of sensual enjoyments*! I will not enlarge upon this. Certain, however, is it that the pleasures of sin for a season fascinate their minds till they sacrifice their souls at the shrine of sordid vanity. For a merry dance, a wanton amusement, or a transient joy that would not bear reflection, they have renounced the pleasures that never pall, the immortal hopes that never fail and turned their backs upon that blessed Savior who gives and feeds the taste for unspeakable joy, for joy full of glory!

In our pastoral oversight of such a huge Church as this, we have painful evidence that *considerable numbers gradually grow cold*. The elders' reports on the absentees reiterate the vain excuses for non-attendance. One has so many children. The distance is too great for another. When they joined the Church, their family was just as large and the distance was just the same! But the household cares become more irksome when the concern for religion begins to flag—and the fatigue of travelling increases when their zeal for the House of God falters. The elders fear they are growing cold. No actual transgression can we detect, but there is a gradual declension over which we grieve. I dread that cold-heartedness—it steals so insensibly yet so surely over the entire frame. I do not say that it is worse than open sin. It cannot be. Yet it is more insidious. A

flagrant delinquency would startle one as a fit does a patient, but a slow process of backsliding may steal like paralysis over a person without awakening suspicion. Like the sleep which comes over men in the frozen regions—if they yield to it they will never wake again. You must be awakened or else this inactivity will surely end in death! "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not." Is it so with any of you, dear Friends? Are you going aside by slow degrees? He that loses his substance little by little presently becomes a bankrupt—and painful is the discovery when the end is precipitated! How miserable must a spiritual bankruptcy be to him who wastes by degrees his heavenly estate, if he ever had any! No words can describe it. God preserve us from such a catastrophe!

Some have turned aside who allege so *through change of circumstances*. They were with us when their means of livelihood were competent, if not affluent. From reverses in business they have sunk in their social position. Hence they do not like to come into fellowship with us as they were known to do. Now, from my inmost soul I can say if any of our members become poor, I, for one, do not think one atom the less of them, or hold them in less esteem, however impoverished they may become! Do not tell me that you have no fit clothes to come in, for any clothes that you have paid for are creditable. If you have not paid for them, I cannot make excuses for you. Be honest. Silk or fustian need not shame you, but for fineness or fashion I should certainly blame you! I am always glad to see Brothers and Sisters sitting here, as I sometimes do, in their smock-frocks. One good friend is rather conspicuous in that line. The wholesome whiteness of his rural garb is rather attractive. If he has paid for it, he is a far more respectable man than anyone that has run into debt for a suit of broadcloth that he cannot pay for! And I rejoice to think that I am not merely expressing my own feeling, but that which is shared by the whole community! We all delight to see our poor Brothers and Sisters. If there are any of you suffering from a sensitiveness of your own, or a suspicion of our reflections, the sooner you get rid of such foolish pride the happier you will be! You want to be thought respectable? Don't you know that a man is respectable for his *character*, not for the money he has in his pocket?

Others forsake Christ *when they become rich and increased in goods*. They did not scorn the little conventicle when they were plain plodding people, but since fortune has smiled on them and they have moved their residence from a terrace to a mansion—and they have taken to keep a carriage—they feel bound to move in another circle. To their parish church, or to some Ritualistic church in their neighborhood, they go once on the Sunday. They patronize the place by their presence. They show themselves among the *elite* of that locality! They bow, and bend, and face about to the East as though they had been born to the manner! They are too respectable to go into the little Baptist Chapel. They receive visitors in the afternoon, dine late and dissipate Sabbatic hours in the frivolous pretence of showing off their gentility. Well, I think their departure is not to

be lamented. When gone, they are certainly no loss to anybody. We sigh for them as we would for Judas or Demas. They have fallen foul of what they thought their good fortune, but of what has proved to be their ruin! Those who have true principles, when they rise in the world, see more reason why they should use their wealth and their influence in aiding a good cause. Principle would prevail over policy to the end of their lives if in their hearts they believed the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. It were no dishonor to a prince to go and sit down side by side with a pauper, were they both true followers of Jesus Christ!

In old times, when our grandfathers sought refuge in caves and dens of the earth, they met the high and the low, the bond and the free. Or when, in earlier ages, the Christians gathered in the catacombs, men out of Caesar's household—now a chief, then a senator, then a prince of the blood—came and sat down in those caverns, lighted with the dim candle, to listen while some unshod but Heaven-taught man declared the Gospel of Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit! That they were illiterate, I am quite sure, for, on looking over the monuments that are found in the catacombs, it is rare to find one inscription that is thoroughly well spelt. Though it is evident enough that the early Christians were an uneducated company of men, yet those that were great and noble, learned and polished, did not disdain to join with them—nor will they in any age if the Light of Heaven shines and the love of God burns in their hearts!

Unsound doctrine induces many to apostatize. There is always plenty of that about. Deceivers will beguile the weak. Some have been turned aside by modern doubt—and positive infidelity has its partisans. They begin cautiously by reading works with a view to answer scientific or intellectual skepticism. They read a little more and dive a little deeper into the turbid stream because they feel well able to stand against the insidious influence! They go on till at last they are staggered. They do not repair to them who could help them out, but they continue to flounder on till, at last, they have lost their footing and he that said he was a Believer has ended in stark atheism—discrediting even the evidence of the existence of God! Oh, that those who are well taught would be content with Gospel teaching! Why should you be so unwise as to go through pools of foul teaching merely because you think it easy to cleanse yourself of its pollution? Such trifling is dangerous! When you begin to read a book and find it pernicious, put it aside. Someone may upbraid you for not reading it all through, but why should you?

If I have a roast on my table of which the smell and the taste at once convince me that it is putrid and unwholesome, should I show discretion by eating the whole of it before giving my judgment that it is not fit for food? One mouthful is quite enough—and one sentence of some books ought to suffice for a sensible man to reject the whole mass! Let those who can relish such meat feed on it, but I have a taste for better food. Keep to the study of the Word of God. If it is your duty to expose those evils, encounter them bravely with prayer to God to help you. But if not,

as a humble Believer in Jesus, what business have you to taste and test such noxious fare when it is exposed in the market?

Can you doubt that there are some who turn aside from Christ and His people *through sheer laziness*. They have nothing whatever to do—and what must a Christian be who has no part in the service of Christ? Nothing to do for Jesus? A drone in the hive! I do not wonder that you go away. My wonder is that the bees do not drive you out. On the other hand, I fear others have gone aside *through having been too busy*—they have been so occupied that they have neglected to feed their own souls. I am always pleased to see our dear Brothers and Sisters diligent in the service of Christ. I am glad to miss many of you on the Lord's-Day evening when I know how well you are engaged. I could spare a few more of you if you were intent upon teaching the young, or exhorting those who are out of the way. But I earnestly admonish you never to be negligent of your own souls while you are vigilant for the souls of others! If you do not get nourished with the Bread of Life yourselves, you cannot grow in Grace! This caution, I am fully persuaded, is not uncalled for. There are some who get so absorbed in Christian work that they never listen to the Word. They hardly ever read. They only talk. This is sorry work. If you do not take in, you cannot give out. If your own soul is starved, you cannot be strong for the Lord's service. Get at least one good spiritual meal in the day. Then spend all the strength you have for God and rely on Him for frequent renewals. Keep up the fire within and add fresh fuel to give a more fervent heat. See to it that you are not losing communion with Christ while you think you are getting conversions to Christ. That is a peril you good people must not play with! It is far too serious. But I will not continue in this strain. It is painful to me, if not to you.

II. Now I want briefly to answer a second enquiry—WHAT BECOMES OF THOSE WHO TURN ASIDE?

Well, if they are God's children, I will tell you what becomes of them, for I have seen it scores of times. Though they go aside, *they are not happy*. They cannot rest, for they are miserable even when they try to be cheerful. After a while they begin to remember their first Husband, for it was better with them, then, than now. They return, but there are scores and scores who, to say nothing of the shame they have to carry with them to their grave, are never afterwards the men they were before. They have to take a second place among their comrades. And even should Sovereign Grace so wonderfully bless their painful experience that they are fully restored, they can never mention the past without bitter regret. Their by-path is serving others' as a beacon—they will say to young people, "Never do as we have done! Nothing but mischief comes of it."

In the vast majority of cases, however, they are not the Lord's people. So this is what comes of it. *Those who prove traitors to a profession they once made are the hardest people in the world to impress*. Doubtless some of you, when you lived in the country, used to always be punctual at your usual place of worship. But since you have come to London, where your absence from any sanctuary is unnoticed, you rarely enter the

courts of the Lord's House, nor would you have been here tonight but for some special inducement—some country cousin or some particular friend having brought you. Though unknown to me, God scans your path. Well, here you are, and yet it may be too little profit. You have had counsels and cautions in such profusion that it is like pouring oil down a slab of marble to admonish you. May God of His Omnipotent Mercy break your stone heart or there will be no hope for you! Such people frequently lose all conscience. They can go a great deal further in talking against religion than anybody else! They will sometimes venture to say they know so much about it that they could expose it. Their boasts and their threats are alike useless, but as boys whistle while they walk through the churchyard to keep their courage up, so do their vain talk and their senseless stories betray their stifled fear! They speak contemptuously of God while they justify themselves in a course for which their own conscience upbraids them. They go back—alas, some of them, to prove themselves the most abandoned sinners in the world! There could not have been a Judas to betray Christ had he not been first distinguished as a disciple who ventured to kiss his Master. You must pick from among the Apostles to find an apostate! As the ringleaders in riotous transgression, when converted, often make the best revivalist preachers, so those that seem to be the most loyal subjects of Christ, when they become renegades, prove to be the bitterest foes and the blackest sinners!

Painful reminiscences rush over one's mind. Standing here, now, in the midst of a great Church, I call to mind things that have harrowed up my soul. God grant I may not see the likes of them again! They go away! Ah, me! *Full many of them go away to die in blank despair*. Did you ever read the life of Francis Spira? If you want to sleep tonight, do not take up that memoir. Did you ever read the life of John Child, a Baptist minister of about 200 years ago? Mr. Keach gives it in one of his works. He was a man who knew the Truth of God and, to a great extent, had felt its power, but he went aside from it and before he came to die, his expressions were too terrible to listen to. The remorse and despair of his spirit chafed everyone away. At last he laid violent hands upon himself.

For any man to eat bread at the Lord's Table, to drink of the cup of blessing, to mingle with the saints, join in their prayers and their hymns, professing to be a disciple of Christ—and then to go back and walk no more with Him—is to venture on a course of no ordinary danger! When his conscience is again awakened, how he wishes that he had never been born! Could he annihilate his anguish-smitten soul to terminate his existence might be accounted wise. But that is impossible. The relief he seeks he cannot find when he takes the dreadful leap from suffering here, to an aggravated form of misery hereafter—ten thousand times worse to endure! He seals his doom and makes his own damnation sure as he raises against himself a murdering hand!

Do I address anyone here who is bereft of every ray of hope and shivering on the brink of despair? To him I say—While there is life, there is

hope! Jesus Christ can forgive you! Return to Him! He can wash you in His blood. He can make you clean, though your sin is as scarlet. But, oh, do not trifle, make no delay! Tarry no longer in your present condition else maybe you will fill up the measure of your iniquities before you are aware and you may taste, even in this world, some beginning of the wrath to come! If not rescued as a trophy of Grace right speedily, you may become a monument of God's wrath—a beacon to deter others from daring to turn aside! I speak solemnly. I cannot help it. So intensely do I feel the terror of that woe and so confident am I that some of you are making light of it, that I would go down on my knees and entreat you with tears to repent of what you are doing. You have got on the inclined place and you are going down, down, down! Your feet are even now on the slippery places from which multitudes have been cast down into destruction! How they are brought into desolation as in a moment! The Lord make haste to deliver you! May He stretch out His hand and rescue you! I can only call out to you. You seem to have got where I cannot reach you. Do not venture a footstep further on that dangerous road! Look to Jesus, look to Jesus! He can redeem your life from the Pit by His Sovereign Grace—but He alone can do it! Then, as a wandering sheep brought back to the fold, you shall adore His name.

III. My third enquiry is—WHY SHOULD WE NOT GO AWAY AS THEY HAVE?

Were we left to ourselves, I cannot tell you any reason why we should not go as they have. Nor, indeed, could I tell you why the best man here should not be the worst before tomorrow morning if the Grace of God left him. John Bradford, you know, as he saw the poor criminals taken away to Tyburn to be executed, used to say, "There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God." And everyone of us might say the same. To abide with Christ, however, is our only security and we trust we shall never depart from Him. But how can we make sure of this? The great thing is *to have a real foundation on Christ to begin with*—genuine faith, vital godliness. The foundation is the first matter to be attended to in building a house. With a bad foundation, there cannot be a substantial house. You require a firm bottom, a sound groundwork before you proceed to the superstructure. Do pray God that if your religion is a sham, you may find it out now. Unless your hearts are deeply plowed with genuine repentance and unless you are thoroughly rooted and grounded in the faith, you may have some cause to suspect the reality of your conversion and the verity of the Holy Spirit's operation in you. May the Lord work in you a good beginning and then you may rely upon it, He will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ!

Then remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you would be preserved from falling, *you must be schooled in humility and keep very low before the Lord*. When you are half-an-inch above the ground, you are that half-inch too high! Your safety is to be *nothing*. Trust Christ, but do not trust yourself. Rely on the Spirit of God, but do not rely on anything that is in yourself—no, not on a Grace you have received, or on a gift you possess.

Those do not slide who walk humbly with God. They are always safe whose entire dependence is upon the dear Redeemer. Be jealous of your obedience. Be circumspect. Be careful. Take heed to yourselves—your walk and conversation cannot be too cautious. Many are lost through being too remiss, but none through being too scrupulous. The statutes of the Lord are so right that you cannot neglect them without diverging from the path of rectitude. Watch and pray. God help you to watch, or else you will get drowsy. Never neglect prayer. That is at the root of every defection. Retrogression commonly begins at the closet. To restrain prayer is to deaden the very pulse of life. "Watch unto prayer."

And, dear Friends, *shun the company which has led other people astray*. Parley not with those whose jokes are profane. Stay right away from them. It is not for you to be seen standing, much less to be found sitting down with men of loose manners and lewd talk. They can do you no good, but the evil they can bring upon you would not be easy to estimate! You may have heard the story—but it is so good it bears repeating—of the lady who advertised for a coachman and was waited upon by three candidates for the situation. She put to the first one this question—"I want a really good coachman to drive my pair of horses and, therefore, I ask you how near you can drive to danger and yet be safe?" "Well," he said, "I could drive very near, indeed! I could go within a foot of a precipice without fear of any accident so long as I held the reins." She dismissed him with the remark that he would not do. To the next one who came she put the same question. "How near could you drive to danger?" Being determined to get the job, he said, "I could drive within a hair's breadth and yet skillfully avoid any mishap." "You will not do," she said. When the third one came in, his mind was cast in another mold, so on the question being put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" he said, "Madam, I never tried. It has always been a rule with me to drive as far from danger as I possibly can." The lady hired him at once! In like manner I believe that the man who is careful to run no risks and to refrain from all equivocal conduct, having the fear of God in his heart, is most to be relied upon! If you are really built upon the Rock of Ages, you may meet the question without dismay, "Will you also go away?" and you can reply without presumption, "No, Lord, I cannot and I will not leave You, for to whom should I go? You have the words of eternal life." So be it. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it." Amen.

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

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

A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM
NO. 2915

[The accompanying Sermon is substantially the same as I preached on the Sunday evening before Christmas day. Some of my members expressed their regret that the reporter was not present. I am not myself aware that there is any novelty except in the arrangement. As for the Truths of God, themselves, they are the simple old facts in which the saints of all generations rejoice. Of course it is not in my power to reproduce the exact words I then employed, but, with just the differences between the effusion of one's pen and the utterance of one's tongue, I now publish it and pray God to acknowledge it with His gracious blessing.—C. H. S.]

(Notwithstanding the above note, which is in Mr. Spurgeon's handwriting on the manuscript of the sermon, the publishers cannot find any trace of its publication. They are very glad to be able to issue it just 50 years after it was preached).

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1854.

"Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us."
Luke 2:15.

NOT to Bethlehem *as it now is*, but to Bethlehem *as it once was*, I would lead your meditation this evening.

Were you to visit the site of that ancient city of Judah *as it is at present*, you would find little enough to edify your hearts. About six miles south of Jerusalem, on the slope of a hill, lies a small, irregular village, never at any time considerable either in its extent or because of the wealth of its inhabitants. The only building worthy of notice is a convent. Should your fancy paint, as you approach it, a courtyard, a stable, or a manger, you would be sorely disappointed on your arrival! Tawdry decorations are all that would greet your eyes—rather adapted to obliterate than to preserve the sacred interest with which a Christian would regard the place. You might walk upon the marble floor of a chapel and gaze on walls bedecked with pictures and studded with the fantastic dolls and other nicknacks which are usually found in Roman Catholic places of worship. Within a small grotto you might observe the exact spot that superstition has assigned to the nativity of our Lord. There a star, composed of silver and precious stones, surrounded by golden lamps, might remind you, but merely as a parody, of the simple story of the Evange-

lists. Truly, Bethlehem was always little, if not the least, among the thousands of Judah—and only famous for its historic associations.

So, Beloved, "let us now go to Bethlehem" *as it was*—let us, if possible, bring the wondrous story of that "Child born," that "Son given," down to our own times. Imagine the event to be occurring just now. I will try to paint the picture for you with vivid colors, that you may apprehend afresh the great Truth of God and be impressed, as you ought to be, with the facts concerning the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I propose now to make A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM and I need five companions to render the visit instructive. So I would have, first, *an aged Jew*. Next, *an ancient Gentile.* Then, *a convicted sinner. Next, a young Believer.* And, last of all, *an advanced Christian*. Their remarks can scarcely fail to please and profit us. Afterwards I should like to take a *whole family* to the manger, let them all look at the Divine Infant and hear what each one has to say about Him.

I. To begin, then, I WOULD GO TO BETHLEHEM WITH AN AGED JEW.

Come on, my venerable, long-bearded Brother—you are an Israelite, indeed, for your name is Simeon. Do you see the Baby "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger"? Yes, he does and, overpowered by the sight, he clasps the Child in his arms and exclaims, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation." "Here," says this faithful son of Abraham, "is the fulfillment of a thousand prophecies and promises! The hope, the expectation and the joy of my noble ancestry! Here is the Antitype of all those mystic symbols and typical offerings enjoined in the Laws of Moses. You, O Son of the Highest, are Abraham's promised Seed, the Shiloh whose coming Jacob foretold, great David's greater Son and Israel's rightful King! Our Prophets did herald your coming in each prophetic page. Our bards vied with one another who should chant Your praise in sweetest stanzas! And now, O happy hour—these poor dim eyes do greet Your beauteous form! It is enough—and more than enough—O God! I ask not that I may live any longer on earth!" So speaks the aged Jew and, as he speaks, I mark the rapturous smile that lights up every feature of his face and listen to the deep, mellow tones of his tremulous voice. As he gazes on the tender Baby, I hear him quote Isaiah's words, "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant" and then, as he glances aside at the virgin-mother, descendant of the royal house of David, he quickly looks back to the sinless Baby and says, "A root out of a dry ground." Farewell, venerable Jew, your talk sounds sweet in my ears—may the day soon dawn when all your brethren shall return to their fatherland and there confess our Jesus as their Messiah and their King!

II. My next companion shall be AN ANCIENT GENTILE.

He is an intelligent man. Do not ask me any questions concerning his creed. Deeply versed in the works of God in Nature, he has glimmering, flickering Light of God enough to detect the moral darkness by which he is surrounded, albeit the Truth of the Gospel has not yet found an entrance into his heart. Call him a skeptic, from the heathen point of view,

if you please, but his is not a willful perversion of the heart, it is rather that transition state of the mind wherein false hopes are rejected, but the true hope has not yet been espoused. This Gentile is staying at Jerusalem and we walk and talk together as we bend our steps toward Bethlehem. He has told me what pleasure he feels in reading the Jewish Scriptures and how he has often longed for the dawn of that day which their seers predict. Now we enter the house—a star shines brightly in the sky and hovers over the stable—we look at the Child and my comrade exclaims in ecstasy, "a Light to lighten the Gentiles!" "Fair Child of promise," he says, "Your birth shall be a joy to all people! Prince of Peace, Yours shall be a peaceful reign! Kings shall bring presents to You; all nations shall serve You. The poor shall rejoice in Your advent, for justice shall be done to them by You. And oppressors shall tremble at Your coming, for judgment upon them shall be pronounced by Your lips."

Then sweetly did he speak of the hopes which had bloomed in that birth-chamber. He looked as if, in that same hour, he saw the application of many an ancient promise with the letter of which he was already acquainted, to the wonderful Child he there saw. It was refreshing to hear that entire quote from the evangelical Prophet, words like these, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; *and a little child shall lead them.*"

As I bid adieu to this friend, you must allow me to offer you one or two of my own reflections. When God, in His anger, hid His face from the house of Jacob, He lifted up the Light of His Countenance on the Gentiles. When the fruitful land became a desert, the wilderness, at the same time, began to blossom as the garden of the Lord. Moses had anticipated both of these events and the Inspired Prophets had foreseen one as much as the other. The heart of the Jewish people made gross, the heaviness of their eyes and the dullness of their ears are not more striking as an exact fulfillment of Divine Judgment, than the extreme susceptibility of the Gentile mind to receive the evidence of our Lord's Messiahship and to embrace His Gospel! Thus had Jehovah said, fifteen hundred years before, "I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Marvel not, then, but admire the crisis in history when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to say to the Jews who rejected the Gospel, "*Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*"

I have consulted the map and looked with intense emotion at the route which Paul and Barnabas took on their first missionary journey. Antioch, the city from which they went forth, is situated directly North of Jerusalem—and there, in not very unequal proportions, they could find both Jews and Gentiles. "To the Jew first," was according to the Divine Injunction and, on their own nation rejecting the Grace of God, lo, they turned to the Gentiles with a result immediately following that greatly cheered them, for the Gentiles heard with gladness and glorified the Word of the Lord! As you follow the various journeys of the Apostle Paul, you will see that his course was ever Northward, or, rather, in a North-Westerly direc-

tion—and so the tidings of the Gospel traveled on until the Church of the Redeemed found a central point in our highly-favored island!

I think I hear some of you say, "We are not antiquarian enough to appreciate the society of your two venerable companions." Well then, Beloved, the three that follow shall be drawn from among yourselves—and it may be that you will discover your own thoughts expressed in the sketches I am about to add.

III. Next in order is THE AWAKENED SINNER.

Come here, my Sister, I am glad to see you and I shall have much pleasure in your company to Bethlehem. Why do you start back? Do not be afraid! There is nothing to terrify you here. Come in! Come in! With trembling apprehension my Sister advances to the rough crib where the young Child lies. She looks as if she feared to rejoice and is beyond measure astonished at herself that she does not faint. She says to me, "And is this, Sir, really and truly the great Mystery of godliness? Do I, in that manger, behold 'God manifest in the flesh'? I expected to see something very different." Looking into her face, I clearly perceived that she could scarcely believe for joy. A humble, but not uninteresting visitor to the birthplace of my Lord is this trembling penitent. I wish I could have many like her out of this congregation tonight. You would see how Mystery is dissolved in mercy! No flaming sword turning every way obstructs your entrance. No ticket of admission is demanded by a surly menial at the door. No favor is shown to rank or title—you may go freely in to see the noblest Child of woman born in the humblest cot wherein infants ever nestled! Nor does a visible tiara of light encircle His brow. Too humble, I assure you, for the fancy of the poet to describe, or the pencil of the artist to sketch—like a poor man's child, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in a manger. It needs faith to believe what the eyes of sense never could discern as you look upon "the Prince of Life" in such humble guise!

IV. My fourth companion is A YOUNG BELIEVER.

Well, my Brother, you and I have often had sweet communion together concerning the things of the Kingdom. "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us." I mark the sacred cheerfulness of my young friend's countenance as he approaches the Incarnate Mystery! Often have I heard him discussing curious doctrinal subtleties, but now, with calmness of spirit, he looks on the face of the Divine Child and says, "Truth is sprung out of the earth, for a woman has brought forth her Son and righteousness has looked down from Heaven, for God has, of a truth, revealed Himself in that Baby." He looks so wistfully at the young Child, as if a fresh spring of holy gratitude had been opened in his heart. "No vision, no imagination, no myth here," he says, "but a real partaker of our flesh and blood! He has not taken on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Heaven and earth have united to make us blessed. Might and weakness have joined hands here!"

He pauses to worship, then speaks again, "In what a small, weak, slender Tabernacle do You, O glorious God, now deign to dwell! Surely,

mercy and truth have here met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other! O Jesus, Savior, You are Mercy itself—the tender mercy of our God is embodied in You. You are the Truth—the very Truth which the Prophets longed to see and into which the angels desire to look—the Truth my soul so long sought for, but never found till I beheld Your face. Once I thought that the Truth was hidden in some profound treatise, or in some learned book, but now I know that it is revealed in You, O Jesus, my Kinsman, yet Your Father's equal! And, sweet Baby, You are also Righteousness—the only righteousness that God can accept. What condescension, yet what patience! Ah, dear Child, how still You lie! I wonder that, conscious of your Divine Power, you can thus endure the weary, lingering hours of Infancy with humility so strange, so rare! I think if You had stood by me and watched over me in my infant weakness, that would have been a service that I could well admire, but 'tis past imagination's utmost stretch to realize what it must be for You to be thus feeble, thus helpless, thus needing to be fed and waited upon by an earthly mother! For The Wonderful, The Mighty God to stoop thus, is humility profound!"

So spoke the young Believer and I liked his speech very much, for I saw in him how faith could work by love and how the end of controversy and argument is reached at Bethlehem, for "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

V. Now I will go to Bethlehem with AN ADVANCED CHRISTIAN, such an one as Paul the Aged, or John the Divine—no, rather with such an one as I might find among the circle of my own Church members!

Calm, peaceful, kind and gracious, he seems as if his training in the school of Christ and the sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit have made him like a child, himself—his character is ripening and his fitness for the Kingdom of Heaven is becoming more apparent. Tears glistened in the old man's eyes as he looked with expressive fondness on that "Infant of Eternal Days." He spoke not much and what he said was not exactly like what any of my other companions had spoken. It was his manner to quote short sentences, with great exactness, from the Word of God. He uttered them slowly, pondered them deeply and there was much spiritual unction in the accent with which he spoke. I will just mention a few of the profitable sentences that he uttered. First he said, "No man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even *the Son of Man which is in Heaven."* He really appeared to see more in that passage than I had ever seen there. Jesus, the Son of Man, in Heaven even while He was on earth! Then he looked at the Child and said, "The same was in the beginning with God." After that, he uttered these three short sentences in succession, "In the beginning was the Word—"all things were made by Him"—"and the Word was made flesh." He looked as if he realized what a great mystery it was that our Lord Jesus first made all things and afterwards was Himself "made flesh." Then he reverently bent his knee, clasped his hands and exclaimed, "My Father's gift—'Behold, what manner of love!'"

As we retire from that manger and stable, that aged Christian puts his hand on my shoulder and says, "Young man, I have often been to Bethlehem. It was a much-loved haunt of mine before you were born. And there is one sweet lesson I have learned there which I should like to pass on to you. The Infinite became finite. The Almighty consented to become weak. He that upheld all things by the word of His power, willingly became helpless. He that spoke all worlds into existence, resigned for a while even the power of speech! In all these things, He fulfilled the will of His Father, so be not you afraid, nor surprised with any amazement if you should be dealt with in like manner, for His Father is also your Father. You who have reveled in the ancient settlements of the Everlasting Covenant, may yet have to hang feebly on the mercies of the hour. You have leaned on your Savior's breast at His Table, but you may presently be so weak that you must rely on the nursing of a woman. Your tongue has been touched as with a coal from the heavenly altar, but your lips may yet be sealed as are those of an infant. If you should sink still deeper in humiliation, you will never reach the depth to which Jesus descended in this one act of His condescension." "True, true," I replied, "my young Brother hinted at the wondrous condescension of the Son of God. You have explained it to me more fully."

Thus, Beloved, I have endeavored to carry out my purpose of going to Bethlehem with five separate companions—all representative persons. Alas that some of you are not represented by any one of these characters! "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?" Care you not for this blessed Nativity which marked of old, "the fullness of time"? If you die without a knowledge of this Mystery, your lives will indeed be a fearful blank and your eternal portion will be truly terrible!

VI. Give me your earnest attention a little longer while I try to change the line of meditation. It may please God that while I attempt to CONDUCT A WHOLE FAMILY TO BETHLEHEM, some hearts which have thus far resisted all my appeals may yet yield to the Lord Jesus Christ!

A familiar picture will serve my purpose. Imagine this to be Christmas Eve and that a Christian father has all his household gathered with him around the fire. Desirous of blending instruction with pleasure, he proposes that "the birth of Christ" shall be the subject of their conversation—that every one of the children shall say something about it and he will preach them a short sermon on each of their remarks. He calls Mary, their servant, into the room. And when all are comfortably seated they commence.

1. After a simple sketch of the facts, the father turns to his youngest boy and asks, "What have you to say, Willy?" The little fellow, who is just old enough to go to the Sunday school, repeats two lines that he has learned to sing there—many of you, no doubt, know them—

"Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior,
Once became a Child like me."

"Good, my dear," says the father—"once became a child like me." Yes. Jesus was born into the world as other little babies are born. He was as

little, as delicate, as weak as other infants and needed to be nursed as they do—

"'Almighty God became a Man,
A Baby like others seen—
As small in size, and weak of frame,
As babies have always been.
From thence He grew an Infant mild,
By fair and due degrees
And then became a bigger Child,
And sat on Mary's knee.
'At first held up for need of strength,
In time alone He ran.
Then grew a Boy. A Lad—at length
A Youth—at last, a Man.'

"It is wrong to draw pictures of the little Jesus and then say that they are like Him. Wicked idolaters do that. But we ought to think of Jesus Christ as made in all things like unto His brethren. There was never a thing in which He was not like us, except that He had no sin. He used to eat, drink, sleep, wake, laugh, cry and hold onto His mother, just as other children do. So it is quite right for you, Willy, to say, 'once became a Child like me.'"

2. "Now, John," said the father, addressing a lad rather older, "what have you to say?" "Well, father," said John, "if Jesus Christ was like us in some things, I do not think He could have had so many comforts as we have—not such a nice nursery, nor such a snug bed. Was He not disturbed by the horses, and cows, and camels? It seems to me shocking that He had to live in a stable."

"That is a very proper remark, John," said his father. "We ought all of us to think how our blessed Lord cast in His lot with the poor. When those Wise Men came from the East, I daresay they were surprised, at first, to find that Jesus was a poor man's Child. Yet they fell down and worshipped Him, they opened their treasury and presented to Him very costly gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Ah, when the Son of God made that great stoop from Heaven to earth, He passed the glittering palaces of kings and the marble halls of the rich and the noble—to take up His abode in the lodgings of poverty. Still, He was 'born King of the Jews.' Now, John, did you ever read of a child being *born a king* before? Of course you never did—children have been born princes and heirs to a throne—but no other than Jesus was ever born a King. The poverty of our Savior's circumstances is like a foil which sets off the glorious dignity of His Person. You have read of good kings, such as David, Hezekiah and Josiah, yet, if they had not been kings, we would never have heard of them. But it was quite otherwise with Jesus Christ. He was possessed of more true greatness in a stable than any other king ever possessed in a palace! But do not imagine it was only in His Childhood that Jesus was the Kinsman of the poor. When He grew up to be a Man, He said, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Do you know, my children, that our comforts were purchased at the expense of His sufferings? 'He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich.' We ought, therefore, to

thank and praise the blessed Jesus every time we remember how much worse off He was in this world than we are."

3. "It is your turn now," said the father, as he looked at his little daughter—an intelligent girl who was just beginning to be of some assistance to her mother in the discharge of her daily domestic duties. Poor girl, she modestly hung down her head, for she remembered, just then, how frequently little acts of carelessness had exposed her to tender but faithful rebukes from her parents. At last she said, "Oh, Father, how good Jesus Christ was! He never did anything wrong." "Very true, my Love," the father replied. "It is a sweet subject for meditation that you suggest. His Nature was sinless, His thoughts were pure, His heart was transparent and all His actions just and right. You have read of the lambs which Moses, in the Law, commanded the Jews to offer in sacrifice to God. They were all to be without spot or blemish—and if there had been one taint of impurity in the Child that was born of Mary, He could never have been our Savior. Sometimes we think naughty thoughts and nobody knows it but God. And, sometimes, we do what is evil, but we are not found out. It was not so with the meek and lowly Savior—He never had even one fault! His delight was in the Law of the Lord and in that Law did He meditate day and night. Even when we do not commit any positive sin, we often forget to do our duty, but Jesus never did. He was like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. He never disappointed any hopes that were set upon Him."

"There now," said the father, "we have already had three beautiful thoughts—Jesus Christ took our Nature, He condescended to be very poor and He was without sin."

4. There was, in the room, a big boy who had just come home from boarding school to spend his Christmas holidays, so his father turned to this son and said, "Fred, we must hear your remark next." Very short, very significant was Master Fred's response—"that Child had a wonderful mind."

"Indeed He had," said the father, "and it would be well for all of us if that mind were in us which was also in Christ Jesus. His mind was Infinite, for He took part in the eternal counsels of God. But I would rather suggest to you another line of thought—'In Him was Light.' The mind of Jesus was like light for its clearness and purity. We often see things through a misleading medium. We form wrong impressions which we find it trouble enough afterwards to correct. But Jesus was of quick understanding to discern between good and evil. His mind was never warped by prejudice. He saw things just as they are. Never had He to borrow other people's eyes—and the ideas hatched in other people's brains never guided His judgment. He had light in Himself and that light was the life of men, so capable was He of always instructing the ignorant and guiding their feet in the paths of peace. His heart was likewise pure and that has more to do with the development of the mind and the improvement of the understanding than we are apt to suppose. No corrupt imagination ever tarnished the brightness of His vision. He was always in

harmony with God and always felt good-will toward man. You might well say, Fred, that He had a wonderful mind."

5. The children having each made some observation, the father next addressed Mary, the servant. "Do not be timid," he said, "but speak out and let us know your thoughts." "I was just a-thinking, Sir," said Mary, "how humble it was of Him to take upon Himself the form of a Servant." "Right, Mary, quite right. And it is always profitable to consider how Jesus came down to our low estate. We may well be reconciled to any 'lot' which Jesus voluntarily chose for Himself. But there is more in your remark, as applicable to Bethlehem and the Nativity, than you perhaps imagined, for, according to Dr. Kitto's account of the inn, or *Caravanserai*, it was the *servant's place* that the holy family occupied. Imagine now a square pile of strong and lofty walls, built of brick upon a basement of stone with one great archway entrance. These walls enclose a large open area with a well in the middle. In the center is an inner quadrangle consisting of a raised platform on all four sides covered with a kind of piazza. And then, in the wall behind, there are small doors leading to the little cells which form the lodgings. Such we may suppose to have been the 'inn' in which there was 'no room' for Mary and Joseph. Now for a description of the stable. It is formed of a covered avenue between the back wall of the lodging apartments and the outer wall of the whole building—thus it is on a level with the court and three or four feet below the raised platform. The side walls of those cells, in the inner quadrangle, projecting behind into the courtyard, form recesses, or stalls, which servants and muleteers used for shelter in bad weather. Joseph and Mary seem to have found a retreat in one of these. There, it is supposed, the Infant Jesus was born. And if it is so, how literally true is it that He took on Him the form of a Servant and occupied the servant's apartment!"

6. Once more the father seeks a fresh text and, looking at his wife, he says, "My Dear, you have taken a quiet interest in our conversations this evening. Let us now hear your reflection. I am sure you can say something we shall all be pleased to hear." The mother looked absorbed in thought. She appeared to have a vivid picture of the whole scene before her and her eyes kindled as if she could actually see the little Darling lying in the manger. She spoke most naturally and most maternally, too. "What a lovely Child! And yet," she added with a deep sigh, "He who is thus fairer than the children of men in His cradle, after a few short years was so overwhelmed with anxiety, suffering and anguish, that His visage was more marred than that of any other man! And His form more than that of the sons of men."

A pensive sadness stole over every countenance as that godly mother offered her reflections. Woman's tenderness seemed to be sanctified by Divine Grace in her heart and to give forth its richest fragrance. The father presently broke the stillness as he said, "Ah, my Love, you have spoken best of all! His heart was broken with reproach! That humble birth was but the prelude to a life still more humble and a death even more abased! Your feelings, my Love, are most precious evidence of your close relationship to Him—

"'A faithful friend of grief partakes;
But union can be none
Betwixt a heart that melts like wax
And hearts as hard as stone.
Betwixt a head diffusing blood
And members sound and whole,
Betwixt an agonizing God
And an unfeeling soul.'"

7. "To close up now," said the father, glancing round with animated expression upon his household, "I suppose you will expect a few words from me. Much as I like your mother's observations, I think it would be hardly right, on such an auspicious day, to finish with anything melancholy and sad. You know that fathers are generally most thoughtful about the prospects of their children. I can look at you boys and think, 'Never mind if you have a few hardships so long as you can struggle successfully against them.' Well now, I have been picturing to myself the manger, the Baby that lay in it, and Mary, His mother watching lovingly over Him. And I'll tell you what I thought. Those little hands will one day grasp the scepter of universal empire! Those little arms will one day grapple with the monster, 'Death,' and destroy it! Those little feet shall tread on the serpent's neck and crush that old deceiver's head! Yes, and that little tongue which has not yet learned to articulate a word shall, before long, pour from His sweet lips such streams of eloquence as shall fertilize the minds of the whole human race and infuse His teaching into the literature of the world! And again, a little while, and that tongue shall pronounce the judgments of Heaven on the destinies of all mankind!

"We have all thought it wonderful that the God of Glory should stoop so low, but we shall one day think it more wonderful that the Man of Sorrows should be exalted so high! Earth could find no place too base for Him—Heaven will scarcely find a place lofty enough for Him! If there is just this one thing to be said about Jesus Christ, He is 'the same yesterday, and today, and forever.' We may change with circumstances—Jesus never did and never will! When we look at Him in the manger, we may say, 'He is The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God.' And when we see Him exalted to His Father's right hand, we may exclaim, 'Behold the Man!'—

"'His human heart He still retains
Though enthroned in highest bliss
And feels each tempted member's pains,
For our affliction's His.'"

So closed the series of observations by the various members of a Christian family around the Christmas fire. The father said it was time to retire. And he bade them all, 'good night.'" And as the father said, so say I, "Good night and God bless you all!" Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 2:1-19.

[Remember, the Exposition was *before* the sermon.]

We will now read the story of our Savior's birth as it is recorded in the Gospel according to Luke.

Verses 1-6. *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.* Little did any idea enter into Caesar's head that he was accomplishing the purpose of God by bringing Mary to Bethlehem at that particular time so that her Child might be born there! But God can accomplish the purpose of His Providence and of His Grace in any way that He pleases! And although Caesar is not aware of all that is involved in his action, his decree which he intends to simply be a means of registering his subjects and of filling his coffers, is to be overruled by God for the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered centuries before the event happened—that Christ must be born at Bethlehem! It may seem to some of you a strange thing that there should be an imperial edict issued from Rome which should have an important influence upon the place of birth of the Child, yet I do not doubt that in God's esteem, the whole of the great Roman Empire was of very small account in comparison with His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! And today the thrones and dominions of the mightiest monarchs are only like the small cogs of the wheels of Divine Providence where the welfare of even the least of the Lord's people is concerned. He reckons not events according to their apparent importance—the standard of the sanctuary is a very different measure from that which worldlings use. When any purpose of God is to be accomplished, all other things will be subordinated to it!

6, 7. *And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.* Now has heavenly Glory wedded earthly poverty and, henceforth, let no man dare to despise the poor and needy since the Son of the Highest is born in a stable and cradled in a manger! How low the King of Glory stoops, and how gloriously He lifts up the lowly to share His Glory!

8, 9. *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sorely afraid.* For such is the condition, even of gracious souls, that the near approach of the Divine Glory begets in them trembling and alarm! Oh, how wondrously changed shall we be when we are able to bear even the glories of Heaven! Have you ever thought of this, dear Friends? The beloved Apostle John saw Christ in His Glory and he wrote, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet, as dead." And these shepherds, even at the sight of "the angel of the Lord," "were sorely afraid." You and I, Beloved, must undergo a marvelous change before we shall be able to

be at Home with God in His Glory—but that change shall, through His abundant Grace, take place before long!

10-12. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* "This shall be a sign unto you," said the angel to the shepherds—and this is the ensign of the Christ of God even unto this day. There are some who are constantly bringing discredit upon religion by their pompous ritual and gorgeous ceremonies buried beneath the weight of their sensuous worship! But the living Christ is still found in simple, lowly guise, "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

13. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.* They had heard the heavenly herald's proclamation and hurried down to join him in publishing the glad tidings! They could not bear that only one angel should announce the birth of the Christ, so, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host."

13-19. *Praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.* Mary laid these things up in store and pondered them, giving them their due weight and value. Oh, that we did the same with every Truth of God that we learn!

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END OF VOLUME 50