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THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF MR. SPURGEON'S FIRST SERMON IN THE TABERNACLE!

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation. Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."
Psalm 40:9-11.

SOMETIMES, dear Friends, we should take a review of life. There are occasions when men feel bound to do so and the retrospect may be full of profit to themselves. I find that many look back in hours of trouble. A dark cloud brings them to a pause. In prosperity they might have run on with very little thought, but sorrow calls them to a halt. They are driven to God in prayer and at such times it is not unusual for them, if God has been gracious to them in the past, to recollect His great goodness and to mention it while they are pleading at the Mercy Seat. They say, "He has dealt well with His servants. The Lord has helped us up to now." They look back and see the Ebenezers which they have raised in past years and then they cry, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?"—

"And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

Thus they drive their griefs away and the remembrance of past mercy helps them to snatch firewood from the altars of the bygone years, with which to kindle the sacrifice of the present moment.

Men are also accustomed to review their lives when they are brought near to the grave. It is helpful, when we fear that life is about to end, to begin to add it up, to see what the sum total reaches. If God should say to us, "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live," the best way to do it is to remember the past—looking at what we have done and what God has done—and then to set one against the other, that we may repent of the sin and may hope because of the mercy. Now, albeit that we may not, ourselves, be brought so near to death's door as that, yet during the past month or so we have, as a people, been continually going to the sepulcher. I think that there were seven notable Brothers and Sisters who fell asleep last week, so constantly have death's arrows been flying among us. Therefore, as we are come to the bank of the river and

are reminded that we must, ourselves, shortly put off this tabernacle, let us look back a little and remember all the ways the Lord our God has led us.

There are, however, other occasions apart from those of great sorrow or of apprehended departure when wise men are fully warranted in considering the period as peculiarly noteworthy. I have come to such a time today. Twenty-five years have passed over our heads since I preached my first sermon in this house. The sanctuary was opened with songs of joy—many who were with us then are now in Glory—and many of you who are with us today were not even born then. To those who were at the opening of the Tabernacle, it must seem almost an old building now! I hear people talk of "the dear old Tabernacle" and well they may, for a quarter of a century is no mean period in the history of a building or of a Church. There has been a great deal done in those 25 years and we have both personally and as a Church enjoyed abounding mercy. I did not think it right to let the occasion pass over without offering devout thanksgiving to the Lord for all His loving-kindness to us, and endeavoring to say some words that shall perhaps make us feel more our indebtedness to God and cause us to determine to be more than ever consecrated to His service.

This text, though it belongs, first of all, in the most Divine and fullest sense to our gracious Master, also belongs to David—and through David to those whom God has called to bear testimony to the Gospel of His Grace. We can say and we do say, humbly but most earnestly—and I know that there are many Brothers here who can join us, each in his own ministry, and many Brothers and Sisters who, though not in the ministry, can say, in any event in the spirit of the words after their measure—"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation."

I. Coming, then, to our text, here is, first, A CONTINUAL TESTIMONY. Many of you have borne testimony for God in your homes as well as in your lives. Some of you have borne the testimony in your classes in the Sunday school. Some in the streets, some in cottage meetings—some in larger assemblies. We especially who are called to the public ministry of the Word, have borne this testimony in "the great congregation." But all of us who are the Lord's servants have, I hope, borne our testimony according to our opportunities and abilities.

It has been imperfect, but it has been sincere. In looking back upon our testimony for God, we could almost wish to obliterate it because of its imperfections, but we can truthfully say that it has been sincerely borne up to the measure of the capacity given to us. It has been borne without a doubt, without any mental reservation, with intensity of spirit—borne because it could not be silenced. I have preached the Gospel to you, my Brothers and Sisters, because I have believed it—and if what I have preached to you is not true, I am a lost man! For me there is no joy in life and no hope in death except in that Gospel which I have continually expounded here. It is not to me a theory. I would scarcely stop at saying

that it is a belief. It has become matter of absolute fact to me! It is interwoven with my consciousness. It is part of my being. Every day makes it dearer to me—my joys bind me to it, my griefs drive me to it! All that is behind me, all that is before me, all that is above me, all that is beneath me—everything compels me to say that my testimony has been borne with my heart, mind, soul and strength—and I am grateful to God that I can say this, putting it as the text puts it, "O Lord, You know." If others do not know the truth of the matter, I rejoice that my Master knows my heart.

I feel grateful to God that I can say this because of *the subjects of the testimony*. The first subject of the Psalmist's testimony had been God's "righteousness." That is the main point to be noticed in all testimony for God—God's positive righteousness in Himself, God's way of righteousness by which He justifies the ungodly and God's method of spreading righteousness in the world by the power and energy of His Holy Spirit. I, for one, believe in a God who punishes sin. I have never flattered you with the idea that sin is a trifle and that in some future age it may expiate itself. No, the righteousness of God has seemed to me to be a dark background upon which to draw the bright lines of His everlasting love in Christ Jesus. In the Expiation of Christ, the righteousness of God is vindicated to the fullest. He is "just, and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus." I ask for no pardon to be given to me unrighteously. My conscience could not be satisfied with a forgiveness that came to me unjustly, for the Glory of God would be dishonored thereby. There would be a blot upon the Heavenly statute-book if sin were pardoned without atonement. But we have preached the righteousness of God and we feel that, in doing so, we lay a sure foundation upon which to build the comfort and hope of the Believer in Christ Jesus!

In addition to the righteousness of God, the Psalmist had preached His "faithfulness." The Lord keeps all His promises. He is the Faithful Promiser—what He promises He performs. There is no lie in Him, nor change, nor shadow of a turning. "Has He said and shall He not do?" Which of His promises ever failed? Has He drawn back even in the least degree from His Covenant, or altered the word which has gone forth out of His lips? Our testimony has not been borne to a fickle God and a feeble salvation which saves for a time and after all, does not really save, but allows saints to fall away and perish everlastingly. No, we have given unfaltering utterance to that declaration of our Lord, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." We believe in everlasting love, in an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure and, therefore, righteousness and faithfulness have been the two foundations of our ministry—upon which we have tried to build a Gospel worth our preaching and worth your having.

Then the Psalmist says that he had borne testimony to two things in conjunction with each other: "Your loving-kindness and Your truth." Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a theme is here! "Your loving-kindness!" God's generous mercy, His overflowing love, His "kinnedness," His

kindness to His chosen whom He has made to be a people near unto Himself, to whom He manifests His very soul. That word, "loving," added to the word, "kindness," makes it a gem doubly precious! Where is there among words any other equal to this—"loving-kindness"? I have exulted to preach to you the loving-kindness of the Lord. I needed not to be driven to this happy task. I have almost needed, sometimes, to be stopped when I have passed the hour and my theme has carried me away! Oh, the loving-kindness of the Lord to those who put their trust under the shadow of His wings! That is a subject on which one might preach forever and yet not exhaust its treasures!

And then His "truth"—God's Truth—the truth of His Word. The truth of His Son! The truth of the great Doctrines which are given to us in the Gospel. I have not preached to you any sort of speculation. I have never sought to invent new forms of truth. It shall be seen one day whose thoughts shall stand—God's thoughts or man's. And it shall be seen which is the true ministry—that which takes up God's Word and echoes it—or that which boils it down until the very life is extracted from it. I have no sympathy with the preaching which degrades the Truth of God into a hobbyhorse for its own thought and only looks upon Scripture as a kind of pulpit from which it may thunder out its own opinions! No, if I have gone beyond what that Book has taught, may God blot out everything that I have said! I beseech you, never believe me if I go an atom beyond what is plainly taught there. I am content to live and to die as the mere repeater of Scriptural teaching—as a person who has thought out nothing and invented nothing—as one who never thought invention to be any part of his calling, but who concluded that he was to take the message from the lips of God to the best of his ability and simply to be a mouth for God to the people—mourning much that anything of his own should come between—but never thinking that he was somehow to refine the message or to adapt it to the brilliance of this wonderful century and then to hand it out as being so much his own that he might take some share of the glory of it. No, no! We have aimed at nothing of the kind! "I have declared *Your* faithfulness and *Your* salvation: I have not concealed *Your* loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation." Nothing have we preached as our own. If there has been anything of our own, we do bitterly take back those words and eat them—and repent that we should have ever been guilty of the sin and folly of uttering them! The things which we have learned of God our Father and of His Son Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit, we have sought to speak unto you.

Now, dear Friends, let me say, next, that this text describes *a work which has been done under great difficulties*. It may seem a very easy thing to simply have a message and to tell it. Yes, it appears so. But it is not as easy as it looks at first sight. I do not suppose that you always find your servants deliver your messages accurately. Did you ever sit around a table and tell one person a story, and ask him to tell it to his neighbor? Let each one whisper it and by the time it gets to the end of the table, you will scarcely recognize your tale, it will have been altered so much! There is a tendency in the minds of all of us to alter what we tell—it is a struggle to keep to the exact truth. Besides, this is an age

which likes pretty things—something fresh and new—and it is not always easy to swim upstream, or to go against the tendency of the time and the spirit of the age. We have no particular desire to be thought fools anymore than anybody else—and we know where all the wisdom is—at least we ought to know, for we hear often enough about it. Ask the brethren of the "modern thought" school if they have not all the wisdom that is to be had nowadays! If they do not say that they have, many of them act as if they thought they had! No, Friends, it is not so easy, after all, to keep to the plain Truth of God. There is a Brother who has struck out something wonderfully fresh. We read his book—shall we not at least go with him a little way? You will find, Brothers, that if you determine to hold fast the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, you will have a battle to fight in which you will be beaten unless you rely upon God for strength! If you are willing to let the Truth of God go, you have but to seek to please man and it is soon done! And only then will you be greeted with, "Hail fellow! Well met!" But if you mean to declare God's Truth, you will need the help of the Most High in the struggle.

But, although this testimony has been borne under difficulties, *it has been attended with unutterable pleasure*. Oh, the delight of preaching the Gospel! I often say to young men who apply for admission to the College, "Do not become a minister if you can help it." But if you cannot help it, if a Divine destiny drives you on, thank God that it is so! You are a happier man if you are able to preach the Gospel than if you had been elected to a throne! There is no business like it under Heaven! I have heard some say that our professional study of the Word of God may be a hindrance to our growth in the Divine life. I know what they mean and there is some truth in their words—but to me, the preaching of the Gospel has been a continual means of Grace and I can say with the Apostle Paul, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this *Grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unreachable riches of Christ." It really is a Grace to be permitted to preach the Gospel—it brings Grace with it. Brothers in the ministry, have you not read the Bible much more because you have had to preach the blessed Truths revealed in it? Have you not been driven to your knees much more because you have had to deal with anxious souls and to lead the people of God? I am sure that it is so and I thank God for giving me a calling which does not take me away from the Mercy Seat, but drives me to it! I am grateful that I have a message which I am glad to tell, glad to tell *anywhere*—a message which never needs to be concealed, but which brings joy to me in telling it and salvation to our hearers in listening to it! Blessed be God that we have such a story to proclaim!

I could say much more about this first point, but I must not, for our time is so short. This must suffice upon the subject of our continual testimony.

II. Now, secondly, the text mentions A REMARKABLE AUDIENCE. The Psalmist says, twice over, "I have preached righteousness in *the great congregation.*" And yet again, "I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from *the great congregation.*"

It is *astonishing to the preacher* that there should be a great congregation to hear the Gospel! I do not know how you think of it, but if anybody had been set here to speak so many times a week upon politics, I wonder whether he would have had a crowded congregation at the end of 25 years? My friend Mr. Varley speaks right mightily, but if he had been preaching upon total abstinence for 25 years, I am sure that some would have totally abstained from coming to hear him! If I had to preach here upon—well, what topic shall I say?—the object that the Liberation Society has in view, for instance, I am afraid that I should have liberated many of you from attendance long before this. All other subjects are exhaustible, but give us that Book and give us the Holy Spirit—and we may preach on forever! We shall never get to the end of it!

I have heard of two infidels, one of whom said to his fellow, "If you had to go to jail for 12 months and you could only have one book, what book would you choose?" He was very surprised when his companion said, "Oh, I would take the Bible!" The first one said, "But you do not believe in it—I wonder that you should choose that." "Oh, but," rejoined his friend, "it is no end of a book." His record is true—it is "no end of a book." Jerome used to say, "I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture." And well he might. I would like you to look at my Bible at home which is marked with all the texts I have preached from. There are thirty-one completed volumes of my sermons and a thirty-second is in the making.

[This sermon begins the 51st volume of Spurgeon's Sermons. How little the preacher thought, when he praised God for 25 years' ministry in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, that he would continue to declare God's faithfulness and salvation week by week to the great company of Sermon readers for so many years after he had put off the tabernacle of the body. The supply of manuscripts is not yet nearly exhausted.]

Of course, in addition to the 32 volumes in the regular weekly series, there are many more volumes printed and I have all the texts marked from which I have preached. I sometimes make the outline of a sermon and then, when I turn to my Bible, I find that I have preached from that text and the sermon has been published—and I say, "That will not do for a Sunday morning." I do not want to have the same subject again more often than I can help. Sometimes, however, I find that the same text may be taken and a new sermon readily enough made from it, for there is a springing well in Holy Scripture, never exhausted, and the great congregation needs continually to come to hear repetitions of the same great Truths of God, though it is always the preacher's duty to seek for acceptable words in presenting it. Young man just beginning to preach—do not be afraid to stick to your texts—that is the best way to get variety in your discourses. Saturate your sermons with Bibline, the essence of Bible Truth, and you will always have something new to say!

But when I think of the great congregation, *how encouraging it is!* It is always good fishing where there are plenty of fish. We are bound to go and angle for a single soul, wherever there is one to be found, and some do great service for the Master who take the fish one by one. But what a delight it is to have the great seine net of the Gospel and throw it into such a lake as this, God guiding the hand of the fisherman all the while! Surely he should be a happy man!

But then, dear Friends, when we think of this great congregation, *what solemn thoughts come over our mind!* I come down to this platform, sometimes, and when I get another look at this great congregation, I am staggered. Time after time I have felt as if I could run away sooner than face this tremendous throng again and speak to them once more. O Sirs, to think of all these being dying men and dying women—and to think that this Gospel that I preach is needed by them all and may be refused by many with awful consequences—and may be accepted by some (it will be, thank God) with consequences of unutterable joy! To think that we shall have to give an account of how we have preached and how you have heard! To think that we shall all meet again at the Judgment Seat to give an account of every Sunday and every Thursday service! If Xerxes could not restrain a tear at the thought of his myriads of men passing away, who can look at a congregation like this without being moved with compassion? Yes, yes—it is not easy to preach to a great congregation so as to be able to say at the last, "I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

The sight of this great congregation gathered tonight *suggests many memories*. I recollect some dear ones that used to sit here, and there, and there, and there. I can almost see them now—some dear old saints with gray heads that used to be our glory—who are now with God. Some young and ardent spirits that were taken away before they reached their prime. You sit where sat some who loved your Master well—and served Him faithfully. Worthily occupy their places, beloved Friends!

But excuse me if I say no more upon this topic. My brain seems in a whirl as dissolving views pass before my memory in quick succession. If you want to see life and death, stand here. I feel like the captain of a vessel on the bridge. I am looking down on you who are the passengers and crew but yet, from another point of view, I seem to be looking at great waves that sweep by and more come, and others follow—a succession of changes, nothing abiding. How long shall we remain? How soon shall we, too, also go? Well, it is something to have preached Christ to this great congregation! It is something to believe that those who have not received Him are without excuse. It is much better to believe that many *have* received Him and that we shall meet them in Heaven, rejoicing in that glorious Sacrifice by which they have been cleansed from sin—in that dear Savior by whose life and death they have been quickened and made heirs of eternal glory! Oh, that this faith may be in us all and that we may all at last join in the general assembly of the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven!

III. I have only a few minutes left in which to expound upon the last of the points, THE SUGGESTED PRAYER. May I just give you an outline of what I would have said if we could have had more time? The prayer of the Psalmist is—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth"—the things which he had preached—"continually preserve me."

This prayer is *suitable for the preacher* and he prays it now. Taking David's words and making them my own, I pray to the Lord at this

moment—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."

The prayer is also *suitable for every Christian here*. Let me read it and let every Christian pray it now—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve *me*."

With a little alteration, *this prayer may suit you who are not yet saved*, but who desire to be—"Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord." Are you praying it? Is not this a good time in which to pray that prayer? The signs are all propitious. There is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." There are tokens for good abroad. There is dew about tonight. Now, therefore, pray this prayer if you have never prayed before—and God help you to claim the answer by appropriating faith!

It seems to me that this prayer was suggested to the Psalmist by at least three things.

First, it was suggested by *the great congregation.* David seems to say, "O Lord, there are so many others who need Your care. Let me not be lost in the crowd—withhold not Your tender mercies from me."—

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
You are scattering, full and free.
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing—
Let some drops fall on me, Even me."

Next, *the subject suggested it*. "Your truth, Your loving-kindness, O Lord. Let these preserve me. I hear of Your goodness—I cannot bear to miss it. I hear of Your truth—I would not be a stranger to it. Lord, bless me, even me!"

Then, again, *the future suggested, it*. The Psalmist expected to suffer great trials and serious afflictions and, therefore, he prayed, "Let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."

Now, as a congregation we have completed 25 years in this building, but we must not reckon that we have reached the end of our struggles, or even the end of our sins! O Brothers and Sisters, this is only a part of the way to Heaven. I think that I told you, once before, that some friends, when they raise an Ebenezer, sit down on the top of it and say, "Here we are going to stop." When this Tabernacle was opened, I remember that that night I put a sharp iron spike on the top of "the stone of help," that nobody might sit upon it—and I do the same again on the Ebenezer stone I now raise in remembrance of God's goodness! Let none of us sit down at the end of this 25th year and say, "We have come this far and here we are going to stay." Long nights of darkness lie ahead—there are giants to be fought, mountains to be climbed, rivers to be crossed! Who dreams of ease while he is here in the enemy's country? Out with your sword, man! You have not done with the battle. Awake, you that sleep! You have not come yet to the place of resting! This is the place for watching, praying, wrestling and struggling. Therefore do we cry, "Withhold not Your tender mercies from me." We are getting older! We are getting weaker! We are, perhaps, getting less wise! Who knows that all our years will bring us good news? They may bring us evil if we trust to our past experience. We need God with us now as much as we ever did! Therefore let us cry to Him, "From this night bless us more and more."

The poor Psalmist was in great trouble when he prayed this prayer. He says, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." Therefore he says, "Withhold not Your tender mercies from me."

He adds, "My iniquities have taken hold upon me." If there is one here whose conscience is accusing him and who is guilty before his God, let him pray this prayer because of his iniquities.

He goes on to say, "I am not able to look up." If that is your case—if you cannot, look up—pray the Lord to look down and cry to Him never to take His mercy from you!

David further says, concerning his iniquities, "They are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me." Well, when our heart does fail us, let us recollect the mercy which has helped us so long—and let us cast ourselves again upon that mercy for all that lies before us.

I am not going to venture upon any prophecy. I attended, on Wednesday, the funeral of our beloved Brother, Dr. Stanford. You may attend mine before this year is over—or I may attend yours. If you could draw up the curtain that hides the future, you would not wish to do it, would you? Trust the Lord so that if you live, you are prepared to live—but if you die, you are prepared to die1 I think that the best thing you can do is to do the next thing that comes to you and to do it thoroughly well. I was here last Monday. I had no rest from spiritual work from three in the afternoon till half-past nine at night. And about the middle of it I felt, "Well, I do not know how I shall get through this long long afternoon of seeing enquirers and candidates for Church fellowship." So I said to a Brother, "How am I to do it all?" However, there was a cup of tea in front of me and I said, "I think I will drink that tea—that is the next thing to be done."

Oftentimes that will be your best course, just do the next thing you can do when you are saying to yourself, "How shall I do if I live to be old?" When you go home tonight, eat your supper and go to bed to the glory of God. And when you get up in the morning, do not think about what you are going to do at night. Do what comes to you when you begin the day's work and keep right straight on. If you can see a step at a time, that is about as far as you need to see. Do not begin prying into the future, but just go straight on from day to day, depending on God for the mercy and Grace and strength of the day. That is the way to live and I am persuaded that is the way to die! Mr. Wesley said, "If I knew that I was to die tonight and I had an engagement to attend a class meeting, I would go to it. If I had promised to call and see old Betty So-and-So on the way back, I would call in to see her. I have then to go home and have family prayer. I would do that. Then I would take my boots off and I would go to bed, just as I would do if I were *not* going to die." Oh, do not let death be a sort of addition to the program which was not calculated upon—but so live that whenever it comes you will be ready for it—even if it comes while we are sitting here tonight! Then yours will be a happy life, a joyful life, a useful life.

Secularism teaches us that we ought to look to this *world*. Christianity teaches us that the best way to prepare for this world is to be fully prepared for the next. It elevates and glorifies the secular duties which

otherwise would trail in the mire if our conversation, our citizenship is in Heaven, even while we are on the earth! God bless you, Beloved! Let us praise His name for all the mercies of the past quarter of a century and trust His Grace for all the future.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 40.

These are the words of David—they are the words of all God's tried and believing people, but above all they are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. So complete is the union between Christ and the Believer that it is possible to describe them both at the same time. The experience of a child of God, sin alone excepted, is very much like the experience of the great First-Born. But Christ is always above us, so you will find words in this Psalm which belong to nobody but Jesus in all their fullness. Yet the title of it is, "A Psalm of David."

Verse 1. *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* You and I can say that and so could our Divine Master. Oh the wondrous patience of the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer! In that agony in the Garden when the bloody sweat showed how great was the wrestling of His spirit, He could say, "I waited patiently for Jehovah, and He inclined unto Me and heard My cry."

2. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* We can say that, too. We remember when we were deep down in the mire, when we found it impossible to rise, for the more we struggled, the more we sank. It was clay under us—miry clay—we could not hope for a rescue, but the arm of Jehovah lifted us out of the deep and set us on a rock and there we stood to sing His praises. Jesus Christ could say the same. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What a very different frame of mind He was in a few minutes afterwards when He said, "Father, unto Your hands I commend My spirit" and shouted, "It is finished!" All His travail was over. It is a great thing for us to have fellowship with Christ in His suffering which we could not have had if we had not, ourselves, also been brought up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.

3. *And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.* Well, God has done that for you and for me. He has put a new song into our mouths which Satan cannot take out of it—and we are singing it today—and others who hear it shall be encouraged to trust in God. But is this true of Christ? Listen to those words at the end of the 22nd Psalm where, beyond all doubt, it is the Savior who speaks—"My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay My vows before them that fear Him." So the Savior is the chief Leader of the holy song which goes up to God on account of redemption! He sings because God has delivered Him and delivered us. Both the Surety and the sinner are now free and the song goes up from both of them! Again you see what sympathy, what fellowship, we have with Christ.

4. *Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust, and respects not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.* Jesus knew the blessedness of faith. Remember how Paul quotes it, "I will put my trust in Him," as the language of the Redeemer, Himself. As Man, He had His fears. As Man there was worked in Him a wondrous faith in God. Oh that you and I might have the same trust and have no respect to the proud nor such as turn aside to lies!

5. *Many O LORD, my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.* We are not dealing with a God who never deals with us. Faith in God is no fiction. We have already had from God the most wonderful displays of power—we have been the recipients of great mercy springing from His thoughts of love toward us. It ought to be an easy thing for experienced saints to trust in God and I hope it has become so with us.

6-8. *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears have You opened: burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.* Now we undoubtedly get the words of Christ. Our Lord said these words and, therefore, He came to fulfill the Father's will and present on our behalf an acceptable Sacrifice with blood better than that of bulls or of goats. You and I have to say this in a very humble measure. We do not now bring to God any sacrifice of bulls or goats, but we do bring our whole heart to Him, trusting to be accepted, for He has written on those hearts His own Law and it is our delight to now do the will of God. This is the kind of sacrifice that God accepts—true, fervent, obedient hearts! God grant us always to present it.

9, 10. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained My lips, O LORD, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within My heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.* What a preacher Christ was! How He told out what He had learned of the Father! How fully, how constantly was He the Witness for God to men! Some of us following far behind, with unequal footsteps, nevertheless can say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation." It is a great comfort in feeling, if you are called to present the Gospel, that as far as you know, you have preached it and have kept back nothing that God has taught you. It will be a thousand mercies if any of God's servants shall be found clear at the last. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have only done what it was our duty to do. But there is still a sweet peace about fidelity when in the integrity of one's heart we can say that we have not refrained our lips as God knows. Then comes the prayer—

11. *Withhold not Your tender mercies from Me, O LORD: let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve Me.* If you have dealt honestly with God's Word, you may expect that God will deal graciously with you. Surely He would not send us to proclaim a message of mercy

and then deny mercy to us! That cannot be. But Brothers, when we have done our best for God and before God, yet we cannot boast—we still need mercy and we fall back upon the loving-kindness of God just as the sinner must do when he first of all comes to God. May we always be in that true and humble frame of mind which looks for nothing but mercy.

12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.* Now here is a passage in which the Master is not to be seen but only the servant! This is the man that said that God had put a new song into his mouth. He is a true child of God to whom God had had respect and whose prayer God had heard, yet see what a plight he has come to! Dear Friends, you and I may have to undergo this trial. Happy shall we be if we have such faith in God that even when innumerable evils compass us about, we shall remember the innumerable mercies of God, such mercies as the Psalmist had spoken of in the fifth verse. When our iniquities take hold upon us, what a mercy it is to think that Christ has taken hold upon us, too, and will never let us go! When our sins seem more than the hairs of our head and our heart is failing us, it is very sweet to feel that the depths of eternal love and of atoning merit have drowned even our innumerable sins—they are cast upon the head of Him that said "Lo, I come to do Your will." They are carried away and they have ceased to be through Him whose precious blood and glorious righteousness have made us accepted before God!

13. *Be pleased O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.* You may pray like that and yet be a true Believer. The man that is not in haste to be saved does not need to be saved at all. He that can put it off till tomorrow knows nothing about it! A true Believer, when he is crying for mercy, cries, "My case is urgent! Help me now, make haste to help me."

14-17. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, "Aha, aha. Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You: let such as love Your salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy, yet the LORD thinks upon me: You are my Help and my Deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.* "But I am poor and needy, yet"—oh blessed, "yet"—"Yet the Lord thinks upon me." He does not throw me a penny and pass on as we often do to the poor and needy! But He stops and thinks. Yet He makes no tarrying. He answers the cry of His people and comes in haste to deliver them!

—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 DOORS OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH
NO. 2917

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1876.

"Have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?"
Job 38:17.

Last Sabbath our spirits flew forward as far as the Judgment Day. We stood with wondering awe to gaze upon the Great White Throne and the fillet of gold about the head of the Reaper who gathered in the harvest of the earth. We trembled as we saw the other angel take the sharp sickle and reap the world's vintage and hurl it into the winepress of Jehovah's wrath where it was trampled underfoot until the blood of men flowed forth in torrents. [See Sermon #2910, Volume 50—THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.] Our excursion at this time will not take us so far in human history. We shall halt at a nearer stopping place. We shall not journey even to the Resurrection—only to the doors of the shadow of death.

The question is, "Have you seen the doors of the shadow at death?" And the answer implied is—"No." In this chapter, God is questioning Job in order to show him his inability and his ignorance. To each question which the Lord puts to the Patriarch, a negative answer is expected. "Have you entered into the springs of the sea?" "Have you walked in the search of the depth?" "Have the gates of death been opened to you?" "Have you perceived the breadth of the earth?" Job had done none of these things.

Well, then, Job, "Have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?" The only answer the Patriarch could have given or that we can give is, "No." We can get as far as the gates of death, but we cannot pry within. Apart from Revelation, we have no information about the dreary land beyond that land which lies enshrouded, as far as we are concerned, in perpetual gloom. We cannot tell when or how we, ourselves, shall die, so we know little of the dread mystery. The message will someday come to us that the pitcher is to be broken at the cistern, but when it shall come, we little dream. It may be much nearer than we think and, on the other hand it, may be farther off than we have feared. We are all, in this life, something like the prisoners confined during the dreadful French Revolution. They were shut in so that they could not escape—and every morning there came a man with a little slip of paper who read out the names of that day's victims—who were then hurried to the wagon which

was in waiting outside to drag off its weary load to death. So every morning comes the death angel into the world and he reads out the names of such an one and such an one. We miss our comrade who has been called and we grow so accustomed to the routine that, alas, we think too little of having missed him. But we are waiting, each one of us, till the missive shall come for *ourselves*—yet we know no more when we shall die than does the ox in the pasture, or the sheep in the fold.

Neither do we know *what it is to die*. We know, in a certain sense, what the act of death is, but what is the strange feeling with which the soul finds itself houseless, forsaken of the body which falls about it like a crumbling tenement? What is it to have the link severed which keeps the mortal bound to the immortal—the spiritual caged within the material? What that is, we do not know—neither has any told us. We have watched others passing. We have stood by the beside of the dying. We have witnessed the last gasp and still it remains a secret what it is to die! We only know that these gates of the shadow of death are so shut upon us that we cannot hold any conversation whatever with the world beyond, save only as there is an everlasting fellowship in the Person of Christ between all that are in Him, so that—

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make."

Indeed, we are so shut off from the other world that we never even dare to pry behind the curtain which God has thrown across the abode of spirits. There have been necromancers in all ages who have desired to intrude into these mysterious regions—who have pretended to have done so. Their craft is to be abhorred as Hell! Woe unto the man that comes near to them! They are, as far as Christians are concerned, to be utterly loathed, for, where the Lord has hung up a curtain and shut the door, it is not for you and me to meddle, lest in eating those sacrifices of the dead we are found to be having fellowship with devils and be cast down to share their doom!

"Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?" We are content to give the answer which Job must have given, that we have not seen them and do not wish to see them. Between those iron bars we do not wish to pry. What the Lord reveals we are content to learn from His Word, but we wish to know nothing more. Now, dear Friends, that being the case, we shall only in meditation go down to those gates as far as we may lawfully go—and speak only about what we may actually know, not dreaming or doting about things beyond our knowledge. There have been some poets who have sung of descents to Avernus and of the circles of the Inferno. You need not that I go through Dante's majestic conceptions, or tell how Milton sings of worlds unknown. Ours is a far less ambitious business. We have no poetry to make—we have simple facts to state.

I. First, then, we ask you to come down as near to the gates of death as we may, in mediation, VIEWING DEATH IN GENERAL for a few minutes.

Look up in vision to these terrible portals and do you not observe, as you stand before them, that these gates are always open? Never, day and night, are those gates of death shut, for at all hours there is traffic through them. Men die at midnight, as they did in Pharaoh's palace. And men die at noon, as the child did who said, "My head, my head," and whose father said, "Take him to his mother," and who then fell asleep in her lap. They die in springtime and the flowers sweetly waking from the earth adorn the hillock which marks their tomb. And they die in summer and know nothing of the sweet flowers that bloom and perfume all the air. They drop like autumn leaves and the winter, howling their requiem, bears many of them away. There is never a moment, I suppose, at any time when the fall of feet may not be heard by listening ears that are hard by the gates of death-shade. The dead have always been coming since Abel led the way—one perpetual stream, never ceasing day nor night.

Let us also remember *that multitudes have now passed through those iron gates!* You cannot count the hosts who have entered. The calculating machine might fail and the powers of mind utterly fail before the mighty total! We speak of them as the great majority and earth with her more than thousand millions has but a slender congregation of living persons compared with the congregation of the dead. What multitudes, I say, have passed through from the first day until now! Sometimes there has been a rush when death's jackals, the kings and princes of the world, have driven their prey in troops through them by means of bloody wars. At other times men in hosts have rushed through those gates pursued by plague or famine—and always by human decay or disease men have come up to these gates, always, always, always passing through. The stream of passengers through the gates of death goes on, on, on. While you and I are sitting here, they are stepping between the posts. Perhaps some dear to us are nearing the portals. We ourselves are, certainly, on the way, and at all times our fellow creatures are being swallowed within the gaping jaws which never shut!

If you will stop here a minute and look—and have eyes strong enough in the shade to *mark who they are that come*—you will see there a man leaning on his staff. But did you notice that there also went by him little children that had not yet learned to speak? You see the strong man come all of a sudden, running away from life. And you see the invalid who has long waited for his summons—you may count his bones as he passes down to his grave. Do you see yonder man? There is nothing special about him. He looks just like any other. He once was a king—there is still a little royal about him. Do you see that other man? He was once a beggar. He does not seem, now, a bit more beggarly than did the monarch! They have, neither of them, brought anything with them—they come here penniless—all of them, and they pass through with empty hands. Titles, grandeur, estates, position, fame—all are left behind. They

come a great crowd in a liberty, equality and fraternity of death—a common brotherhood that will never be realized in life. Do you see them going? In view of this general leveling, you may set small store on the distinctions of this world. I have come to declare that nothing is worth seeking after but that which will survive the tomb!

Through that gate you have seen many go in thought tonight. Will you please remember that *no one has ever returned*, with the exception of a few restored by miracle? They go through that way, but there are no steps backward. Gone, gone forever. Once the breath has left the body, I think that the soul shall not revisit its old haunts or know anything of all that it done under the sun. But whether that is so or not, it is certain that they will not come back in the old familiar form. They are gone. They cannot return. It is idle to weep and wish them among us again—floods of tears cannot restore them. As for the tree that is cut down, at the scent of water it will bud, but rivers of precious water from weeping eyes cannot cause these dead ones to live again.

Now, concerning these gates of the grave, we may say further that though they are thus thronged, *there are very few that ever come there as voluntary passengers*. Man dreads to die. It is right that he should, so long as it does not come to a fear that is bondage. Understand this—that God has implanted within us all the desire to live for right ends and purposes. There are a few that pass that way in a hurry or of their own consent. Ah, dreary souls that take away their lives! To what has a man come when he dares to contemplate such an insult to his Maker? He that gave you breath may take it back, but you may not give it up yourself! To die by your own hand is not to escape from suffering, but to plunge yourself into it forever, for we know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Therefore he that murders himself, if he knows what he is doing, gives sure evidence that eternal life is not in him! We must all go through those gates, but we must gallantly bide our time and take arms against the sea of trouble that now awaits us. Then at last, if we are Christ's—and all of us may be His and know we are His—when our Captain bids us come to Him, we will bow our heads and pass through the gates of iron, not fearing for a moment! Our Lord will come to meet us and our soul will stretch her wings in haste and fly fearless through the shadowed portals, nor feel anything of terror as she passes them!

Those thoughts may suffice about death in general.

II. Now, in the second place, let us go down to the doors of that death-shade and stand some moments VIEWING SAINTLY DEATHS. I wish only to speak simply about them.

First, I remark that *all saintly deaths are not pleasant to look upon*. Some of the grandest men who ever lived have died in a storm. Martin Luther's deathbed was troubled. I do not wonder that when a man has done such glorious mischief to Satan's dominions, he should not be allowed to enter into his rest without one more struggle with his foe! John Knox, again, had a fierce battle when he came to die. He found it

hard, though he triumphed at the last even as Luther did. And many that have served their Master well, instead of shouts of joy and singing of hymns in their departure, have had to lay hold with all their might upon their Crucified Savior in order to sustain their hope. There is something right about this, too—it becomes a lesson to us all—"If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" And if to die is sometimes hard work to a man who is known to be a true Believer and who has shown to others that he is really saved, what shall they expect in the hour of death who have no such confidence in God?

Yet, Beloved, standing at the doors of death tonight, I must confess that as far as I am concerned, of those I have seen passing through, who have believed in Christ, *most of the saints have passed through gladly*. They have entered the gates with a cheery note, with a song, or with a Hallelujah. I cannot forget the times in which I have been asked to sing at dying beds when I could not possibly have done it for very choking of sympathy with those about me. But the dying man has sung and the dying woman has joined sweetly in the hymn—and when we seemed to feel as if it might be too much for the failing strength—we have been asked by the saint who was ready to depart that we might sing another verse! While they have been—

"Sweeping through the gates of the new Jerusalem,"

they have wanted us to sing them Home! If I had to tell where I have seen the most joy on earth, I would certainly not say at the bridal feasts, for that joy has much that is flimsy about it. In many that partake in that festival, the sentiments are often unreal. But the joy of the dying man—the joy of the expiring saint—has something so deep, so sublime, yet so simple in it that I know not where to equal it, whether I am permitted to search in the palaces of kings or in the homes of content! The greatest joy on earth is, after all, the joy of departing saints. So you may stand at the gates of death-shade, and hear them sing as they pass through. Some of them you may hear saying extraordinary things. Haliburton cried, "Have at you, Death! Have at you, Death!"—as if he fought and conquered the grim foe without a fear. Others have shouted, "Victory, victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb!" in their last moments. There has been sorrow, but there has been far oftener joy!

Concerning the doors of the shadow of death, let me say that *there are stores of Grace laid up hard by those gates of the grave for saints when they come there*. You must not expect, dear Friends, to have dying Grace in living moments. You must not expect at this time to have Grace to die with, when, perhaps, God intends you to live another 50 years! What would you do with such Grace? Where would you put it? You shall have it when you come to die. Only trust in Christ, today, and do His bidding—when the dying time shall come—the dying Grace shall be afforded you.

In addition to this, I believe that God not only gives His people Grace to die, but, in their last moments, *some of the saints get visions of another world before they enter the gates of death*. I am persuaded that the glow and the glory that I have seen on some men's faces when they have been dying, have not been of earth—that the strange light that lit their features and the wondrous smile of ineffable delight with which they have fallen asleep—have not been things of time. They could not have been created by their present circumstances, for their surroundings have been all to the contrary. The radiance from the world beyond has been upon them. What strange things, too, they have said! Some of them have been hard to comprehend, for the expiring saints have spoken a language more of Heaven than of earth, as if they knew things which were unlawful for them to utter and must not speak so as to be understood. Stray notes from harps of seraphim they have caught and they have tried to sing them here, below, but have failed. Yet we have heard enough to let us know that God has partly drawn up the blinds and permitted them to see through the lattice and behold the King in His beauty. Angels, too, we doubt not, come to those gates of death. Why should they not? They came to Jesus in Gethsemane. They are bid to the care of the Lord's people, lest they dash their foot against a stone. I have no doubt that they minister to the heirs of salvation, for it is written that when Lazarus died angels carried him into Abraham's bosom. The angelic bands wait, I believe, at these gates of death to help the righteous in their last extremity.

Best of all, I should like you, as you come with me to these doors of death-shade, to notice that *there is a blood-mark right across the entrance*. If you look down, there is the print of a footprint unlike that of all the rest, for it is the print of a foot that once was pierced! Ah, I recognize that mark. My Lord has gone that way! I have not yet been down to the doors of death-shade, but He, my Savior, has been there. He has passed through them, indeed, and yet He lives! Therefore the joy of the Believer is that when he passes through, because Christ lives, he shall also live! And because Christ is risen, he, too, shall rise! I could not believe the Resurrection if it were not certain that Christ has risen. But if ever there was a fact in history that is well attested beyond all conceivable doubt, it is the fact that He who was put into the grave by the Jews and whose tomb was sealed, rose again from the dead on the third day! All His people shall also rise because He has led the way. O gates of death-shade, we dread you no longer since Christ has passed through your portals!

And see, Brothers and Sisters, for the Believer, *all around those gates of death-shade bright lamps are burning!* Do you not see them? They are lamps of promise. "When you pass through the rivers I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overflow you." "O death, I will be your plagues." You know how the Lord of the pilgrims has given the assurance over and over and over again, in all shapes and ways, that He

will not leave nor forsake His people, but that He will help them even to the end and cause them, when they walk through the Valley of the Shadow at Death, to fear no evil because He is with them.

The gates of the grave, then, as far as Believers are concerned, are not places of gloom at all! We ought often to go there. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our last hours—to antedate them and to die daily. Make a friend of death! Oh, go to the graves, not to weep, but that you may not weep when you go there! Often strip yourself and go through the rehearsal of your death, that when the time shall come it may be no strange work for you to die since you shall have died daily for, it may be, 50 years at a stretch!

III. Now, lastly, and very sorrowfully, a few words VIEWING THE DEATH OF SINNERS. Down to these grim gates the ungodly must go as well as the people of God. To every one of them is the lot appointed. Let us speak the truth about them solemnly and tenderly, with tears in our heart, though sad words are on our lips.

The death of ungodly people is not always terrible. There are many that die and are lost, of whom David says in the Psalm, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." They never cared for the House of God nor regarded the Sabbath. They knew nothing of prayer, or of faith. Their consciences have become seared. They played bravado with God and He has given them up, so when they come to die, they take it coolly enough. They "shuffle off this mortal coil" almost without a fear, and they that stand around say, "Oh, he died so sweetly—such a happy death." Ah me! Ah me! Ah me! Saints often die struggling—and sinners often die in dreadful peace! I say, "dreadful," for have you never noticed the stillness—the awful silence of nature before a storm, when there is not a breath of air and not a leaf stirs on the trees? The very clouds seem to hang still in mid Heaven and earth and sky get more quiet and still more quiet, and our very breath becomes intensely stifling in the dread stagnation—till with peal on peal the dread artillery of Heaven begins to shake Heaven and earth! Such is the death of many an ungodly man—a treacherous calm. Oh, what an awakening for him when in Hell he shall lift up his eyes, far from every hope of mercy! Pray God you may not die so. I should not like to die stupefied. I would prefer to be in my senses. Presumption is a drug which stupefies the soul and because of it men often die at peace, full many of them. But it were far better that they had never taken that dire drug, but could really look into the future, perhaps, even at the last moment, while their feet were sliding, so they might find Grace enough to start back and lay hold on Everlasting life that they might not descend into the abyss below! Because their eyes are blinded, there are many that die peaceably enough—and are lost.

Of impenitent men I may say that when they come to die, *many of them are not at peace.* A very large number of such people shrink back from the doors of death because, in the quiet chamber, memory begins to

work. Then the evil deed, the midnight scene, the neglected Sabbath, the unread Bible, the Throne of Grace forsaken—all claim to speak. And as the clock goes tick, tick, upon the wall, the mind begins to go over childhood, youth, manhood, married life and to remember and to bring up sin. It is not every sinner that is such a fool as to be able to remember a wasted life without some terror or regret! Fear, too, is generally busy, for the mind begins to ask whether the thought is pleasant to the dying person or not—"Where am I going?" And there is a something in man that does not let him believe that he is a mere animal. Look at your wife, man—you that believe all living men to be mere beasts. What is that dear body of your wife whom you have loved these many years? Well, principally so much water and so much gas. When that is taken away, there is a small residuum of earthy ash—that is all. And is that what you have loved—so many pounds of water and gas and earth?

No, Sir, you have not. You have loved a woman! You have loved a thing infinitely better than dead earth and water and gas. You know that. You do not believe that your mother is only mere water and gas and earth, nor your child, nor yourself! You cannot persuade yourself to accept such materialism as that! There is a something in this body that is better than this water, gas and earth—a something that will consciously exist when these have been dissolved. And there is that within all of us that makes us believe it whether we will it or not! Therefore, at the portals of death there comes into the mind the question, "Where am I going?" And if the heart cannot answer that question by saying, "I am going where Jesus is—I am going to my Savior, in whom I have trusted, who has washed me from my sin"—then fear comes up and the man begins to say, "Oh, how can I go forward? The Bible tells me I am going to judgment and I am unfit for judgment—that I am going to resurrection and what must it be for a sinful body like mine to rise from the dead? I am going to condemnation and already in my conscience I am condemned! How can I go? How can I stop? Ah, must I leave you, O earth, and cannot I enter you, O Heaven? Then where must I fly?" Not many ungodly men can manage to shake off such thoughts as these in the dread prospect of departure.

Let me say, further, that *near these gates of death-shade is a very difficult place in which to seek the Lord*. When a man gets troubled with memory and fear, and his body it racked with pain, he is very ill-fitted to listen to the voice of Jesus. I would not discourage a dying man for a moment from looking to Jesus. If he desires salvation, if he will but believe in the Christ of God, he shall have eternal life even at the last! But speaking from what I have seen, the most of men in the article of death are quite unfit for thought—quite unable to feel anything beyond the stabs of physical anguish—and quite incapable of faith. No man knows how far God's mercy goes, but if that mercy is given to faith, I cannot see how it can be extended to some dying men. Delirium, a wandering mind, an aching head—oh, these will give you quite enough to

do in dying without having to seek your peace with God! It is task enough only to die, to take a tearful farewell of those babes and of the partner of your life. It is enough to die without then having to begin to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Have you seen the doors of death-shade? If you have, you will not choose them as a place to repent in—you will rather choose the present time to seek the Lord—now while yet your mind is fresh and vigorous and He is waiting to be gracious!

I must not detain you more than another minute or two, but let me remind you that *at the doors of death-shade is the place of testing and the place of stripping*. The man comes there who has professed to be a Christian. If he is not, how the rags of his self-righteousness are torn off! Or he says, "I was no professor of religion. I was better than that! I was an honest man." Now it turns out, at last, that he was not even true to his God and his fancied honesty drops off him like a garment! Build castles in the air if you will, but death is a wonderful dissipater of all your magic! At the shadowy gates nothing will do for you or for God but reality. If the religion you have and the hope you have will not stand the test of self-examination and heart-searching sermons, certainly it will not stand the test of a dying hour. What a stripping time it will be! Now, my lord, you must take the last look at your crown—that will never encircle your brow again. Now look through the window at your broad estates—you will not be able to call a foot of it your own! Even the six feet of earth in which you lie will only be yours as long as the charity of your successors will permit you to slumber in peace. Good-bye to your money bags! Farewell to the market and the exchange! You have got your wealth with much labor, but you are forced to leave it now—every penny of it. None of it can go with you.

Worse still, *the gates of death-shade are the places of farewell*. An ungodly man has to bid, sometimes, farewell to a Christian wife. Kiss her cheek, man—you will never see her again. You have a Christian child, a dear child that has lately joined the church, but you are no follower of Christ. When you come to die, they will bring her to your bedside and you will have to say, "Good-bye, Mary. I shall never see you again, or if I do it, will only be as Dives, who looked up and saw Lazarus far away in Abraham's bosom, but with an awful gulf between." Some of you unconverted brothers, how will you like to be separated from your Christian sisters? Some of you daughters—how will you like to be divided from your father and your mother who will be in Heaven? Oh, all of you say, "We would like to meet in Heaven as unbroken families." Young girl. Young man. What if your name should be left out when Christ shall summon home His own? Certain it is that death-shade gates are the place of everlasting farewell. God grant you may never have to take such farewell of any of your kin who are in Christ, but may you soar up to Heaven and be raised with them when the trumpet of the archangel sounds!

Thus I have, as best I could, talked of the end of the earthly life. O Souls, prepare to meet your God, for you may have to meet Him before another sun has risen! I beseech you, by the living God, whose servant I am, postpone not repentance and faith, but now, while mercy's white flag is to the front and God waits to be gracious to you, bow before the Cross of Christ! Trust in Jesus and be saved! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 49.

The chief musician here bids us not to fear the ungodly. However high they may be placed, they are but dying men and when they die their hope shall perish with them. He gives a very graphic description of the deathbed and of the perdition of ungodly men.

Verses 1, 2. *Hear this, all you people; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor together.* Whenever God has a voice for men, it is meant for all sorts of men. No Scripture is of private interpretation. No warning is intended only for a few. Hear this, then, all you people. Whether you are low, you are not too low to listen to His voice. Or, whether you are high, you are not too high to be under His supremacy.

3, 4. *My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline my ear to a parable: I will disclose my dark saying upon the harp.* Mysteries are to be preached, but they are to be preached with an earnest endeavor on the preacher's part to make them plain. If it is a dark saying, yet let it be open and, if music will help, so let it be. Whatever there is to be taught, let it be plainly taught to the sons of men.

5. *Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* We may read it, "The iniquity of my *supplanters* shall compass me about." There may be some dark days when the wicked seed, whose delight it is to bite at the heel of the Seed of God, will gather around us. And we think, perhaps, that they will be too many for us. But why should we fear them? Who are they? They are great and mighty, perhaps, but if they are but an iniquity—we need not to be afraid of them. Our righteous God is our defender.

6, 7. *They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.* They may be rich as Croesus, but they cannot save a comrade from the grave. They may pay the physician, but they cannot bribe death. How little is the power of wealth, after all! The rich man cannot even save his baby that he loves so well. He certainly cannot save his fellow sinner.

8. *(For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases forever).* There is no redemption but one. And if a soul is unredeemed, the hope of it ceases forever.

9. *That he should still live forever, and not see corruption.* For the bodies of the great are fed upon by worms as readily as the bodies of the paupers. They may embalm the body, if they will, to cheat the worms, or put it into a coffin of lead, but little can they do with it. It is a costly business, after all, and is the exception to the rule. Even the wisest cannot live forever so as not to see corruption.

10. *For he sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish and leave their wealth to others.* Whatever men may have gathered, the wisest cannot find an invention which will enable him to take his treasure with him. He must leave it behind. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there."

11. *Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names.* Man is so fond of immortality that while he foolishly rejects the reality of it, he clings to the name of it—and he builds a house which he ties down by deed to his heirs, and his heirs' heirs, "forever," as he calls it. And then he calls the land by his own name that it may never be forgotten that such a worm as he once crawled over that portion of the earth!

12. *Nevertheless man being in honor abides not.* He passes away. His grace, his lordship, his reverence must lie in the grave! How ridiculous grand titles seem when once it is said, "Earth to earth; dust to dust; ashes to ashes." "Vain pomp and glory of the earth." Indeed we may say in the presence of the shroud and the mattock, and the grave and the worm—"Man being in honor abides not."

12. *He is like the beasts that perish.* Not like any one beast, but like any beast that perishes. He does but live and, as far as this world is concerned, he is gone.

13. *This their way is their folly: yet their prosperity approves their sayings. Selah.* When men have lived only for this world and die and pass away without any future worth the having—without any hope of Heaven—yet still they report it in the papers that he died "worth" so much—as if it were wonderful to have so much to leave! And they speak of the shrewd things he used to say—mostly very greedy things and very grasping things. And though he was a fool, after all, for aiming at the "main chance," as he called it—while he missed the real main chance, namely, the salvation of his soul—yet his posterity inherit his folly with his blood and they approve his sayings.

14. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave.* They lead a worldly life and die a worldly death—quiet, contented with this world—no thought of the world to come.

14. *Death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.* That everlasting daybreak shall shed a light on many things. And then the master and the lord who tyrannized over the poor and needy shall find himself under the foot of those he trod upon! "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning."

14, 15. *And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me. Selah.* What a happy confidence! Blessed are those who, by a living faith in a living God, know that their soul shall be received into its Maker's hands! But woe unto those whose confidence lies in the treasure they have accumulated and the acres they have purchased.

16, 17. *Be not you afraid when one is made rich when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dies he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.* They will not know him in the next world to be the squire, the peer, the prince. Death is a dreadful leveler. Envy not the great man of this world! "His glory shall not descend after him."

18. *Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise you, when you do well to yourself.* Not "when you do good," mark, for often when you do good, men will criticize and censure—and the better the deed, the more sure is it to provoke the contempt of many. But "men will praise you when you do well to *yourself*." "A shrewd man, that! That is the kind of man I want to be! See how he prospers! A smart, pushing fellow! Oh, yes, he is the man for a friend." Whenever there is an aggravated selfishness that accumulates to itself like a rolling snow-ball, men are sure to praise. It is the irony of life.

19. *He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.* They are sleeping in the grave. So shall he. And beyond the grave there is nothing but darkness for him whose heart is set on this world.

20. *Man that is in honor and understands not, is like the beasts that perish.* Understanding and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom—not earthly honor—is our only succor in the day of death.

—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.

FACING THE WIND
NO. 2918

A SERMON
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"But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good,"
2 Thessalonians 3:13

THE Christian church ought to be an assembly of holy men. Its members should, all of them, be eminently peaceable, honest, upright, gracious and Christlike. In the main and in spite of all our failures I trust these characteristics may be seen in the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, still, from the beginning there has been a mixture. Judas in the sacred college of the 12 Apostles seemed to be a prophecy to us that there would always be troubles in Israel. It was so in the Church at Thessalonica to which Paul wrote two Epistles, part of the last of which we have just now been reading. There was evidently, then, a class of people who because the charity of the church was very large, imposed upon it and, under pretense of great spirituality, refused to work, busying themselves instead in doing mischief according to the old adage that—

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

We sometimes complain of our churches now. I very greatly question whether an average church of Christ in modern times is not considerably superior to any church that we have read of in the New Testament—certainly very superior to some of them. In the Church at Corinth they tolerated a brother who lived in incest. I trust there is no Christian church, at least in our own denomination, that would endure such a thing for an hour! And when this man had been put out by Paul's command and proved penitent, then the Church at Corinth, which was a church that did not believe in ministry, you know, (there is a class of Christians of that sort, now, which resembles greatly these Corinthians), because they had once put him out, refused to receive him again though he was penitent and wanted to return.

I scarcely know a Christian church that would refuse to receive into its membership again, a brother who had erred if he showed signs of true repentance. The churches of today, compared with the early churches of Christ, can say that the Grace of God has been extended to us, even as unto them—and we now have no right to be continually crying down the operations of the Holy Spirit in the churches by making unfair comparisons between them and the churches of old. They had their

faults, as we have ours. They came short in many respects, even as we do. Instead of bringing a railing accusation against churches as they are, the best thing is for everyone of us to do his best in the sight of God to make them what they should be, by seeking our own personal sanctification and endeavoring that the influence of a holy life shall, in our case, help to leaven the rest of the mass.

Paul turns from the consideration of those who had grieved him in the church to speak to the rest of the brethren and says to them, "But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good." In expounding these words we shall, first, notice that our text contains a summary of Christian life—it is called, "doing good." Secondly, we shall see it gives out a very distinct warning against weariness and it hints at some of the causes of weariness in the Christian life. In the third place, I shall close the discourse by giving some arguments to meet the reasoning of our soul when, at times, it seems to plead its own weariness as an excuse.

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, our text contains A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is "doing good." This is all you have to do—you that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and renewed in the spirit of your minds. You have to spend your lives in doing good!

Now this is a very comprehensive term and we are certain that it includes *the common acts of daily life*. You perceive the Apostle had been speaking of some who would not work—"working not at all," he says, and he commands them that they should labor and should eat their own bread. It is clear, then, from the connection, that the work by which a man earns his daily bread is a part of the doing good to which he is called. It is not only preaching and praying and going to meetings that are to be commended. These are useful in their place. But doing good consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods, tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work—sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs if you happen to be a domestic servant. Doing good is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life—attending carefully to them and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers—but in everything are seeking to serve God. I know it is difficult to make people feel that such simple and ordinary things as these are doing good. Sometimes stopping at home and mending the children's clothes does not seem to a mother quite so much "doing good" as going to a Prayer Meeting. And yet it may be that the going to a Prayer Meeting would be doing ill if the other duty had to be neglected. It is still a sort of superstition among men that the cobbler's lap stone and the carpenter's adze are not sacred things and that you cannot serve God with them—you must get a Bible and break its back at a revival meeting, or give out a hymn and sing it lustily in order to serve God.

Now, far am I from speaking even half a word against all the zeal and earnestness that can be expended in religious engagements. These things you ought to have done, but the other things are not to be left undone, or to be depreciated in any way whatever. When Peter saw the sheet come down from Heaven, you remember it contained all manner of beasts and

creeping things. God said even of the creeping things that He had cleansed them and they were not to be counted common—from which I gather, among a great many other things, that even the most menial of the forms of service—even the most common actions of life—if they are done as unto the Lord, are cleansed and become holy things and are by no means to be despised. Do not cry down your church, but make your house also your church! Find fault as you like with vestments, but make your ordinary smock-frock your vestment and be a priest in it to the living God! Away with superstition! Kill it by counting every place to be holy, every day to be holy and every action that you perform to be a part of the high priesthood to which the Lord Jesus Christ has called every soul that He has washed in His precious blood!

That these common things are doing good is very evident if you will only think of the result of their being left undone. There is a father and he thinks that to go to his work—such common work as his—cannot be especially pleasing in God's sight. He means to serve God and so he stays home! He is upstairs in prayer when the factory bell is ringing and he ought to be there. He hears that there is a conference in the morning, so he attends that—and then he has another period of prayer—he spends all the week like that and then on Saturday night there is nothing for his wife. Now, you see, directly, that he has been doing ill because it was his duty to provide for his own household. And if a man, being a husband and a father, neglects to find daily food for his wife and little children, all the world cries shame on him! Does not Nature, itself, say, "This man cannot be engaged in doing good"? It cannot possibly be so. Though at first sight the ordinary toil for daily bread looks to be a very commonplace thing, yet if you only suppose it to be neglected, the leaving of it out is no commonplace thing, but brings all manner of mischief.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the Christian woman were to become so very devout—so ashamed to be like Martha—so certain not to be cumbered with much serving that she would not serve at all in Martha's direction, but always sat still and read and prayed, and meditated leaving the children unwashed and nothing done for the household? The husband—perhaps a worldly man—may be driven away from the house by the lack of comfort in it and sent into ill company. He may, indeed, he ruined. You can all see that whatever pretence there might be of doing good about the wife's conduct, it would not, *it could not really be doing good*, for the first business of the Christian woman placed in that position is to see to it that her household is ordered aright, even as Jesus Christ would have it. Oh, dear Friends, it is an art to balance duties so as never to sacrifice to God one duty stained red with the blood of another duty that you have destroyed in getting this one ready for the sacrifice! Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. Give to husband and child and to the household the share that is due and then—I will not say give God the rest—but give God that service and all besides! He would not have you bring robbery for burnt offering and He will accept that as done to Him

which you have, as a matter of duty, done to others. So then, common life is included in the term, "doing good."

I think, also, from the connection, that anyone would conclude that *attending to the poor and doing good to all that are in need* is included in the term, "doing good." The connection seems to say that there were certain persons in the Thessalonian Church who had abused Christian charity—living upon it instead of working and eating their own bread. The Apostle says, "But you, brethren be not weary in doing good." Do not say, as some do, "There are really so many imposters that I shall give nothing at all. I have been deceived so many times and have given to persons who have only put my gift to bad use, that I do not intend to open my wallet any more, but shall keep what I have or lay it out in some other way." "No," says the Apostle, "you must not do that—be not weary in doing good." It is the part of a Christian to seek as much as lies in him to do good unto all men—and especially to those of the household of faith. It is one of Christ's precepts to "Give to him that asks of you and turn him not away who would borrow from you." A general spirit of generosity to those in need is synonymous with the Gospel—the reverse may be suitable to the Law with its rigor—but not to the Gospel with its noble-hearted love! Christian Brothers and Sisters, you must remember those who are in need as being, as yourself, a part of the body of Christ! As much as lies in you, "comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men."

So we see that within the range of "doing good" is included a kind and tender consideration of all those who are in need.

But, Brothers and Sisters, the circle of "doing good" which is to be the Christian's life, though it makes a wide sweep, includes *the things that are nearer the center.* "Doing good" means that I love the Lord, my God, with all my heart—that I commune with Him—that I dedicate myself to Him and give all that I have to the extension of His Kingdom and to the honoring of His glorious name!

If you want to know what doing good is, I will give you a few hints and tests. *Everything is doing good that is done in obedience to a Divine command.* If you have God's Word for it, it is doing good. Some may call you imprudent, but it is doing good if you do what God bids—and it is prudent, too. In the long run you shall find it so. When God says, "Do this," let it be done at once—that is doing good. And if He says, "You shall not," the doing good is fleeing from the accursed thing! Let not your own wisdom and prudence ever fly in the teeth of a positive command of God! When you are doing what God bids you, you are doing well—and you need have no difficulty in defending yourself. God will not allow that man ever to be confounded who makes the will of God to be the law of his life. So may it always be with us.

Taking the first condition for granted, in the next place *everything is doing good that is done in faith.* "Whatever is not of faith is sin." That is to say, even though the thing you do is right, if you do not believe it to be right it is not right for you. There are many things that I may do that you

must not do because you do not think it would be right to do them. Therefore you must refrain. Even, I say again, if the thing is not in itself a wrong thing, yet if it *seem* wrong to you, it *will* be wrong to you—therefore do it not. Paul could eat the meat that had been offered to idols without being troubled in his conscience, but there were some who thought that if they ate it, they would be partakers with the idol. Paul did not think so and, moreover, he said, "An idol is nothing in the world. Whatever is sold in the shambles, I eat asking no question for conscience sake." Still, "he that doubts is condemned if he eats." If he has his doubts about it and thinks he should not do it, he must not do it. He will not be practicing the art of doing good if he does that concerning which his conscience raises any scruple. If you can say with Scripture warrant, "God permits this and I can do it, feeling that He permits it," you are doing well in so doing.

Again, *everything that is done out of love to God is doing good*. Ah, this is a motive that sways no man till he is born-again. But when God, who is Love, has begotten us into His own likeness, then we love God and love becomes the motive of all our actions. I hope, Beloved, this is the mainspring of our doings and goings—that you would be God's servants or God's ministers because you love God—that you seek to bear up under poverty or to use with discretion and liberality the riches with which you are entrusted because you love God. If a man loves not God, how little there can be of doing good about him! Yes, he lacks the very root of it all if he has not love to God.

Doing good includes doing what we do in the name of the Lord Jesus. How this should stop some professors in a great many actions. Have we not the exhortation, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"? If there is anything you cannot do in the name of the Lord Jesus, do it not, for to do it will not be doing good! In the name of the Lord Jesus you may go to your daily labor, for He went to His for 30 years and worked in the carpenter's shop. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may undertake all the duties of your calling if that calling is a right one. But if it is not, you have no right to be in it at all, but should get out of it at once! You may do in the name of the Lord Jesus all that men would do if you are a saved soul and your heart is right towards Him.

Still further, *doing good includes that which we do in Divine strength*. There is no doing good except we get power to do it from the Holy One of Israel. The Spirit of God is the Author of all true fruit in the Christian life. Except we abide in Christ and receive the sap of the Sacred Spirit from Him, we cannot bring forth fruit, for, "without Me," He says, "you can do nothing." But to work in the Divine strength is doing good. Poor and feeble though it is, if I do it out of love to Christ and with the little strength I have, acknowledging that I would not even have that but for His Grace, my act is an act of doing good. Even though I have to mourn my failures and mistakes, nevertheless I may feel that with a true heart I am striving to glorify God and that I am surrendering myself to the

Divine impulses so as to be ready to do everything as unto my Master. Then am I living as a Christian should live in doing good.

Brothers and Sisters, we are very great at wishing well and "if wishes were horses, beggars might ride." If wishing well meant anything, there would be some very great saints about! But the practice of a Christian should be to do what he knows should be done—doing good. Resolving well is a very common habit. Suggesting well and criticizing well are tempers of mind familiar to most of us. Some of you could take a high degree in admirably criticizing everybody else that does anything—and putting your own hands into your pockets and keeping them there! Talking well is also a great deal more common than doing good. But the Christian life lies in none of these things. If God has given you the life of the Spirit, you will not bring forth only buds and blossoms and flowers, but there will be fruit—the fruit of doing good!

So much concerning the first point.

II. Now let us turn to the second point which is this—there is A WARNING AGAINST WEARINESS IN DOING GOOD. Is it possible, you say, "that a child of God can ever grow weary of doing good?" I suppose so, for I remember another text which says, "Let us not be weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." And the marginal reading of this text, itself, is, "Faint not." I suppose that blessed as it is to be doing good and to be living unto God, yet while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak and there is a danger of our getting weary in the most happy exercise.

The first danger is mentioned in the context. There is a tendency to cease from doing good *because of the unworthy receivers of our good deeds*. As I have already said, there were those in the Thessalonian Church who received the gifts of the faithful and who sat still and did nothing that was of any good. They became a pest and nuisance to their neighbors. Now, the natural tendency of others in the Church would be to say, "Well, I do not know what others think about it, but I shall give no more." "No," says the Apostle, "be not weary in doing good." It is bad that that man should make a bad use of your gifts, but it will be worse, still, if he should induce you to harden your heart! It is a loss, perhaps, to give to a man who wastes, but it will be a greater loss not to give at all! I remember one who spoke on the missionary question one day saying, "The great question is not, 'Will not the heathen be saved if we do not send them the Gospel?' but, 'Are we saved, ourselves, if we do not send them the Gospel?'" And so it is with regard to Christian gifts. It is not so much a question how far this or that man is benefitted or hurt by what we give, but what about ourselves if we have no heart of compassion for a Brother or Sister who is in need? What about the hardening influence on our own soul if we get, at last, into a condition that we say, "I am weary in having done what I have done because I see to what an ill use it is turned"? I believe that to be a common temptation of the present age and I see that all the political economists and the newspaper men almost as good as tell us that it is one of the most wicked things we can ever do,

to help the poor at all—it is indeed a dreadful thing unless we do it through that blessed machinery of the poor Law which seems to be the next thing to the Kingdom of Heaven in their estimation! There seems to me to be, however, a very long distance between them and I trust that Christians will continually, by their actions, bear their protest against the steeling of the believing Christian's renewed heart against their fellow men because they seem to pervert the doing good into evil.

We have need of warning *because idle examples tempt others to idleness*. If there were in the Church at Thessalonica some who did not work, there would no doubt be others who would say, "We will do the same. Since that fellow never does a hand's-turn, but only goes about and talks and makes a good thing of it, why should not I do likewise?" "No," says the Apostle, "be not weary in doing good. Do not give up your daily work. Do not give up any form of service because others have done so, for you can see, if you look at them, that they turn out to be busybodies. You do not need to become mischief-makers such as they are! Therefore shun their conduct—avoid it with all your might—and do not weary in doing good even if you see others who apparently prosper by doing nothing at all."

Again, I think the Apostle would say to us, "Be not weary in doing good *because of unreasonable and wicked men.*" We read about them just now and I made a remark about them. [In the *Exposition* printed at the end of the sermon.] Whenever anybody gets very earnest for Christ and lays himself out for God's Glory, there is sure to be a little lot of unreasonable and wicked men who get round him. The birds go flying through the orchard and they do not say a word to one another till they come to a cherry tree where the cherries are very sweet and ripe. Then they all fall at once and begin to peck away with all their might! So of an ordinary Christian who is doing little for his Master—nobody says much, except, perhaps, "He is a very good respectable man. Never bothers anybody with his religion." But let him become earnest—let his fruit be ripe and sweet before the Lord and, believe me, more birds than you ever thought were about will come—and they will peck at the ripe fruit. That which God approves most will be just that which they most violently condemn! If you get into such a case as that, my Brothers and Sisters, be not weary of doing good because of your critics. Does it matter, after all, what men think of us? Are we *their* servants? Do we live on the breath of *their* nostrils? Do they think that their praises inflate and exalt us? Do they dream that their censures can make us sleep a wink less or even ruffle our spirits? I trust, if we know the Lord aright, we are of the mind of Ann Askew, who, after she had been racked, sat up with every bone out of joint and, as full of pain as she could live, said to her tormentors—

"I am not she that lists
My anchor to let fall
For every drizzling mist.
My ship's substantial."

And she bore out the storm and did not intend to cast anchor because of her persecutors! Glory be to God when He shall have delivered you altogether from the bleating of the sheep and from the howling of the wolves, too, and make you willing to let your enemies say their say—and say it over again as long as it pleases them—but as for you, your heart is fixed to go on in what you know to be doing good till your Master, Himself, shall say to you, "Well done!"

Once more. There is a temptation to cease from doing good not only because of unreasonable and wicked men outside the church, but, according to the context—and I am keeping to that—*because of busybodies inside the church.* Some of these are men—some of them are not. There are busybodies about everywhere. They do not speak out very distinctly—they whisper and they do it with a sigh! Perhaps nothing is said, but there is a shrug of the shoulders. "So-and-So is an excellent woman." "What a wonderful work she is doing for Christ!" "Well—yes, but—such-and-such a man! How greatly God honors him in the winning of souls." "Yes—ah, yes—I *suppose* it is so." That is the style. And then straightway there are ambiguous voices sounding abroad and depreciating things said! I have known some of tender heart that have suffered—I dare not think how much—from the insinuations of idle people who, I hope, did not know the suffering they were causing or they would have run to give help instead. But there is so much of this thoughtless babbling of innuendos even among those who, we trust, are God's people, that if any such are here I would earnestly entreat them to give up that bad business! And if any Brother or Sister here has suffered from such people, do not suffer more than you can help it, for this idle chatter is not worth a thought!

Do not let it prey upon your mind because, well, there is nothing in it! All the dirt that people can fling will brush off when it is dry. You do not expect, do you, to go to Heaven on a grassy path that is mowed and rolled for you every morning with all the dew swept off? If you expect that, you will be mistaken. You may even learn something from what these busybodies say about you. It is not true, of course, but, Brother, if they had known you better, they might have said something worse that *was true*! They picked a fault where there was none. Well, but you know there *are* some faults that they do not know and had not you better amend them lest they should pick those next time? The eagle eyes of envy and malice should even be sanctified to our good to keep us the more watchful—and to make us more earnestly seek to be diligent in doing good. Courage, faint heart—it will all be over, by-and-by, and we shall be before that Judgment Seat where the talk of friends and the threat of foes will go for nothing! We are being examined here by this and that, but what matters the result of the examination? The Lord weighs the spirits and if in those great scales we shall, at last by Divine Grace, escape from having the sentence pronounced, "You are weighed in the balance and found wanting," it will be a theme for everlasting joy! Let us look to that verdict and not care for the praise or blame of men.

III. Now I am going to close by bringing up A FEW ARGUMENTS TO KEEP MY DEAR BRETHREN WITH THEIR FACES TO THE WIND. I want you that are going uphill for Christ and find the wind blowing very sharp, to set a hard face against a strong wind and to go right straight on all the same. If you have to fight your way to Heaven through every inch of your life, I would encourage you to keep on. May God's Spirit give you strength to do so!

And first, you say, "Oh, but this service—keeping your garments always white—is hard work. *Doing good needs so much effort.* I am afraid I shall be weary." Now, I would ask you to remember that when you had just begun business and you needed to make a little money, how early you rose in the morning, how many hours you worked in the day! Why, you that are getting gray now knew that in those days everybody wondered at you because you threw such strength into everything—you did the work of two or three men! What was all that effort for? For yourself, was it not? My dear Brother, can you put all those exertions forth for yourself and cannot you put out as much effort for Christ? That was only for the worldly things—shall there not be something like that in the spiritual things? It is enough to shame some people—the way they toil to get on in business and then the little energy they show in the things of Christ!

I used to tell a story of a Brother I once knew who, at the Prayer Meeting, was accustomed to pray in such a way that I was always sorry when he got up, for nobody could hear him. And I always thought that he had a very feeble voice. I had indistinctly heard the Brother mutter something to God and I felt that we had better not ask him again, for his voice was so thin. But I stepped into his shop one day—he did not know that I was there and I heard him say, "John, bring that half-hundred weight." "Oh," I thought, "there is a very different tone in the business from what there is in the Prayer Meeting!" It is symbolical of a great many people. They have one voice for the world and another voice for Christ. What weight they throw into the ordinary engagements, but what little force and weight there is when they come to the things of God! If that should touch any Brother here, I hope he will carefully take it to himself. I am afraid it has to do with a great many of us and I put it thus—if for the poor things of this world we have often manifested so much vigor, what ought to be expected of us—of us who are under such obligations to Divine Grace—in the service of such a Master in reference to eternal things?

"But," says one, "such *doing good requires so much self-denial*. I trust I am a Christian, but I sometimes hesitate because to deny one's self again and again and again and to lead a life of constant self-denial is, I am afraid, too much for me." Yes, but, dear Brother, recollect what Paul bids you remember. He was thinking of the men that went to the boxing matches and the men that went to the races among the Greeks—how they had to contend for a crown that was only of parsley or laurel. Weeks and months before they ran, they kept under their body, brought it into

subjection and denied themselves all sorts of things they would have rejoiced in, till they got the muscles well out and by degrees pulled the flesh off their bones to get them into condition to enter into the arena. Now, says the Apostle, they do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible! I am sure the hardships to which some of those champions in the public games put themselves were enough to make the cheek of professors mantle with crimson when they think that the little self-denials of their life are often too severe for them! May God in Infinite Mercy help us not to be weary in doing good since these stand before us as examples!

"Yes," says one, "but I grow weary because, though I could deny myself, continued *doing good brings such persecution*. I am surrounded by people who have no sympathy with me. On the contrary, if they could stamp out the little spark of spiritual religion that I have in me, they would be glad to do it." Now, my dear Brother, be not weary in doing good because of this, but look up yonder! I can see in vision a white-robed throng. Each one bears a palm branch and together they sing an exultant song of triumph. Who are these that thus wear a ruby crown?—

"These are they who bore the cross,
Faithful to their Master died,
Suffered in His righteous cause,
Followers of the Crucified!"

Take down Master Fox's *Book of Martyrs* and read a dozen pages—and after that see whether you are able to put yourselves on a par with the saints of old. "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Your persecution is only a silly joke or two against you, a bit of frivolous jesting—that is all. These things break no bones! O Sirs, ask Divine Grace to enable you to rejoice and to be exceedingly glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's sake! For so they prosecuted the Prophets that were before you—therefore be not dismayed.

But another says, "No, Sir, I could bear anything for Christ, but do you know I have been trying to do good to my neighbors, to the children of my class, and to the others—and I really think that the more I try to do good to people, the worse they are—*doing good is followed by so little result.* I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing and, you know, Sir, that hope deferred makes the heart sick. They seem to refuse and reject my message though I put it very kindly." Now listen to me, if ever you listened in your life! You must not—you *dare not* complain of this because—and I know you well, there once came to your door one who loved you better than you love these people—He knocked with a hand that had been pierced for you and you refused Him admission! He knocked and knocked again, and said, "Open to Me, for My head is filled with the dew and My locks with the drops of the night." But you would not open to Him. Then He went His way and you were much worse than before. Sometimes you said you would open, but you did not. And by the month together—ah, perhaps I do not exaggerate when I say, by the *year* together—"that Man of Love, the Crucified," came to you again and again

and again and pleaded His wounds and blood with you and yet you refused Him! You have now admitted Him, but no thanks to you—you would never have done it if He had not put in His hand by the hole of the door and then your heart was moved for Him. Then He came into your soul and He is still supping with you. Now, after that, you must never say a word when they shut the door against you! You must, say, "This is how I treated my Master. It has come back to me and in good measure, but not pressed down or running over. And so I am well content to bear rebuffs for His sake since He bore them from me, even from me."

"Still," says one, "I have gone on and on, trying to do good in my sphere. I have given much and I still desire to do the same, but I do not appear to get much return—*doing good does not earn much gratitude.* If I had some thanks I would not so much mind. Indeed, I do not seem to be doing any good, either. If I saw some results I would not be weary." Once more I speak and then I am done. Do you not know that there is One who thus every day bade the showers descend upon the earth? And when they fell, He did not say to the raindrops, "Fall on the crops of the grateful farmers and let the Christian men have all the benefit of the shower." No, He sent the clouds and they poured out the rain that fell on the churl's land and watered his property! Tomorrow morning when the sun rises, it will light the blasphemer's bed as well as the chamber of the saint. And tonight God lends His moon to those that break His Laws with a high hand and defile themselves as well as to those who go forth on ministries of mercy. He stops neither rain nor sun nor moon, nor makes a star the to shine less, nor sends less oxygen into the atmosphere, or less health in the winds because man sins!

And there are whole nations where, when God gives His bounties, idols and images are thanked and not the gracious Giver! There are other nations where, when God makes the vine to produce its fruit, the people turn it into drunkenness. And when He bids the corn be multiplied, they turn it into gluttony and surfeit and pride. Yet He does not restrain His gifts. Therefore you keep on even as the great God continues to work unweariedly. He has done good to you and to thousands like you. If you were to skip doing good to men, what would you be saying to God? "Lord, this race does not deserve that You should do it any good. Do not do any more good." Your conduct in saying that your fellow creatures do not deserve that you should do them any good says, in the most emphatic manner, that you do not think God ought to do them any good, either, for if God should do them good, much more should you who are so much less than He. And if you stop your hand and say, "It is no use doing any more good," you, in effect, pray God never to do any more good to your fellow men! That is an inhuman prayer and tempts God. I pray you let not the action which incarnates such a prayer ever spring from us again!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ has blotted out our sins. He has bought us with His blood! We belong to Him and whatever service He gives us to do, He will give us the strength to do it! So let us go back to our work with joy. If we have been grumbling—if we have

complained at all—let us ask His forgiveness and buckle our harness on anew, saying, "Master, You shall not find me skulking, but as long as the day lasts and You give me strength, I will reap in Your fields, or work in Your vineyards according to Your bidding, thankful for the great honor of being permitted to do anything for You and even for having to put up with inconvenience for Your sake. Seeing that You did endure so much for me, why should I not bear something for You?"

You may have to face a gale of wind, but you may face it gaily in the strength of your Lord! Keep on and keep on keeping on! You shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you, over all the oppositions of men. Why, be comforted, beloved fellow laborers, and let no Brother's heart fail him because of anything that has happened to him. Let no Sister's hands hang down, but, "be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I pray God to lead many others to enlist in this service, but they must first believe in Jesus Christ. When they have done so, then they may also come and share in the blessed warfare—and they shall have their reward! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake.

—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.

"WHOSE GOODNESS NEVER FAILS"
NO. 2919

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1905.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1876.

"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep."
John 10:11.

THESE words were spoken when our Lord was among His own people. Perhaps as you hear them there comes a whisper in your soul, "I wonder whether that is true now? If the Lord Jesus in His flesh were here at this moment, in the midst of us, and if He said, 'I am the Good Shepherd,' we might find it easy to believe it. But He has gone. What assurance have we that it is the same now, when He is no longer among us?" I answer, "Dear Brothers and Sisters, we know it is true because Jesus Christ is 'the same yesterday, today and forever.' That in itself were enough, but we have the added assurance that in this place He meant to say it was so, for, if you notice, He was evidently looking to the future when He said, 'I am,' seeing that He added, 'The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep,' when as yet He had not done it. There was an interval between the time when He said these words and the laying down of His life upon the Cross. As He went on further in His discourse and said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also, I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd,'

He was looking to the future you see. He spoke of Himself—I was almost going to say in momentary unconsciousness of His Deity without meaning, perhaps, to speak as God. He says, *'I Am,'* using the very name of Jehovah and speaking of the future as though it were present. It was as if He had said, 'I am the Good Shepherd and I am going to gather in the wandering people that, as yet, are not of My flock.' So that, the meaning and force of the *'I am,'* evidently runs right on till He has gathered in all the other sheep that were not, when He spoke the words, included in His fold. Yes, He means you to understand that He is speaking the same words as much to you, Brothers and Sisters, as to Peter and James and John. To you He is saying, 'I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.'"

First, let us look at our great Master's claim, "I am the Good Shepherd." Then we shall observe the proof of it. That, though it had not been completed when He uttered these words at the first, is now complete—"He gives His life for the sheep." When we have talked rapidly on these two points, let us try and chew the cud and see if there is not something to be found here of very practical use to us. On these

Communion nights the time is very short—therefore I must try to speak without many words upon any one point.

I. First, then, I say, let us look at CHRIST'S CLAIM, "I am the Good Shepherd." He means us to understand three things. It is as if He said, "I am a Shepherd," and then, "I am a *Good Shepherd*," and, last of all, "I am *the* Good Shepherd"—that Good Shepherd who is spoken of in the Old Testament.

"I am a Shepherd," He says first. That is to say, *He stands in the same relationship to His people as a shepherd does to his flock*. He owns His people—every one of them belong to Him. He prizes them because they are His—sets a value upon each of them. He takes care of them, remembering them both night and day. His heart is never off them and because of His inward love there is an outward goodness which He constantly extends to them. He protects them from the wolf. He guards them from a thousand dangers. He sees to the supply of all their needs. He guides them in the right way. He brings them back when they wander. He strengthens them when they are weak. He carries them when they are too feeble to go. He sees that they are a weak flock, a silly flock and a wandering flock—therefore is He their strength, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all. No creature, perhaps, has more diseases than a sheep—except a man. No creature is more dependent upon another and higher creature than a sheep is, for it seems only half itself till it is under the care of man. And none of us, Brothers and Sisters, can be said to be less dependent than the sheep are, for we are not true men till we get near to Christ. We are without life and without strength till we find life and strength in Him. As a sheep would be sure to wander and, wandering, would be very likely to wander into a desert—would be sure not to better itself—would be certain in the end to come to nothing—so is it with us. Without Him who is our Shepherd we would wander farther and farther into misery and sin—and our ruin would be certain. We are more dependent upon Christ than sheep are upon the shepherd. You see, then, why Christ says, "I am a Shepherd." Towards His own people whom He has redeemed with precious blood He stands in the position of a Proprietor, a Leader and Guide, a Father, a King—all of which may be condensed into this one word—a Shepherd.

But He is not only a Shepherd, He is a *Good* Shepherd, for *what He does He does well*. Never does He neglect His flock. Not one ever perished because He forgot it. Since He never forgets, not one ever perished at all. He is a Good Shepherd because all that ought to be done—all that *can* be done—all that may be wished to be done towards His sheep—He does. Never shepherd so intensely threw His heart into His calling as Christ throws His heart and soul into the sacred calling of the Shepherd of Israel. He gives for His people all that He has, yes, He gives Himself! His power is their defense. He lifts up His hand and says, "I give to My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." His Wisdom is their guidance. His Love is their perpetual shield. His Infinity is their storehouse. His Omniscience is their protection. Human and Divine are You, O Christ, in Your Person,

but the Human and the Divine are both alike for Your people. You have a thousand of offices, and You exercise them all on the behalf of Your own flock. Oh, Christ is a Good Shepherd, indeed! He is skilled as well as zealous in the art of shepherdry. He knows all the diseases of the flock, for He, Himself, has felt all their griefs and woes. He has studied human nature oh, how long! He knows it by a personal experience and therefore knows it in such a way as it can be known only by Himself. He is a Good Shepherd. Was there ever imagined one that could be compared to Him?

But then He says, "I am *the* Good Shepherd." Emphasis is to be laid upon the fact that *He is supreme and sufficient for all the needs of His people*. There have been other shepherds appointed by Him that have, in their measure, been good, but He is *the* Shepherd—the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He it is of whom we read that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in Glory. None of us are *the* shepherd. We have to take our little share of the work beneath His eyes and do it for His sake, though never to our own satisfaction. It will be a joy to us, indeed, if He shall be satisfied with us and say, "Well done." But all the under shepherds in the world put together are poor things compared with *the* Head Shepherd of the sheep! He is the Good Shepherd of the sheep—preeminently good—good beyond all that are good! The Shepherd of the shepherds, as well as the Shepherd of the sheep. Good because the whole company of the faithful, if they have any good in themselves, received it from Him. "I am *the* Good Shepherd."

Now that being the meaning of the words, let us see Christ's claim in this chapter. Observe how He works it out. He says, if you notice the verse that comes before the text, "The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." See, then, He is our Good Shepherd *because He gives life to His sheep*. No shepherd can say about his flock what Christ says about His. "I have given all these sheep of Mine the life that they have." What a Good Shepherd must He be!" They were dead—dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision," He says, "but I have given them life." Listen to this, you that are the sheep of His pasture—you have spiritual life, but He gave it to you! Lift up your eyes and bless Him that your heart ever came to know what repentance is, what faith is, what prayer is and what praise is, for now that you live unto God, you see that it was He that quickened you. To your Shepherd you owe everything! We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. It is He that made us, He that new-made us—not we ourselves.

Do you notice how He adds, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly"? So, Beloved, if you now feel cold and dead, I ask you not to look to yourself, or to the pasture in which you are at the moment, or to the under shepherd who seeks to care for you, but to Him, the Chief and Choice Shepherd! He gave you life at first and He will give you more of it, that you may have it abundantly. If there is any one of you whose heart is leaping for joy because the love of God is shed abroad within you by the Holy Spirit—Brother, Sister, you

have got all that from Him! Bless Him for it! If, on the other hand, another one is mourning because he feels the life within him to be so feeble—dear Friend, you may have it strengthened by Him who gave it at the first! All the praise and glory must be to your Good Shepherd who is, indeed, good because the very life of His flock is His gift—and their increase in life is worked by His Sovereign Power. Oh, how good You are, dear Lord, Author and Source of our very being!

Our Lord shows us His Good Shepherdry further on when He says, "He that is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flock; and the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep." So see, secondly, the Good Shepherd is good *because He cares for the life which He has, Himself, bestowed*. First He gives it and then He protects it. The wolf is always around about the fold. When we do not hear him howling, yet we know that he is seeking to find an entrance somewhere. When he gets in, it is said that he comes to kill and to destroy—and what can poor sheep do against a wolf if the shepherd is away? And what would you and I do against Satan in the world and in the temptations of the flesh if Christ were away? We would soon fall a prey to the wicked adversary. But our good Master cares for us.

You know that precious promise, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? Though the simile is changed, the meaning is the same. Our Savior—our blessed Shepherd—by night, though the frost is upon Him, watches His flock. And by day, though the sun lights on Him with its fervent heat, He still watches. His very life seems to be nothing to Him in comparison with the protection of His people. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what battles our Shepherd has had with the wolf for us! I need not go into the story of our glorious David's prowess, even for the little lambs of His flock. But He may say truly to His Father, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear" because they came and "took the lamb out of the flock." Jesus takes even the feeblest from between the teeth of the foe and will not suffer one to perish because He cares for us! You know the meaning of caring for us, do you not? Well, I do not think that I can explain it except by asking you to think of what it is to care for your children. That is how the Lord Jesus cares for you. As for the children, poor little dears, they cannot take care of themselves—nor can you, though you try hard to do it. And as your little children leave their cares with you and you care for them, you may leave your cares with your Shepherd. It is a very comprehensive thought. Your care springs out of your love and that love makes you think of the welfare of your family. But your care is not all thinking—you are actively engaged for them, too, and before they even know their needs, you supply them. In fact, they hardly know they have any needs because you never leave them unsupplied long enough to let them discover that they need anything. You meet all their needs by caring for them. Even so does Jesus, the Good Shepherd, care for His

people. He gives them life, increases that life, cares for that life and protects it from all harm!

But just read on and you will see still further what a Good Shepherd He is. "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep." That is to say, "As much as I and My Father know each other, so do I and My people know each other." He is the Good Shepherd because He lives among His sheep, He treats them as His children and so cares for them that He actually has communion with them. Sheep understand a good deal of what the shepherd says. There is a shepherd's language which you and I do not understand, but the sheep do. They know his whistle. They know his frown. They know the motion of his hands. He has a language which he speaks to them. When Jesus Christ says, "I know My sheep," it means not only that He knows who are His and who are not, but that He knows all about each one. He knows your trouble at this instant, dear Friend—your infirmity, your sin, your sorrow. He knows you a great deal better than you know yourself and He sums you up and understands you much better than the dearest friend you have. He never misunderstands you—He knows you so thoroughly. Oh, it is a wonderful word, that—one of those great deeps into which I drop my plumb line but cannot find the bottom—"I know My sheep." It means that He owns them. He knows them so that in the Presence of God and of the holy angels, He will say, "Yes, those are My sheep." What? That one with the torn wool? That one with the lame foot? That one with a split ear? There is not much beauty in any of them. Yet the Shepherd will not be ashamed of even the least. "It is Mine," He says, "and though it is not beautiful to any besides, it is beautiful to Me, for I bought it with My blood and I have fought the lion on its behalf and, therefore, it is very dear to My soul." He knows His sheep. A man can scarcely enter into the feeling of a sheep, can he? And yet Jesus Christ, though He is God, makes a stoop of condescension and enters into the feeling of the poorest and the most ignorant—yes, and the most sinful of all His children! Bone of their bone does He become, so intimate is His union with them.

But then He says, "I am known of Mine." Now we might think that a sheep cannot know much about the shepherd, but they do. They get to love him. Among the eastern flocks there are often sheep that are peculiarly attached to the shepherd. They always follow at his heels—they never seem to care so much for the pasture as they do for him. They are always first and, I may add, generally fattest, for they that keep nearest to him are pretty sure to get the sweetest bits of grass. And so, in the Church of God there are some that keep near the Shepherd and that know Him well. And all His people know something of Him. What a condescension this is—that the Good Shepherd so comes and lives among His people that He not merely knows *them*, but teaches them to know *Him*. Blessed be His name for this! Try whether you cannot drink in the glorious meaning of this deep mystery!

But yet farther—and to close this point—our Lord is a Good Shepherd *because He gathers all His sheep*. Read the 16th verse. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." While His eyes were on the Jews, His heart was on the Gentiles, too. He is a Shepherd who is not content with the ninety-nine, but when He counts the flock over and knows there ought to be a hundred, His heart begins to care for the lost one—and He folds the 99 and lets them rest. But, as for Himself, He gets away upon the mountain's bleak side so that He may find the lost one. Ah, my Lord, You are a Good Shepherd, indeed—a much better Shepherd than any among Your Church—Your workers—are! We often forget the wandering one. We get a church together. Perhaps the building is full and we have too little missionary enterprise to look after the masses that are in ignorance. We see England bathed in the Light of the Gospel, but feel little zeal for sending the Word to the distant heathen lands. It ought not to be! It is not so with Christ, for if He has an elect one, be he where he may, He knows him and His eyes are on him—and He must bring him in!

I wonder whether there is someone here tonight that He must bring in? You did not think when you came in to the Tabernacle that Christ was seeking you, but, perhaps My Lord Jesus has bought you with His precious blood and His Father gave you to Him from before the foundations of the world! And perhaps He brought you here that you may know this and come to Him tonight. Thus says the Lord, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Come, poor Wanderer—come to the Good Shepherd's feet and lay yourself down all helpless and forlorn! He will put you on His shoulders and carry you back rejoicing! Is He not a Good Shepherd, giving life, sustaining life, defending life, knowing life, teaching life to know Him and going after poor wanderers to bring them to Himself? That is Christ's claim.

II. Now I can say but very little, in the second place, about CHRIST'S PROOF OF HIS CLAIM, for I have already proved it. "I am the Good Shepherd," He says. "The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." Christ has given His life for us many times over. If I read the text without referring it to the one act of His death, it seems to me to be very full of meaning. In Heaven He gave His life for them. He had a life in Heaven, such as we may guess at from a distance, but can never fully understand. He dwelt as God inhabiting the praises of eternity but you know He gave up that life for us. He laid aside—

"That most Divine array,
And wrapped His godhead in a veil
Of our inferior clay."

To leave the harps and hymns of Heaven for the sorrows and sins of earth was giving up His life for His sheep.

When He was here, you know *while He lived on earth He gave His life for the sheep*, for every moment of that life was spent for them. There was a connection between His private life in the carpenter's shop and their

salvation—an intimate connection. In His public life what did He strain all His powers for, but this—that He might seek and save that which was lost! For His people were those prayers on the cold mountain side at night! For His people those earnest pleas in the midst of the crowd by day! For them the weary journeys! For them the hunger and the thirst! For them the homelessness which forbade Him to have a place where to lay His head! He gave His life up to them as long as He was here.

Then *one dark night did He give His life for His sheep in the sense*, I doubt not, intended here. On that dread night—you know it—that night to be remembered, for it was the night of God's Passover, the Shepherd went round His flock and the sheep were sleeping, but there came the wolf and the Shepherd knew his snarl. The sheep, all startled at the howls, were scattered—they forsook the Shepherd and fled. That night He had enough to do to meet the wolf. But He stood at the fold to watch the sheep and let them all go in safety. And then He confronted the grim monster who leaped into the fold thirsty for the blood of the sheep, but the Shepherd caught him and then came a desperate struggle between the two. The shepherd did bleed and sweat, did bleed and sweat and bleed again. Great drops of blood fell to the ground, but He held the monster fast and firm. Our Great Shepherd was wounded on His head, on His shoulders, on His hands and feet—and one awful fang tore open His side, but He held the wolf—held Him till He had slain him! Then, dashing down his body to the ground and putting His foot upon him, He shouted, "It is finished!" But in the same moment, the Great Shepherd fell. In slaying our foe He had, Himself, been slain! But scarcely had the Shepherd touched the earth than, as if reanimated, up He sprang again and said, "I lay down My life that I might take it again; therefore does My Father love Me because I lay down My life for the sheep." You know that story and need not that I tell it again at any length. But, oh, love Him! Love Him! Kiss His wounds! Worship this blessed Shepherd who has conquered your foe and delivered you from the jaw of the lion and from the paw of the bear—and set you forever safely in His fold! "The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

He is still giving His life. The life that is in the Man, Christ Jesus, He is always giving for us. It is for us He lives and because He lives, we also live. He lives to plead for us. He lives to represent us in Heaven. He lives to rule Providence for us. He lives to prepare our mansions for us, where we are going. He lives that He may come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may also be. Truly the Good Shepherd has proved His claim—"He gives His life for the sheep."

III. Now let us finish by trying to GET SOME JUICE OUT OF THESE THINGS, as I hope that we have done as we have gone along.

First, dear Friends, if the Good Shepherd gives life, *let us try and get life abundantly*. Sometimes I wish I could leave off preaching any sermons and do as I have seen the sergeant do when he is drilling a lot of men. He only says a word, "First position," and they take up the position! "Second position," and they take up that position. He has not a lot of

eloquent talk, but he just tells them what to do. Now then, try if you can, to take up your position. More life is to be had. Breathe the prayer, "Good Shepherd, You have given me life—give it to me more abundantly! May I know You more, love You more, trust You more, serve You more and be more like You. Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your word."

That will do. Go on. Take another position. If He is the Good Shepherd, *let us feel like sheep who have a Good Shepherd*. How do they feel? I do not think I know a sight that is more peaceable and happy than that of flocks at eventide when they have been gathered into a good pasture, or are folded among some prolific root crop. They have eaten as much as they can and they lie down on the grass to rest. No care enters their woolly heads. They have nothing to fret about. They might have if they could worry about the future as some of us do. Will there be turnips enough tomorrow? When there is dry weather, will there be grass enough? There is that butcher—when will he come? If they could understand me, I could suggest no end of cares and doubts and fears to sheep! But it does not enter into their constitution. I wish it did not enter into yours and mine! The shepherd cares for the sheep.

Dear Brother, dear Sister, will Jesus Christ care for you? I have heard of men that have kept sheep and cattle who have let them starve. You do not often hear of such things, for self-interest leads men to cherish their sheep. But I never heard of Christ neglecting any part of His flock. Come, then, let us feel quite quiet in His care. May the Lord help us to be so! Away with your doubts and fears and cares. There, begone, begone, all of it! What is the use of it? It never gave me any pasture. O care and anxiety and fretfulness, you did never feed me, nor strengthen me, nor help me! You have worried me and weakened me, but you have done nothing else. Begone! As for us, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ is our Shepherd, let us begin to say, "I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still water. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 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." That is a happy religion, is it not? And it is a very important thing that all Christians should be happy. The enjoyments of Believers lie very near their holiness. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Now, Brothers and Sisters, do not begin behaving like dogs, but try and be such sheep as you ought to be with such a Shepherd!

Next, *let us be His own*. Jesus Christ says of the hireling, "whose own the sheep are not, for he leaves the sheep," and in that He implies that when He tends the sheep, they are His own. Come, then, let us be His own! Brother, Sister, have you ever given yourself up wholly to Christ—altogether to Christ? I am afraid we sing a great many things that are not true. I have heard you say—

"Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love My God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all."

I leave it to your own conscience whether you get anywhere near that—anywhere near it at all. We say that we belong to Christ and we are not our own, but bought with a price. Do we live as if it were true? Come, let us take up the position of being altogether Christ's own sheep. If the sheep could speak it would say, "There is not a fragment of wool on my back that belongs to me: there is no part of me that is my own. I belong to my shepherd, and I am glad to have it so." You belong to Christ as absolutely as that.

The next thought to take up is, *let us try to know more of Him.* He says, "I know My sheep and am known of Mine." Let us then know Him better. You know how you come to know a man by getting into his company, by hearing his words, by marking his actions, by telling him your secrets and letting him tell you his secrets. Come and know Christ in this fashion. Let your head be on His bosom and your whole self come into communion with His blessed Self. Ask for that Grace tonight while you are around the table. Say, "Good Master, You know me. Let me know You. Oh, let my communion with You be as nearly as possible equal to that which You have with Your Father and Your Father with You, that we may be one together."

The next and last is, *let us love Him more.* Did you notice how He says in the 17th verse, "Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again." Let us make another verse and say, "Therefore do My people love Me because I lay down My life." Jesus did not say that, but let us make it true. Oh, how we ought to love our dear and ever-blessed Lord! Do you feel love stirring in your bosom? Perhaps you say, "I wish I did feel it more." I am glad you say that. I think that is often as far as we can get. I do not, I cannot love You, O Lord, as I ought—

"Yet I love You and adore—
Oh for Grace to love You more!"

I am persuaded that the man who loves Christ best is just the man who is most discontented with his own love. When a man lives wholly for Christ, he is the very man who still looks for something yet beyond and desires to serve Christ still more. Now, indulge your love tonight! Sit still and meditate on His love—enjoy His love! Say to yourself—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me!
Even me!"

And then add, "I am so glad that I can say that I love Him. He knows all things and He knows that I love Him." Just let those two seas meet. "Seas," did I say? I must not say that. Let the little brook of your love to Him flow into the mighty *ocean* of His love to you—and so let them blend and join! I have seen the Thames flowing on in its majestic course toward the sea and every here and there a little hill drops into view for a while, but the meadows stretch between. The mighty river and the brook go side by side, but as they flow on, at last they melt into one. So let my poor soul's love tonight flow in the same course with the great love of Jesus till at last it melts into His and life becomes, "Not I," but "Christ in me" and my soul be forever content!

Now I have done, but I hope the Lord Jesus has not done. We are going to hold the Communion service and there are many of you that are going away, and going away rightly, too, because you could not come to the Table of the Lord without being hypocrites. You know that you do not love Jesus and have not trusted in Him. As you go away I pray the Good Shepherd to go after you—and before you reach your houses tonight I pray that He may get such a grip of you with those strong but tender hands of His, that He may never let you go till He brings you, also, into His fold! If not here, yet somewhere else, for I am sure that in this house He has other sheep which are not yet of His fold, whom He must bring that there may be one flock and one Shepherd! May He bring you in tonight, for His mercy's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23; ISAIAH 40:9-11; EZEKIEL 34:11-25.

We shall view Christ in the office of a Shepherd and the first passage we read sets before us faith proving Christ in that office—accepting Him, trusting Him, following Him.

Psalm 23:1-2. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.* Can you say that for yourself, dear Friend? There is the sweetness of it. The words in themselves are noble, but it is the *experimental acquaintance* with their meaning which is the real honey of life. If you can use these words and lay the emphasis upon the personal pronoun, you are one of the happiest out of Heaven!

3-6. *He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* There is the Believer realizing Christ in that gracious office as the Shepherd of His people. Now let us see how our glorious Shepherd is set forth in prophecy.

Isaiah 40:9-11. *O Zion that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lamb with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* This office of Christ makes glad the hearts of those who have to preach it! To lift up our voice and to proclaim to others the good tidings is grateful service. It is the joy of the Church that Jesus, the Lord God Almighty, is strong for the defense of His people and, at the same time, tender towards their infirmities. Let us rejoice and be glad in Him!

Now let us hear what our Shepherd says by the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel. After He has been complaining of the hireling shepherds—the false ones who sought the fleece and not the flock, who did not feed the sheep nor care for them, nor had any tenderness toward them, He goes on to show what He will do for His own.

Ezekiel 34:11,12. *For thus says the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so, will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.* What a glorious promise! Christ's elect run here and there in the darkness of their ignorance, into sin of every kind but He will find every one of them! There is no jungle so thick but Christ will track His own through it. There are no bogs of sin so dangerous but Christ will traverse them and find every lamb of His flock! And if through your backslidings, O people of God, you have wandered far from Him, yet He perceives you with those eyes which sees in the dark as well us in the light—and He will follow after you and bring you back. Blessed be His name!

13, 15. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there they shall lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.* A beautiful image of that peace of mind, that complete repose that perfect contentment, that sweet satisfaction, that Divine fullness which is the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of Believers when they are gathered to Christ!

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.* It is a sweet thing, then, to be one of the needy ones of the flock because you see all the promises run that way. But, if we feel ourselves to be very strong and great, we are in a dangerous state, for then there is no promise for us. The only word concerning us is—"I will destroy the fat and the strong."

17, 18. *And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?* Truly there are some vain-glorious Christians who not only will not receive the Gospel, themselves, but actually find fault with it, insinuate doubts into the minds of others and prevent the simple-minded people of God feeding on the pasture which the Lord provides for them! See one of the evils of being great and strong in your own esteem—you are pretty sure to despise the very pasture which was quite good enough for you

when you were weaker and feebler. That very Truth of Jesus Christ which was marrow and fatness to you when you were hungry, comes to be despised as the manna was by the children of Israel when they called it "light bread." There is no savor in it that you should desire it. Blessed, blessed hunger that makes the Word of God to be always sweet!

19-25. *And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.* What perfect assurance for Christ's flock when, in the very place where the wolf once ranged, they shall be able to lie down and sleep in perfect safety! Happy people, with all their weaknesses, who have Divine Strength to be their protection! O my Soul, seek no other strength than this, but learn the Apostle's logic and his true Christian philosophy so that, like he, trusting in the Mighty Shepherd, you will be able to say "When I am weak, then am I strong."

—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.

ELECTION—ITS DEFENSES AND EVIDENCES
NO. 2920

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1862.

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance...And you became followers of us, and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit."
1 Thessalonians 1:4-6.

AT the very announcement of the text, some will be ready to say, "Why preach upon so profound a Doctrine as Election?" I answer, because it is in God's Word, and whatever is in the Word of God is to be preached! "But some Truths of God ought to be kept back from the people," you will say, "lest they should make an ill use of them." That is Popish doctrine! It was upon that very theory that the priests kept back the Bible from the people—they did not give it to them lest they should misuse it. "But are not some Doctrines dangerous?" Not if they are true and rightly handled. The Truth of God is never dangerous—it is error and reticence that are fraught with peril! "But do not men abuse the Doctrines of Grace?" I grant you that they do! But if we destroyed everything that men misuse, we would have nothing left! Are there to be no ropes because some fools will hang themselves? And must cutlery be discarded and denounced because there are some who will use dangerous weapons for the destruction of their adversaries? Decidedly not! Besides all this, remember that men read the Scriptures and think about these Doctrines and, therefore, often make mistakes about them. Who, then, shall set them right if we who preach the Word hold our tongues about the matter?

I know that some men who have embraced the Doctrine of Election have become Antinomians. Such men would probably have found other excuses for their misdeeds if they had not sheltered themselves under the shadow of this Doctrine. The sun will ripen the noxious weed as well as the fruitful plant, but that is not the fault of the sun, but of the nature of the weed, itself! We believe, however, that more persons are made Antinomians through those who deny the Doctrine than through those who preach it. One evidence of this is that in Scotland. You will scarcely find a congregation of Hyper-Calvinists—the simple reason being that the Church in Scotland holds entire the whole Doctrine upon this matter and her ministers, as a rule, are not ashamed to preach it fearlessly and boldly—and in connection with the rest of the faith.

Take any Doctrine and preach upon it exclusively, and you distort it. The fairest face in the world, with the most comely features, would soon become unseemly if one feature were permitted to expand while the rest were kept in their usual form. Proportion, I take it, is beauty—and to preach every Truth of God in its fair proportion, neither keeping back any nor giving undue prominence to any, is to preach the whole Truth as Christ would have it preached! On a Gospel thus entire and harmonious, we may expect to have the blessing of the Most High. So much by way of preface, not by way of apology. It is not my custom to offer any apology for speaking the Truth of God!

I. WHAT IS THIS DOCTRINE OF ELECTION? Let us try to understand it as spoken of in the text—"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

There is such a thing as election. Any man who should deny that man is a free agent might well be thought unreasonable, but *free will* is a different thing from free agency. Luther denounced free will when he said that "free will is the name for nothing." And President Edwards demolished the idea in his masterly treatise. God is the universal Agent and does as He wills—and His will is supremely good. He is the superlative Agent and man, acting according to the devices of his own heart, is nevertheless overruled by that Sovereign and wise legislation which causes the wrath of man (that agency in which the creature cannot govern himself) to praise Him and the remainder thereof He restrains. How these two things are true I cannot tell. It is not necessary for our good, either in this life or the next, that we should have the skill to solve such problems. I am not sure that in Heaven we shall be able to know where the free agency of man and the Sovereignty of God meet, but both are great Truths. God has predestinated everything, yet man is responsible, for he acts freely and no constraint is put upon him even when he sins and wantonly and wickedly disobeys the will of God! But so many as are saved, you will say, are saved because they believe. Certainly it is so! It is most true—God forbid I should deny it—but why do they believe? They believe as the result of the working of the Grace of God in their hearts. Since every man who is saved confesses this, since every true Believer in the world acknowledges that something special has been done for him more than for the impenitent, the fact is established that God does make a difference. No one ever heard it laid as an impeachment against the Lord that He has made such a difference, so I cannot see why He should be impeached for intending to make that difference—which is the Doctrine of Election! I am saved, but I know it is not because of any goodness in me. And if you are saved, you will freely confess that it is the distinguishing love of God that has made you to differ. The Doctrine of Election is simply God's intention to make the difference between people which you know exists. While He gives mercy to all, He gives more mercy to some so that the mercy already received shall be made effectual to their eternal salvation.

This Election of God is Sovereign. He chooses as He wills. Who shall call Him to account? "Can I not do as I will with My own?" is His answer to every quibbler. "No, but, O man, who are you that replies against

God?" is the solemn utterance that silences everyone who would impugn the Justice of the Most High. He has a right, seeing we are all criminals, to punish whom He will. As King of the universe, He doubtless acts with discretion, but still according to His Sovereignty. Wisely, not wantonly, He rules, but always according to the counsel of His own will. Election, then, is Sovereign.

Again, *Election is free*. Whatever may be God's reason for choosing a man, certainly it is not because of any good thing in that man! He is chosen because God will do so. We can get no further. We get as far as those words of Christ, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight," and there we stop—for beyond that no philosophy and no Scripture can take us.

As it is Sovereign and free, so *Election is irreversible*. Having chosen His people, He does not cast them away nor call back the word that is gone from His lips, for it is written, "He hates putting away." He is of one mind and who can turn Him?

Once more, Election *is effectual*. For "whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

And this *Election is personal*, for He calls out His children one by one by their names. He calls them even as He leads out the stars and so He brings them, every one, to the Father's House above.

We have thus given a statement as to what this Doctrine is. There we will leave it. Our present objective is not so much to expound the Doctrine as to strike a blow or two at certain errors which are very common and which spring out of it. I know, dear Friends, there are some who are so afraid of this Doctrine that the mention of it produces alarm. If they were to meet a lion in their way, they would not be more terrified than they are when they see this Doctrine in Scripture or hear it from the pulpit!

II. Therefore, secondly, we will NOTICE WHAT ARE THE DEFENSES OF THIS DOCTRINE and try, if we can, should you be laboring under any distress of mind about it, to remove your difficulties.

Will you please remember, then, that *this is not a point which you can understand at the commencement of spiritual and religious life?* You would not teach your children, I suppose, to say their prayers backwards and begin at, "Amen." And you are beginning at the wrong end when you want, first of all, to know your election instead of commencing with repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! Election is a lesson for the more advanced students. Faith and hope must be learned, first of all, in the infant class to which we all must go if we would be wise unto salvation.

Now, if a child should have a book of algebra put into his hand and should puzzle himself and say, "I shall never get an education, for I cannot understand this." And then take down some ancient classic and say, "I cannot comprehend this, either," you would say, "Dear Child, you have nothing to do with these yet! Here is a sampler book for you—a primer. Here you have A, B, C—learn this, first, and then, step by step,

you shall attain to the rest." Even so it is with us. Simple trust in Christ is the first thing you have to understand. After that you shall know the high, the sublime and the glorious Doctrine of God's Decrees—but do not *begin* with these! You will mystify and ruin yourself—you will lose your way in a fog and get no good thereby.

Again, it is very certain that whatever this Doctrine may be—and we will have no dispute about it just now—*this Doctrine cannot possibly be inconsistent with certain plain promises in God's Word.* Such promises as these—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Why, I might quote by the hour together some of these promises which are as wide as the poles—invitations that must not be narrowed, exhortations which are addressed to every man and woman under Heaven—in which every one of them is bidden to hear and live. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters." You know the class of promises to which I allude. Now these are the Words of God which are for you—get hold of them—come to Jesus Christ with them in your hands and rest assured the Doctrine of Election, instead of pushing you back, shall stand like the servants about your father's table to make music while your whole being shall dance to the glorious tune! It shall be like a dish upon the table at the feast of the returning prodigal, of which you shall eat to the very full! It shall by no means repulse you or show anything to you which may keep you from hoping in Christ.

Once more, it is quite certain that whatever it may be, *this Doctrine of Election does not deliver you from your duty.* Now what is your duty? "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." So much is this your absolute duty that, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed." This, more than anything else is the reason of men's condemnation! The Scripture says this is the one great sin. Of the Spirit of Truth we read that "when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin—of sin because they believe not on Me." Very well, then—in as much as God has so put it, that He commands you this day to trust Christ and to believe on Him—that is what you have to see to—and you may rest perfectly sure that falling back on the Doctrine of Election in order to exonerate you from what God commands you to perform is but a pitiful pretense! You are *commanded* to believe and what God commands, no Doctrine may teach that it is unfit for you to do! May God help you to believe, for this Doctrine comes not to excuse you. The Gospel *commands* you and Election through the Holy Spirit *enables* you. It is your duty to believe, but no man ever was saved as a matter of duty, for that which saves is the gift of God. But your business now is with Christ, only, and not with the Decrees of the Father which are all in the keeping of Christ and shall presently be revealed to you. You have to go to Christ, first, and to His Father afterwards, for He says, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." You must go to the Cross to get to the Decree—you must go round by Redemption to get to Election—there is no other way.

III. In the third place let us see WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF ELECTION. Our text says, very plainly too, that the Apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians. How did he know it? The way by which the Apostle knew it must be the method by which you and I are to know our election of God, too.

We have known more than once in our day of some men who pretended to know their election by their impudence. They had got into their head the presumption that they were elected and though they lived on in sin and still did as they liked, they imagined they were God's chosen. This is what I call presuming upon election by sheer impudence.

We know of others, alas, who have imagined themselves to be elect because of the visions that they have seen when they have been asleep or when they have been awake—for men have waking dreams—and they have brought these as evidences of their election. These are of as much value as cobwebs would be for a garment! They will be of as much service to you at the Day of Judgment as a thief's convictions would be to him if he were in need of a character to commend him to mercy. You may dream long enough before you dream yourself into Heaven—and you may have as many stupid notions in your head as there are romances in your circulating libraries—but because they are in your head they are not, therefore, in God's Book. We need a more sure word of testimony than this and if we have it not, God forbid that we should indulge our vain heart with the dainty thought that we are chosen of God!

I have heard of one who said in an alehouse that he could say more than any of the rest, that he was one of God's children. Meanwhile he drank deeper into intoxication than the rest. Surely he might have said, with an emphasis, that he was one of the *devil's* children—and he would have been correct. When immoral men and women who live constantly in sin, prate about being God's children, we discern them at once. Just as we know a crab tree when we see the fruit hanging upon it, we understand what spirit these people are of when we see their walk and conversation. Oh, it is detestable—loathsome above all loathsomeness—to hear men whose characters in secret are infamous, and whose lives are destitute of every Christian virtue, boasting as though they had the keys of Heaven and could set up whomever they would, and pull down whomever they might please! Blessed be God, we are not under their domination, for a more terrific set of tyrants than they are, the world has never known! And a more frightful reign of vice than they would inaugurate if they had their way, I am sure villainy, itself, cannot conceive! "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If Divine Grace does not make us holy, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is not worth the having! Brothers and Sisters, if we are God's elect we must have some substantial evidence to attest it!

According to our text, what are these evidences? They seem to be four. *The first evidence appears to be the Word of God coming home with power.* If you will turn to the verse, you will soon see how the Apostle says, "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the

Holy Spirit." The Gospel is preached in the ears of all—it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise *men would be the converters of souls*. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise *it would consist in the wisdom of man*. The power which converts souls does not even lie in the preacher's simplicity or adaptation to his work—that is a secondary agency, but not the cause. Again, the power which converts souls does not even lie in the pathos which the speaker may employ. Men may weep to the tragic muse in a theater as well as to prophetic strains in a chapel! Their creature passions may be impressed through the acting on the stage as well as by the utterance of God's own servants! No, there is something more than this needed and where it is absent, all preaching is nothing! We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit going with it, changing the will of man!

O Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Spirit is with the Word to give it power to convert the soul! We are reminded of Mr. Rowland Hill, who once met a man in the street at night, not quite drunk, but almost so. The man said, "Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts." "Yes," he said, "I dare say you are one of *mine*—but if you were one of *God's*, you would not be in the state in which you now are." Our converts are worth nothing. If they are converted by man they can be unconverted by man! If some charm or power of one preacher can bring them to Christ, some charm or power of another preacher can take them from Christ. True conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Spirit alone!

Well, then, my Hearers, did you ever, when listening to the Word, feel a Divine Power coming with it? Never mind where you were, whether in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, in this Tabernacle, or at some special service at one of the theaters—the place matters nothing. "Well," perhaps you will say, "I have felt some impression." Ah, but that may be wiped away! Have you ever felt something coming with the Word which you could not understand. Which, while it wooed you and won your heart, smote you as though a sword had gone through you and that not with a flesh wound, but with a wound that divides between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow, as if the Truth of God were, as indeed it is, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts?

Those who are really God's elect can tell a tale something like this. "There was a time when the Word was to me like a great ten thonged-whip—my shoulders were stripped bare and every time the Word was preached it seemed to make a gash within my soul! I trembled. I saw God in arms against me. I understood that I was in debt to His Justice and could not pay—that I was involved in a controversy against my Maker and could not conquer. I saw myself stripped naked to my shame, leprous from head to foot, a bankrupt and a felon ready to be given over to a traitor's doom." Truly the Word came with power to your soul. "And," you continue, "I remember, too, when the Truth of God came home to my heart and made me leap for very joy, for it took all my load away—it

showed me Christ's power to save! I had known the Truth before, but now I felt it! I had understood that Christ could save, but now that fact came home to me! I went to Jesus just as I was—I touched the hem of His garment and I was made whole! I found now that the Word was not a fiction—that it was the one reality. I had listened scores of times and he that spoke was as one that played a tune upon an instrument—but now he seemed to be dealing with *me*, putting his hand right into my heart and getting hold of *me*. He brought me first to God's Judgment Seat and there I stood and heard the thunders roll! Then he brought me to the Mercy Seat and I saw the blood sprinkled on it, and I went home triumphing because my sin was washed away." Oh, again I ask you, did the Word over come home with this power to your souls?

Since the day of your conversion has the Word ever rebuked you? Has it sometimes cut down your hopes? Do you sometimes, after hearing a sermon, feel as if it had been like a great hurricane bearing right through the forest of your thoughts, cleaving its own course, and leaving many a dead thing that you thought alive swept down to the ground? Do you feel, too, when you go home from the sanctuary, as if God Himself had been there? You did not know what else it could be. It could not have been the speaker nor the words he uttered, but the very God came and looked into your eyes and searched the thoughts of your mind—and turned your heart upside down and then filled it full again with His love and with His light, with His truth and with His joy, with His peace and with His desire after holiness? Is it so with you? Where the Word is not with power to your souls, you lack the proof of Election.

Remember, I do not say that it will always be so. You must not expect that God will speak with you every time—in fact, the preacher himself fails often and is painfully conscious of it. How shall one man always speak without sometimes feeling that he, himself, is not in a fit frame to be God's mouthpiece? But though it be a clown from the country, if he preaches God's Word, the Spirit will go with it! It is not the clown, nor yet the archbishop that does the work—it is the Word of God that is quick and powerful! Your evidence of Election is blotted and blurred unless the Word has come to you with demonstration of the Spirit and with His Power. People come and hear sermons in this place and then they go out and say, "How did you like it"—as if that meant anything to anybody—"How did you like it?" And one says, "Oh, very well." And another says, "Oh, not at all." Do you think we live on the breath of your nostrils? Do you believe that God's servants, if they are really His, care for what you think of them? No, verily, but if you should reply, "I enjoyed the sermon," they are inclined to say, "Then we must have been unfaithful or else you would have been angry—we must surely have slurred over something or else the Word would have cut your conscience as with the jagged edges of a knife! You would have said, 'I did not think how I liked it—I was thinking how I liked myself and about my own state before God. That was the matter that exercised me, not whether he preached well, but whether I stood accepted in Christ, or whether I was a castaway.'" My dear Hearers, are you learning to hear like that? If you are not, if going to

church and to chapel are to you like going to a play, or like listening to some orator who speaks upon temporal matters, then you lack the evidence of Election—the Word has not come to your souls with power.

But there is yet a second evidence of Election. *Those whom God has chosen receive the Word "in much assurance."* They do not all receive it with full assurance—that is a Grace they get afterwards—but they receive it with *much* assurance. There are some professors who go upon very strange principles. It is indeed somewhat difficult to know what principles are enforced and acknowledged in this age, for there are persons whose principles allow them to say black and white are the same thing! And there are certain persons whose religious principles are not much unlike this. They put a hymn book in their pockets when they are going to a meeting. They put a comic song book in their pockets when they are going somewhere else. They can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Such people as these never have any very great confidence in their religion—and it is very proper that they should not—for their religion is not worth the time they spend in making a profession of it!

But the true Christian, when he gets hold of principles, keeps them and there is no mistake about the grip with which he maintains his hold of them. "Ah," he says, "that Word which I have heard with my ears is the very Truth of God and it is true to me, real and substantial to me—and here I clasp it with both hands—with a clasp that neither time, nor tribulation, nor death shall ever cause me to let go." To a Christian his religion is a part of himself—he believes the Truth of God not because he has been told it or taught it by mother or friend, but because it is true to him in his inmost soul. He is like the servant girl who, when she could not answer her infidel master, said, "Sir, I cannot answer you, but I have a something in here that would if it could speak." There is "much assurance."

Sinners who have once felt their need of a Savior feel very much assurance about His preciousness. And saints that have once found Him precious have very much assurance about His Divinity, about His Atonement, about His everlasting Love, about His immortal dignity as a Prophet, a Priest and a King. They are sure of it. I know some persons who say if a man speaks positively, he is dogmatic. Glorious old dogmatism, when will you come back to earth? It is these, "ifs," and "buts," and qualifications—these, "perhapses," and "maybe sos" that have ruined our pulpits! Look at Luther when he stood up for the glory of his God—was there ever such a dogmatist? "I believe it," he said, "and therefore I speak it." From that day, when on Pilate's staircase, he was trying to creep up and down the stairs to win Heaven, when the sentence out of the musty folio came before him, "Justified by faith we have peace with God," that man was as sure that works could *not* save him as he was of his own existence! Now, if he had come out and said, "Gentlemen, I have a theory to propound that may be correct. Excuse my doing so," and so on, the Papacy would have been dominant to this day! But he knew God had said it and he felt that that was God's own way to his own soul—and he could not help being dogmatic with that glorious force of secession which soon laid his foes prostrate at his feet!

Now have *you* received the Gospel "with much assurance"? If you have and you can say, "Christ is mine. I trust in Him and though I may sometimes have doubts about my own interest in Him, yet I do know by experience in my soul that He is a precious Christ—I know not by '*Paley's Evidences*' nor by '*Butler's Analogy*,' but I know by my heart's inward evidence. I know by the analogy of my own soul's experience that the Truth of God which I have received is no cunningly devised fable, but something that came from God to draw my soul up to God"—that is another evidence of Election! If you have that, never mind the rest! I hardly care whether you believe the Doctrine of Election or not—you are elect. As I have sometimes told a Brother who has denied the Doctrine of Final Perseverance, when I have seen his holy life, "Never mind, my Brother, you will persevere to the end and you will prove the Doctrine that you do not believe! You may not be able to receive the Doctrine I now preach, but if such has been your experience, when you get to Heaven you will wake up and say, 'Well, I am one of the elect! I made a deal of fuss about it while on the earth, but I will make a deal of music about it now that I have got to Heaven. And I will sing more sweetly and loudly than all the rest, 'Unto Him that has loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!'"

But there is a third evidence. *Those who are chosen of the Lord desire to be like Him.* "You became followers of us and of the Lord," the Apostle says in the text—by which he does not mean that they said, "I am of Paul, I am of Silas, I am of Timothy"—but that they imitated Paul so far as he imitated Christ. Thomas aˆ Kempis wrote a book about the imitation of Christ and a blessed book in some respects it is. But I would like the Holy Spirit to write in your hearts the imitation of Christ. It shall be to you a sweet proof that you are chosen of God. Are you Christlike or do you want to be? Can you forgive your enemy and can you love him and do him good? Can you say tonight, "I am no more any man's enemy than is the baby that is just born"? And do you now desire to live unselfishly, to live for others, to live for God? Are you prayerful? Do you come to God in prayer as Jesus did? Are you careful of your words and of your acts as Christ was? I do not ask you if you are perfect, but I do ask whether you follow the Perfect One! We are to be followers of Christ, if not with equal steps, still with steps that would be equal if they could! If we follow Christ, that will be to others one of the surest proofs of our election, though perhaps to ourselves, if we are humble-minded, it will be no proof, since we shall rather see our blemishes than our virtues and mourn over our sins more than we rejoice in our Graces. If a man follows not Christ, those who look on may be safe enough in concluding that, whatever he may say about election, and however much he may prate about it, he is not the Lord's. On that point I shall not say anything more because I have already enlarged upon it in a former part of the discourse.

In the last place I will say *the fourth evidence is the existence of spiritual joy in spiritual service*. If you look further, it seems that those of whose election the Apostle was sure, received the Word of God "in much affliction," but, "with joy in the Holy Spirit." What do you say about this,

you whose religion consists of a slavish attendance upon forms that you detest? Look how many there are who go to a place of worship just because it is not respectable to stay away, but who often wish it were! And when many of your Christians get to the Continent, where is the Sabbath with them, then? Where is then their care for God's House? See, too, with what misery some people at home go up to the House of the Lord. Why? Because they have come to regard it as a place where they ought to be very solemn. It is not a home to them—it is a prison. How different it is with your children when they come home for their holidays! How do they come into their father's house? Dull, demure, as if they could not speak? No, bless their little hearts, they come running up to their father's knees, so glad to be there, so glad to be home! That is how a man whose religion is his delight comes up to the House of the Lord. He feels that it is his Father's House. He would be reverent, for his Father is God, but he must be happy, for God is his Father!

See again the Christian when he goes to his closet to pray. Ungodly persons will not go there at all. Or, if they do, it is because they want to win Heaven by it. But look, they go through their dreary prayers—and what a dreary thing it must be for a man to pray when he never expects to be heard and when he has no spirit of prayer! It is like a horse going round a mill grinding for somebody else and never getting any farther—doing the same tomorrow, the same the day after, and ever on and on. Sometimes as the little church bells sound in the morning in certain churches to fetch people out—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday there are some persons to be found there for early prayers—and they go to evening prayers, too, and a very good thing this would be if those who attend went there with holy joy! But there is the sexton and he says it is a great trouble to be always opening the doors like that when nobody comes except three old women that have got alms-houses and two that expect them and are, therefore, there. Do you think that an acceptable service to God? But they who go because they would not stay away if they could—they who worship God because it is an *instinct* and a pleasure, a holy thing and honorable—these are men and women who delight in God's Word and they give the best evidence of being chosen of God!

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who make your faces miserable that you may appear unto men to fast! Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that reads the heart asks not that your head may hang down like a bulrush, but that you may do deeds of mercy and walk humbly with your God! And you who can delight yourselves in your God shall have the desires of your heart! You that rejoice in the Lord, always, and triumph in His name shall go from strength to strength, and going at last to Glory, you shall find that you are there as the result of His Divine Purpose and Decree—and you shall give Him all the praise!

But now, I think I hear some say, "Oh, I want to know whether I am elect. I cannot say that the Word ever came to me with power. I cannot say I received it in much assurance. I cannot say I am a follower of Christ. I cannot say I have received the Word with joy." Well, dear Beloved, then leave that question alone! Instead of that, let me ask

another, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Christ to save your souls?" He will do it, if, just as you are, whoever you may be, you will come to Christ and give yourself up to Him to save you, to have you, to hold you for better, for worse, in life and through death. The moment you believe, you are saved! That act of faith, through the precious blood of Christ, will put away your every sin! You will not begin to be saved—you *are* saved. You will not be put into a salvable condition, but you shall be saved the moment you believe—completely and perfectly saved! "Oh," says one, "I would I could trust Christ." Say you so? "Whoever will, let him take," let him *trust* Christ. God help you now to do it! Trust Jesus and you are saved! This is addressed to every one of you without exception, for, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." The Lord help you to trust Jesus and then you may go on your way with joy, "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 9:22-27.

The Apostle Paul is here giving a description of the way in which he made everything help toward the fulfillment of his desire to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He longed to be the means of winning souls. He desired that at the last his Master might be able to say to him, "Well done, you good and faithful servant." And, therefore, everything with which he had to do was made to bend in that direction.

22-24. *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know you not that they which run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?* No matter if 20 or a hundred had entered the race, "but one receives the prize." Alas, out of these who appear to be running in the Christian ministry, how many will be prize-takers at the last? And out of those who seem to be running the race of the Christian life, how many will win the prize? Ah, Lord, You know!

24. *So run that you may obtain.* Do not speculate about what others will do, or not do, but see to your own running—"So run that you may obtain." Salvation is all of Grace, but when a man is saved, he still has to run the Christian race and to be a runner as long as he lives."

25. *And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.* Here Paul is alluding to the athletic games and pugilistic encounters of the time. It was a matter of common notoriety that every man who was going to fight, or wrestle, or run, had to get himself into proper condition—to "go into training," as we say in similar cases nowadays.

25. *Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we for an incorruptible crown.* The athletes who completed in the Grecian games passed through great self-denials and mortifications of the flesh in order that every part of their bodily frame might be tough and strong when they came forward to wrestle, or to run, or to fight. "Now," says Paul, "if they do all that to gain a crown of parsley"—which was generally the

crown given—truly, "a corruptible grown"—"how much more ought we to do in order to win a crown that fades not away—'an incorruptible crown'"!

26. *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air.* He would not leave a stone unturned, as it were, that he might gain the prize. He put out all his strength in the name of the Lord.

27. *But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.* The Greek word, according to some, implies getting his body into the same position as a man does when, in a sport encounter, he gets his adversary's head under his arm and smites him with all his might. So Paul says concerning his body, "I bring it into subjection and take care that it feels the full force of my will." According to other interpreters, the verse may be read, "I drag my body off as a slave"—just as in some of those ancient fights, the victors dragged away their antagonists as slaves, Paul accounted his body to be as a slave to his soul and dragged it behind him in chains.

27. *Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* The Greek word which is translated, "a castaway," is, "*adokimos*." It might better have been rendered, "disapproved." It certainly has no such meaning as that which has been generally given to it. Paul was not afraid of being cast away by God at the last! What he aimed at was this—as he had entered the lists, as a Christian minister, to fight for Christ, to wrestle against principalities and powers, to seek to win souls for Christ, he must keep his bodily powers and passions so in subjection that, at the last, when the prizes were distributed, he would be found to have won his. This is quite another matter from being "a castaway" from salvation and eternal life! Paul was saved and he knew it—and some of us know, to a certainty, that we are saved—but we also know that there is another crown to be won which the Lord will give to His servants who win in the great fight with sin. To win this crown is our high ambition and we long to hear the Master say to each one of us, in that day, "Well done, you good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord."

—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.

AN OLD-FASHIONED REMEDY
NO. 2921

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1876.

"He sent His Word and healed them."
Psalm 107:20.

THE healing of natural sickness is not accomplished without the power of God. Vain were the skill of the most learned physician unless the God of Nature cooperated with the medicine. If any of you have been restored of late from sickness, I charge you to praise God for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Remember your weary nights. Remember your painful days. Call to mind the vows of your soul in anguish and take care that you play not false to God. In the day of your health, be true to the promises made on your sickbed. Let the song of gratitude go up from your heart and from your lips—and let the life which He has so graciously preserved be dedicated to His service. It ought to be so. God help you that it may be so.

However, the Psalm is intended to speak of spiritual things and so, tonight, we shall apply our text to the disorders of the mind—the diseases of the heart. There are some here present who have felt that worst of sicknesses—a sick heart—and many of us, blessed be God, have received that best of healing, the healing of the mind! They can praise God tonight while we speak of this precious fact—"He sent His Word and healed them."

Just in a few strokes let me sketch the patient in his extremity and then at length let me describe the cure in its simplicity. "He sent His Word and healed them."

I. First, let us give the sketch of THE PATIENT IN HIS EXTREMITY. I hope he will see himself as in a glass and say, "That is myself."

The first thing about him is that *he is a fool*. Turn to the 17th verse. "Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities are afflicted." It is insulting to a man to call him a fool, but I question whether any man is saved unless he has called *himself* a fool! "Fool," says the man under a conviction of sin, "you may write the word large about me, for it describes my condition!" We sometimes speak of a born fool. Well, that is exactly what the convicted man feels he is—he has been born a fool, his very nature is foolish—for he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness! And that not now and then, but by the very force of nature he seems to constantly make a foolish choice. He has been one of those fools who has said in his heart, "No God," for he has practically lived without thinking of his God.

He has been one of those fools who has chosen the transient present and left the eternal future to be forgotten. It is a difficult thing to cure a man of his folly. "Though you should crush a fool in the mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet his foolishness will not depart from him," says Solomon. That would be a rather rough process, would it not? But it would be useless! Folly would still remain in spite of all the grinding. When a man truly sees his sickness, he feels that he is just such a fool as that—a fool with folly ingrained. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," and in the life of a sinner!

But this man has played the fool. Besides being a fool, *he has acted like a fool*, for, "fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." Transgression means breaking bounds and trespassing and he that trespasses in the fields of a God who is so just and so strong to smite, is a fool! Iniquity means lack of equity, lack of truth, lack of rightness, lack of honesty and surely he that tries to cheat God is a fool! How shall he hope to be able to deceive the Omniscient One, or that those eyes which are like a flame of fire shall fail to detect the inequity, the dishonesty of his doings? That he has thought for a moment that he could do it, shows that he is a fool and that he has acted like a fool!

Now, I am not going to say of any man present that this is true concerning him, but if any man here present feels it is the truth about himself, he is a man that God is going to bless, for when the Lord has shown you yourself, He will afterwards show you Himself. And when He has made you see that you are a fool by nature and a fool by practice, then it is that He will take you into the school of wisdom and yet teach you the right way! The patient's disease, you will see, is a very bad one and it is one that is very hard to cure.

You notice, according to the Psalm, that *he has come into a condition in which he has lost all appetite.* It is written, "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." A sick man in certain diseases loses his appetite for everything. It matters not how daintily cooked the delicate morsel may be, he turns against it. Ah, well do I remember my own season of suffering when I passed through this experience. I am only describing what has happened to myself and, therefore, I know that it has happened to some of you, for though in detail our experiences differ, in the main they are amazingly alike. How we loathe everything in our sickness! Manna—that is light bread. Bread that is heavy. Wine—it is too hot. Water—it is too cold. It mattered not what was brought to me when I was in that spiritual condition, I could not receive it. Doubtless it is so with you, too. Of the invitations of the Gospel, the soul says, "Ah, Jesus Christ could not intend to invite *me*." Of the promises of the Word, the heart says, "Ah, they may be true for everybody else, but they cannot be true for *me*." One may preach the sweetest and the softest messages of love, but when a soul is under a sense of sin, it abhors all manner of meat—it turns against all consolation—it refuses to be comforted. You may try to comfort such a case as much as you will, but the dreary thought rises in the soul, "It cannot be for *me*. As for me, I shall perish in

my iniquity! I have played the fool exceedingly and God has given me up to my heart's lusts and now I shall perish in the day when He judges mankind."

The Psalmist goes on to say of the sick man that *he is drawing near unto the gates of death*. I know some souls that feel as if it could not be long before they shall be utterly lost. They have not had any peace, rest, happiness, comfort, for such a great while that it seems to them a wonder that the earth does not open and swallow them up! They cannot sleep at night for terrible dreams and cannot rest at day for terrible sounds that are in their ears. They think of an angry God, the Judgment Seat and the dreadful sword of the Most High that is made bare to smite the wicked. I do not say that many of you are in that state, but if any of you are, it is to you that I am sent tonight with words of mercy, for the text says, "He sent His Word and healed them." These fools, these that have played the fool, these whose soul abhors all manner of meat and these who draw near unto the gates of death—to these very people He sent His Word and healed them! Oh, that Infinite Mercy might do the same with any such who are in this company!

There is one hopeful mark about this sick man and that is that he has begun to pray. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." It would not be much of a prayer if it had been printed—you could not have read it. Indeed, you could not print it, for you cannot print a cry. The reporter has not got a sign in all his stenography, I think, by which he can record a cry. A cry is the heart's own language with which the tongue cannot interfere. Is there anybody here that does pray and yet cannot pray—who groans before God, "Oh, that I might be saved"—whose only words are tears—whose only language is the anguish of his silent spirit? Ah, you are the person—the person that can cry! Cry, then, unto the Lord with all your might! It is said of such, "He sent His Word and healed them."

Well, those few touches may suffice. An artist sometimes sketches a likeness with a piece of charcoal. So have I sketched my patient in words few and simple. I am now going to take a longer time to describe the healing in its wonderful simplicity. "He sent His Word and healed them."

II. THE CURE IN ITS SIMPLICITY.

When a physician meets with a very bad case—a case in dire extremity—it will sometimes happen with him that he has to think awhile. Perhaps he has to resort to his books of medicine or to his diary of former cases, or to hold a consultation with another physician before he will venture to prescribe, for something unknown is needed in this unusual disease. But I want you to observe that though the case represented in the Psalm was a very bad one, there was no new thing needed to meet it. The old remedy would suffice. All that the Infinite Lord had to do was to send His Word and heal them! It was the old healing Word of God that had healed many a fool before and could still heal fools—the old healing word that had brought back many from between the very gates of death! Nothing more was needed in order to bring back these who were in such a dreadful condition. For the healing of the souls sick with sin and sick of it, I have no new Gospel to preach nor any new

thing to say. Thank God, the old, old Gospel meets every case! New developments of sin, strange out-of-the-way diseases of iniquity keep cropping up, but the old remedy meets them all. God needs not to consult nor make new compounds—the simple thing which healed men centuries ago still heals them. "He sent His Word and healed them."

The text may be understood to mean three things. First God sent Christ, the Incarnate Word. That is the *essence* of the remedy. Then He sent the Bible, the revealed Word. That is the *instrument* of the remedy. He sent, thirdly, His Word of Power by the Holy Spirit. That is the *application* of the remedy. Let us speak of these three things. They are all necessary. As there is a Trinity in the one God, so must there to a trinity in the one Word by which men are saved.

First, let us look at *the essence of the remedy*. Dear Friends, when God heals a sinner He does it by Christ, who is the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. Almighty healing lies in the Person and work and merit of Him who is called the Word of God, of whom you read, in the first chapter of John's Gospel, that "the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

Now, whatever your disease may be, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is able to meet it. He can heal the guilt of sin. However guilty a soul may be, Christ stands in the sinner's place, bears the sin and makes Atonement for it unto God. So all sin can be put away. No matter how many your sins, or how black they may be, although they are double-dyed, yet the moment Jesus Christ comes to you and you accept Him—

"Your sins shall vanish quite away
Though black as Hell before,
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea
And shall be found no more!"

There is healing for the guilt of sin.

Probably, however, your conscience is troubled about the influence of sin over your life. Christ can meet that need, too. He can cure you of sinning. Even if you could be forgiven the past, you cannot bear the thought of going on as you have done. Dear sick one, there is healing for your foolishness as well as for your sin—for the iniquity of your heart as well as for the iniquity of your life! Jesus Christ is able to set you all right. If the wheels of the watch are wrong, He is the Great Maker and He can put it all right again. He can rectify every cog of every wheel till He shall have sanctified you wholly—spirit, soul and body. Jesus Christ is made of God unto us not only Justification but Sanctification, too! He is able to meet both the dire ills of life and the guilt and the power of sin.

Possibly you reply to me that you are suffering in your inmost soul. Well, the Great Physician speaks and *He can heal the depression of sin*. A sense of sin has broken your bones. A sense of sin has seemed to take away all courage from you. You do not seem to be half a man now, for sin has unstrung you—has made you weak as water. My Lord Jesus Christ can heal that! He can take away the depression, the despondency, yes, and the despair. Though you may have written yourself down as damned. Though you have made a league with Hell and "a covenant with

death," yet my Lord Jesus Christ with one touch of His pierced hand can make your spirit leap for joy! It is His way to pluck us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set our feet upon the rock and put a new song into our mouths and establish our goings. You cannot tell how quickly despondency can be changed for delight when Jesus appears! He can put off your sackcloth and your ashes from you so that you shall never wear them again. He can gird you with gladness and put jewels in your ears and about your neck, and adorn you as a bridegroom decks his bride with ornaments. You little know the great joy which Christ can give, in a moment, to the most desponding sinner!

If you tell me that sin has done you all sorts of mischiefs—that you feel as if sin had poisoned you all over—that your whole nature is now out of gear and even though it should be healed, yet there are scars which you will never lose, broken bones you will carry to your tomb, I still preach to you of the power of Christ! *He can remove even the scars*. My Lord has various ointments and remedies with which He can heal even these. What He did here on earth to the bodies of men, He is now prepared to do to the souls of men! There came to Him the blind. They could not see, just as you cannot understand. You say truly that sin has darkened your judgment. What did the Master do but make clay with His spittle, anoint the eyes of the blind and say, "Go and wash," and the blind went and came back seeing! Sometimes He touched men's eyes and the scales fell and so they saw! My Lord can give you back your calm and right judgment again. He can so overrule your spirit that it shall no more put the bitter for the sweet and the darkness for the light. He can give you back those eyes of your heart—

"He comes from thickest films of night
To clear the mental ray,
And on the eyeballs of the blind
To pour celestial day."

Ah, but you reply, "I can see well enough, but I cannot act. I know what I ought to do, but I do not do it. I perceive the right but I do the wrong—I would, but I cannot." Still I invite you to Jesus. *He can give you the strength you have lost.* When my dear Lord was here on earth, there were men with withered hands and He bade them stretch them out and they were restored. There were some that had lain on the bed and could not stir, sick of the palsy, but He bade them walk. And there was one that had been lying for years by Bethesda's side, that could not stop into the pool. He lay there as you lie at the pool of ordinances, but Christ said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," and he did so. My Lord can give you back all power that you have lost—the power to repent, the power to believe, the power to shake off sin, the power to walk in holiness! He can give it all back to you and He can do it now, even while you are sitting in this House of Prayer! Was there ever a disease that came to Christ that puzzled Him? Do you remember one that He ever turned away? In the long list of human diseases reckoned to be incurable, almost all, if not quite all, came under His glance, but was there one that foiled Him? Was there one of which He said, "My Power is

not equal to that"? No, you know He even raised the dead! Even though Lazarus had begun to stink, He raised him—he had been dead three days and yet he came forth—when the grave cloths were unwound, there was the living man! What cannot my Master do?

If I address someone who feels himself to be full of evil till he is almost like a man with a devil within him, I point that man to Christ. *He can dispossess the devil.* Do I speak to one whose raging passion, or whose lustful desire, or whose unsatisfied thirst of drunkenness, or whose long habit of blasphemy has made him like the demoniac? Oh, come here! Come you but within range of that mighty Voice and it shall say, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit, and enter no more into him." Christ can make even you to be clean!

Wherever Jesus Christ comes, *He* is that Word of God that makes men whole! So I say to you tonight that if any of you want to save others, preach Jesus Christ, for He is the Word that heals them! And if any of you want to be saved, think much of Jesus Christ. Look to none else but Jesus Christ. Fix your mind's eye on Him and trust Him—and as surely as you trust Him, you shall be made whole. In your case it shall be written, "He sent His Word and healed him." There is nothing about your case that Christ cannot reach! There is in Jesus Christ something exactly adapted to the peculiarly disastrous nature of your position. He can, He will save even you, even you, if you do but trust Him now!

I am obliged to be brief for time flies so rapidly. And now, notice in the second place, *the instrument of the remedy*. "He sent His Word and healed them." That is, He sent this Book, this Revelation which is the Word of God. Though it is Christ that heals men, and not the Bible, the Bible is like the wrapper of the bottle in which the medicine is put—and we find the remedy by unfolding the wrapper. Remember, dear Souls, if you are sick, that the medicine that is to reach your case is somewhere between these two covers. There is something in here for every sin-sick soul that seeks it!

Perhaps it is a *precept* you have been neglecting—something of that which the Lord would have you to do. I have known many a soul brought to Christ by a precept. The Law of God has often been a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ that they might find peace in Him.

But for many more of you there is here an invitation such as this, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." That refers to you, does it not? Do you not thirst? And there is the sweet invitation of last Sunday night, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That has been the instrument of healing to countless numbers.

Sometimes it is not an invitation, but a *promise* or a grand encouraging statement such as, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Or such a sweet word as, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," which is used by the Great Physician as balm for the wounded soul.

Precepts, promises, invitations, Gospel statements—here they are! The medicine is put into many forms because the disease assumes so many aspects, but within this Sacred Volume lies that living Word of God which, if it is blessed by the Holy Spirit, will bring peace to your souls! I wish you, therefore, to value this Book beyond all price—to read it much, to read it, praying as you read, "Lord, bless it to my soul"—to lay your heart open to it when it cuts you like a knife—to receive those friendly wounds as meant for your healing. Then open your heart to receive its light that you may see by it—to receive its comforts that you may rejoice through them. Open wide the great doors of your soul that every part of this Word may have entrance there.

You that preach to others preach much of the Word of God. O dear Sirs, remember good McCheyne's experience—he says that almost always when there was a case of conversion the hearer attributed it to a text of Scripture that had been quoted in the sermon. I believe it is largely so at all times and when McCheyne again says, "It is God's Word, not our own, but God's Word that is generally blessed," I am sure it is so.

If you who are hearers have a choice in the matter, frequent a ministry that is full of Scripture. You are more likely to get a blessing, there, than anywhere else. Read books that are full of the very Word of God and then read the Word itself. But do not think you will be saved simply by reading it. That is impossible, for you are only saved by Christ—and He said to the people of His time, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and you will not come unto Me that you might have life." But though you will not be saved *by* reading, you may be saved *through* reading and through reading the Scriptures! While you are reading and hearing God's precious Word, He may send home some of the Light of God and the Truth of God and the Life which lie concealed within the sacred pages. "He sent His Word and healed them." My learned doctor, we do not want your new gospel! We want the old Word of God. My friend of the fine poetical speech, you of the grand rhetoric, you of the golden mouth—we want neither you nor your mouth unless you give us the Word of God—just what is revealed in Scripture! There were great preachers before Luther and Calvin, before Wickliffe and Huss and Jerome—they went about preaching and preaching to great crowds, too, but they did not save souls! That was not because they could not speak and were not attractive, but because they had not this story to tell—the story that is in this Book—the story of Him who did hang upon the Cross. We must preach the Word! "Preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season," for it still stands true, "He sent His Word and healed them."

Now again time checks me and I must therefore notice that there is a third sense in which we may view this text. Let us speak, then, of *the application of the remedy*. Jesus Christ on the Cross does not save men while they reject and refuse Him. And this Book does not save anybody until the Holy Spirit with power speaks to the soul. When that happens, then, it is the Word of God in another sense. Just as of old He spoke and it was done, as He said, "Let there be light," and there was light, there

seems to be needed a distinct call from God to men or they will not come to Him. The Living Word must leap from the mouth of the Living God or else the Bible will be but a dead letter! Men will turn away from Christ as if it were nothing to them that Jesus died—unless the Spirit reveals the Truth in power! Beloved, you that have been healed, do you not ascribe your healing to the secret mysterious power of the Holy Spirit? You know you give Him the glory. Hence when you wish to bring men to Christ, always honor the Holy Spirit. Do not forget to adore Him, to lean entirely upon Him for all the power with which the healing of a soul is to be accomplished. There is no faith in the world that will save except the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God! There is no true glance of the eyes toward Christ on the Cross but such as the Spirit of God has given!

Now I want to speak just two or three words about this. Some of you will say, "Ah me, would God that the Spirit of God would speak to me." Be not deceived, He is speaking to you now! The Word, when it is faithfully preached with prayerful spirit, has the Spirit of God going with it. Men may resist it, but they add to their sin in doing so. As said the man of God of old, "You do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did so, do you." Let us explain what the Spirit of God does *not* do. Since you can only be saved by hearing about Christ, He will not bring you a new way of salvation or reveal another Savior. And if you are not saved by reading the Word of God and hearing it, He will not be likely to use any other means. The Spirit is of the same mind as father Abraham who said about the five brothers of the man at whose gate Lazarus lay begging, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." You must not sit still and say, "I expect to see signs and wonders, or else I will not believe." You shall have no sign and no wonder except the sign of a dying Savior and a Savior risen from the dead—and the added sign of this great wonder that you refuse to believe in Him and put your trust in Him.

Now know this, that when men are led to Christ by the Spirit of God, they do not know at the time that it is the Spirit of God that is leading them. They have no idea of it! They think, they meditate, they judge, they decide and they believe. They are free agents and they act as such. It is afterwards that they discover that the Spirit of God has been leading them through it all. Now if you wait till you feel the Spirit of God and *know it to be* the Spirit of God while you are yet unbelieving, you will wait forever—for such an experience will never be granted to you. No man ever knows the Spirit of God so as consciously to be aware that the Spirit is at work with him until he knows Jesus Christ. As no man comes to the Father but through the Son, so no man comes to realize and to be aware of the work of the Spirit on his soul till he knows Jesus Christ!

What is the Spirit of God, then, to do for you? What I hope in many cases He is now doing, namely, to make you willing, as I trust you are. To make you conscious of your danger, as I trust you are. To make you understand the remedy, as I think you do. And to lead you sweetly and gently to accept what God provides, as I hope you will.

"Is that all?" asks one. Ah, Beloved, it is a very great, "all." I know I cannot do that work! And all the ministers in the world put together could not do that which you think to be so little. I am certain if I were sent to you to proclaim that you could all be saved if you would go barefoot from here to John o'Groats and start tonight, that the great northern road would be thronged by people going! People would do *anything* of that sort to be saved! They would not need to be persuaded. But if we tell them that they are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—it is so simple, it is so easy—that God has to work a miracle before He can bring their proud hearts to consent to be saved in that way! He has to give men new life and new light before they will come to it. Oh, have you come to it? Have you come to it now? Do you feel that at this instant you can say, "I do trust Jesus." Well, dear Brother, or Sister, it is the Spirit of God that has brought you to it! He is within you! You need not raise any question about it. He has sent the Word and healed you. If He has brought you there, keep saying—

"While I view You wounded, grieving,
Breathless on the cursed tree,
Gladly I'd feel my heart believing
That You suffered thus for me."

Do you trust yourself to Him now, whether you sink or swim? Do you trust yourself to Him that bled on the tree? That is the work of the Spirit of God—none but He could have done it!

"It seems so little," says one. "It looks as if I might have done it myself." Ah, but that little thing is the great thing here. When Elisha said, "Wash in Jordan and be clean," that was the hard thing. "If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?" asked his servant. But it was really a great thing the Prophet had commanded. If our Gospel were hard, it would be easy, but because it is easy it is hard! It needs a strong hand to bring us down to this and I am praying while I am preaching to you that the Lord Jesus Christ would now send forth the ever-blessed Spirit—His own Word of Power—to bring you to Himself. Look and live!

Oh, are you sick? Christ is a Physician on purpose for the sick! Are you crying? Christ is One who always comes at the cry of sick souls! Are you willing to be saved in God's way? Will you let Him do what He wills with you? Do you surrender at discretion? Do you say, "Anyway, anyway, just so I may be but saved from the wrath to come?" Will you now open wide your hearts to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord? Then the Spirit of God is present healing you! He is at work with you. He has healed you, I trust, already! Only trust the bleeding Lamb of God, only trust Him! It is done. It is done. All glory to the Lamb of God! It is done! All glory to the Divine Spirit who has brought us into this state of salvation! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107.

1. *O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* Because we are sinners, God's goodness takes the form of mercy. Mercy—this was what we need—therefore, instead of mere benevolence towards the good, God's love takes the form of mercy towards the guilty and this mercy is forever! It always was, always is and always shall be.

2. *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* Let the redeemed be the first to sing and let them sing the sweetest of all. O children of God, you are meant to be leaders in the chorus of God's praise! All nature is a great organ and if you are what you should be, you are the men and women whose fingers of gratitude are to touch the keys and bring forth thunders of praise unto God!

3. *And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.* It is a part of Redemption's work to gather out all people—fetch them into a separated condition. The voice of Redemption sounds—"Come out from among them and be you separate. Touch not the unclean thing." And the hand of Redemption gathers out God's chosen and brings them into a saved unity where they enjoy fellowship with each other and with God. Now here he gives a description of the gratitude which is due to God from different persons who have been partakers of His mercy. First, souls are here compared to lost travelers.

4-6. *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.* Some of you know what this means. You have lost your way. You know not how to find it. Spiritually you are in a wilderness and you would, if you could, get to the city of Jerusalem. You would get to the very heart of God, but you cannot. You find no city to dwell in—no peace—no rest.

Moreover, your spiritual needs are very pressing. You are hungry and you are thirsty, but it is a wilderness and you cannot find a morsel of food. No manna drops for you. Your soul is ready to faint. You feel as if you could not go another step nor search another inch. To lie down and die is all that you can do. But the vultures are in the air and you are afraid even of despair. You are hard pressed. Notice it is said, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." Why did not they do so before? Because men do not begin to pray to God as long as they have any hope besides. But when all hope is gone, then comes the first real living, agonizing, cry to Heaven—and no sooner is that heard than God answers it! "He delivered them out of their distresses."

7-9. *And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.* Is there a longing soul here tonight? Amidst these thousands, surely there must be some! Well, dear Soul, God will satisfy you! He will not merely stay your hunger for a little while, and help you to break your fast, but your longing shall be satisfied. And if you are hungry, He will fill you and fill you not only with

good, but with goodness itself—the very quintessence of everything that is excellent! Next, the Psalmist describes prisoners. We have a picture of the spiritual state of man from another point of view.

10-13. *Such as it is in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron because they rebelled against the words of God's and condemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses.* These were prisoners in a prison where they were forced to work and where they found no rest. A picture of a dark soul—a soul over which death spread his dragon wings. You know what it means to be brought into spiritual death—to feel the chill of spiritual death even to your very marrow, paralyzing you and binding all your hopes in everlasting frost, do you not? Have you been in dread of the wrath to come? Have you set to work to redeem yourselves and toiled like slaves, but toiled in vain? Has your heart been brought down from your high notions, your proud desires, your boasting and your loftiness? Then is fulfilled in you the words of this text—"Therefore He brought down their heart with labor: they fell down and there was none to help."

"Then," but not till then—"they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses." Proud hearts will not pray. When a man can help himself, he will not cry to God. As long as he has any hope left within the compass of his nature, he will not turn to the God who made him. But what a blessed despair that is which drives us to God! It is like the wave that sweeps the mariner up on to the rock where he is safe. May such a wave of despair catch some of us and hurl us into safety! They cried and He saved them.

14-16. *He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men; for He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.* The third picture of our lost estate is given us under the image of a sick man.

17-19. *Fools because of their transgressions and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry.* Even these fools! "Then they cry"—

19-22. *Unto the LORD in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.* One more picture is given and that is of a soul at sea, tossed with tempest and not comforted—spiritually shipwrecked.

23-28. *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. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger*

like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry. Never till they get to their wit's end do men cry to God! When nothing else is to be done and all human might has utterly failed, then they cry. Now, you that have ever been in this storm—you know what it means. You recollect how you were sailing smoothly along with fair weather and suddenly a spiritual cyclone took hold of you, and twisted your soul roundabout—threw you sometimes up with presumptuous hopes, and then down again with awful despairs! You could not stand or hold to anything, even the Truth of God you knew, you could not believe, and the promises which you could believe, you could not apply to yourself. There was no hold-fast for you! You reeled and staggered and your courage was gone. Your soul was melted because of trouble. There seemed nothing before you but the abyss. Deep called to deep, and Jehovah's waterspouts sent forth a sound. "Now," you thought, "surely the end is come." And then it was that you began to pray.

28-32. *Unto the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.*

—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.

AN INFALLIBLE SIGN OF REVIVAL
NO. 2922

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 12, 1876.

"The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."
Isaiah 2:11.

IN the eternal past the Lord alone was exalted. When He dwelt alone before the earth was and when He commenced the mighty works of His Creation—and the universe sprang into being at the fiat of His unhindered will—He alone was exalted. He made multitudes of creatures. Perhaps we have no idea how many of them there were and in what varied forms intelligent beings were created, but the Lord alone was exalted. Every angel adored Him—every creature knew its Lord. It was an ill day when there broke out a rival spirit and when evil began to set up its throne in opposition to the God of Good. The leader of the angels—the light bearer—sought to erect a rival throne. "How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." Then, by and by, in process of time, upon this world God's Glory was dimmed. Here, too, another spoke and was believed and God was doubted. Another claimed man's love and gained it and God was disobeyed. No longer on earth was the Lord alone exalted as He had been in the quiet glades of Eden when our first parents worshipped none but God and counted it the very cream and flower of their being that they might serve the Most High who had made them what they were.

Now look where we may, in this poor, fallen world, the Lord alone is not exalted. There are many lords and gods—spiritual wickedness and principalities of evil—which set themselves up in opposition to the great King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet as surely as Jehovah lives, He will win the victory in this conflict! Ere the drama of the world's history shall come to a close, it shall be known throughout the entire universe that the Lord, He is God—and the Lord alone shall be exalted.

It is a part of the work of Grace—no, it is the main objective of the work of Grace, and it is an objective, also, of the work of Providence to promote this great end—that the Lord alone shall be exalted. For your comfort and for your instruction, then, notice first the occasions when my text has been true. I shall take the text out of its connection, not, I hope, unduly, and show that on a large scale there are several days in which the Lord alone has been exalted. And then we will come back to a little quiet meditation and look into our own experience to see whether there have not been days with us when the Lord alone has been exalted.

I. Come then, first, and notice WHEN THE LORD ALONE HAS BEEN EXALTED ON A LARGE SCALE.

The Lord alone has been exalted among men whenever He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the plenitude of His power. The Revelations under the Law of God were mainly Revelations girt with terror. Under the Old Testament dispensation you find God coming out of His place to terribly shake the earth. When He bows the Heavens and comes down, the mountains flow at His Presence. The Lord alone was exalted in those days when He vindicated His Justice and displayed His Power against His enemies. Remember the flood when, after so many years of warning, the ark being prepared for the salvation of the believing few, God was pleased to draw up the floodgates of Heaven and to bid the cataracts of earth leap upward instead of downward until over all the face of the world there was nothing but one mighty all-devouring wave! When in majestic silence the ark floated over the bosom of the world which had become the grave of Jehovah's creatures—then the Lord alone was exalted in that day!

And when men had multiplied again upon the face of the earth and His people had gone down into Egypt, you know well the story, how proud Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Then Moses came and with many strokes of his mystic rod he afflicted the fields of Zoan, he turned their waters into blood and slew their fish. He spoke and the flies came—and the frogs and the locusts without number—yes, the Lord smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength, and in that night, when a cry went up from every Egyptian household and the people of Israel were led forth like sheep by the hands of Moses and Aaron, the Lord alone was exalted! Then the nations knew that Jehovah worked His will among the sons of men!

Nor was that all. When in their desperation, the Egyptians pursued the Israelites into the very depths of the sea, the Lord turned and looked upon them and troubled the host of Pharaoh and took off their chariot wheels so that they could not be driven—then the sea returned in the fullness of its strength and the depths covered them until there was not one of them left! Then Miriam's song, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," was but an exposition of our text, "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Time would fail me to tell of all His mighty works, nor is there any need for me to recapitulate the records of the book of the wars of the Lord, "for the Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name"—and when He comes forth to battle, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day!

May we never live to see a pestilence sweep through this land! But should such a visitation of God come upon us, then will our houses of prayer be thronged and men will begin to cry unto the Most High! May we never hear the noise of war in our streets! If such a calamity should befall us and the Lord takes the sword of war out of the scabbard, men will begin to learn righteousness! May He be pleased to have mercy upon us and lead us by gentle means to glorify His name. Were He to come in judgment, then would the spirit of atheism and of idolatry which now, with brazen faces, dare confront the Gospel of Christ, betake themselves to the darkness in which they were begotten! When the Lord comes forth in terror then is He alone exalted!

Let us change the theme now and see, too, how *wherever God comes forth in His great mercy, His name alone is exalted.* The day when the infant Church of Christ gathered in an upper room and sat there, all its members being of one heart and of one soul, and the Lord revealed His Grace by the baptism of the Holy Spirit—when the sound of the rushing mighty wind was heard, when the tongues of fire sat on the disciples—when they began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance and thousands were added to the Church, that was a day when the Lord alone was exalted! Was there any whisper on that day of honor to be given to Peter, or to John, or to James in the Church of God? Do you think there was any trace of the spirit that could say, "I am of Cephas," and, "I am of John"? Ah, no! The name of the Lord was very precious to His people that day. They gave glory to the Lord both in the Temple and in their own houses, eating their bread with gladness of heart. Only let the Lord show Himself in great blessing, then He alone is exalted! Behold, His enemies fly before Him because of His Divine Grace!

Well, Brothers and Sisters, it will be even so, by-and-by, "in that day" of which we were reading just now with so much delight—when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted on the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow unto it." There is to come a day when Christ shall be known and loved of every land! When the dwellers in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust. I am not going into any details or prophetic descriptions of the millennium, but we do expect a day when the Gospel shall win its way over this whole globe and the poor world, instead of being swathed in mist and fog, shall come out of the cloud of her unbelief and out of the darkness of her sin, and shine like her sister stars at the feet of her great Creator! In that day the Lord alone shall be exalted! You will hear no more of the name of Pope, or Patriarch, or a great religious leader receiving the chief honor. No great name set in the front of a section of the church shall be shouted in that day—the Lord alone shall be exalted!

So again it will be when yet farther on in human history the end shall come—when you and I and all born of woman shall stand before the dread tribunal of the Last Great Day—then shall the Lord alone be exalted! There shall be no pomp of kings before that Great White Throne. There shall be no glare of riches there before the prince of the kings of the earth. Honor and fame that were so feverishly sought and so highly prized by the sons of men shall then melt away like the fat of rams. Kings and their serfs, princes and their subjects shall stand together. There shall be no idol gods in that day, nor shall men receive homage of their fellows, but while the earth shall be reeling to its doom and the Heavens themselves dissolving, the Lord alone shall be exalted! Jehovah's great and glorious name shall fill all ears and His majesty shall impress all hearts. May we be found in Christ in that great day! The Lord grant it for His mercy's sake!

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to talk to you on humbler topics, endeavoring to bring our subject down to our own experience and to see WHEN THE LORD ALONE HAS BEEN EXALTED ON A SMALLER SCALE. When it is written, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, we

may understand that what is true on a great scale is equally true on a little scale in God's Kingdom. He works according to rule, so that if you split up some great crystal of His Providence into as small fragments as you please, each fragments shall be found to be crystallized in the same form. So, if in the grand events of history God is to be exalted, you will also find that in the little world of your own experience—in the history which is only recorded in your own pocket-book—in the story of your own life—that God is also exalted! Brothers and Sisters, many of you already know, and I pray that others here who as yet do not know it may be brought to know it, that there have been red-letter days in your life when the Lord alone has been exalted!

One of the earliest of these blessed days was *when you first had a sense of sin*. Ah, I had no thought how black I was until that day! I had never dreamed how corrupt my heart was, how vile my nature, how desperate my condition, how near the borders of Hell I stood till then. There came at last that day in which the Light of God shone into my soul and I saw the evil of my state, the danger of my condition and the horrible rottenness of my whole nature even to the very core! Do you remember such a day in your experience, beloved Brethren? I know you do! Oh, what a withering day it was. Your flesh is grass and do you not remember when the grass withered and when the flower thereof faded away because the Spirit of the Lord was blowing upon it? Surely the people are grass. Do you recollect when you perceived in your heart a new rendering of that old passage, "And we all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away"? When you found your righteousness to be only a fading leaf and the strength of your passions to be like the wind that took you right away and carried you—you knew not where? You seemed to be like a sear leaf blown away in a tempest of sin!

Before that, you had thought yourself to be very fine—very few were more respectable or honorable than you. If you had not many glittering virtues, yet you felt you had no degrading vices! There was much about you that others might imitate and if people did not respect you, you felt very angry—you felt they ought to pay great deference to such a one as you were. But you did not feel like this on that day—not on that day! No. In that day you threw your idols to the moles and to the bats. You wanted to forget that you ever thought you were righteous. You felt ashamed of even your most precious golden idol—your self-righteousness. You wanted to disown it and you were afraid somebody should remind you that you ever worshipped it! It seemed such a horrible thing that you should ever have talked about acceptance before God by your good works. Good works? The very thought seemed a sarcasm on God, an irony of the devil! Good works indeed! Your prayers, your tears, your church attendance, your chapel attendance all seemed like so much dung! You understood Paul's strong language that day—your own righteousness was as offensive to you as his was to him. You put all your old hopes away with abhorrence. Oh, I know what happened to you—the Lord alone was exalted that day!

If anybody had preached a sermon that day about the dignity of human nature, you would have been inclined, like Jenny Geddes, to

throw a stool at his head. If anybody had talked that day of the great things man is capable of, and of virtue that still remains in him after the slight mischief of the Fall, you would have felt indignant at such an infamous lie, for God had stripped you bare of all your glory! In that day you felt yourself to be cast in a ditch and your own clothes abhorred you. But, oh, if anyone had preached of the splendor of the great God that day, of the Infinite Majesty of His holiness and of His justice, you would in silence have bowed your head and shed tears of contrition which would have been the best form of adoration from your penitent heart! If they had begun to preach the amazing mercy and the love of God in Christ, your heart would have leaped to hear the very sound of it, for there are no two things that ever so sweetly met together as an empty sinner and a full Christ! When a soul sees itself, it then has the eyes with which to see Jesus! He that can see his own deformities, shall not be long before he sees the Lord's unspeakable perfections! In that day of self-humbling, cutting away and casting down, I know the Lord alone was exalted in your soul!

Well, then there came another day in your experience which is very sweet to remember—the day *when you saw Jesus hanging on the Cross*—when you put your trust in Him and knew that He had taken away your iniquity and blotted out your sin. Oh, I remember that day—it was my best marriage day and birthday, too—the day when I knew that sin was gone and gone forever! How bright the Cross shone that day! How bright were the eyes of Jesus and how fair His wounds! Ah, the Lord alone was exalted that day! Had anybody preached to me of the power of sacraments and the magic of priests, I would have had abhorred them in my inmost soul and I would have spoken my horror of the thought of giving the glory of the Lord to another! When the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin, where is he that *dares* ask me to let him wash me and to let him put away my sin for me? The blood, the blood of Jesus has taken all our guilt away, once and forever—and woe be unto the man that dares to stand up and put himself side by side with the All-Cleansing Christ! That was how we felt. The Lord alone was exalted in that day.

We feel just the same today. I am sure if people knew the power of the blood of Christ they could never become slaves to the superstitions of men. If they felt the force of being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, they would be like Martin Luther when he sprang from his knees on Pilate's staircase, never to go another step in the weary round of man-made ordinances! What have we to do with these beggarly things when Christ our Lord has set us free and saved us forever from the wrath to come? A sight of Your Cross, O Jesus, makes the priests topple down like Dagon before the ark—and the sacraments that once were trusted in to be despised if placed side by side with You! You alone are exalted in that day!

Since then we have had some other very happy days. The life of a Christian has many illuminated letters in it. Our roll is not written within and without with lamentation. We have high days and holidays and there are times of nearness to Christ which I hardly dare to describe here. I

could venture to talk of them to two or three choice friends that know the secret of the Lord, but these things are not for all ears. These are days when we realize the meaning of the Song of Songs and bless God that ever the book of Canticles was written, otherwise there would have been in the Bible no expression for our ardent love to Christ. On such days we say with rapture, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." "Your love is better than wine." "He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love." "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me." "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He pleases." Read Rutherford's letters if you know the secret beforehand—if not, they will be an enigma to you, even as the Song of Solomon must always be. This much we may say, *when Christ draws us near to Him*, "The Lord alone is exalted in that day." When He wraps us in His crimson vest and shows us all His name and says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you. I have engraved you on the palms of My hands," O Brothers and Sisters, "the Lord alone is exalted in that day!" Then self has gone. We cry, "I am black but comely" and the blackness strikes us as much as the comeliness that Christ has put upon us. We sink into nothing at His feet. These manifestation of His glorious love makes us cry like Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You, therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." The Lord alone is exalted in that day!

Well, you know, Brothers and Sisters, that after some of those high flights when we have been on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration, we get exalted above measure and then we have to be humbled. It is a wretched confession to make, but God's people know how true it is. We wander from the Lord and for a while He leaves us to ourselves when we exalt ourselves. But *when we return from our wandering*, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day. You know how, perhaps, there have been weeks of estrangement between you and your Lord—He has been jealous of your heart and you have been cold to Him—you have gone, perhaps, into the world with too worldly a spirit and the sweetness of His Word has departed from you and His voice is no longer heard in your soul. Then you begin to cry, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with Your free Spirit." You know what it is to cry—

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.
Return, O holy Dove! Return,
Sweet messengers of rest!
I hate the sins that made You mourn
And drove You from my breast."

Ah, when you get your prayer answered, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day!

Do you know what it is to go creeping to the Mercy Seat where once you used to go so boldly? To go there with many tears and with much shame when you used to go with a radiant face—and yet to find your

Jesus waiting there? Do you know what it is to turn to the grand old Book that once you used to read with sacred glee and look there for a sinner's promise such as might suit a broken heart? And do you not recall how many times you found it come home with just the old power till the bones which had been broken began to sing again, and your heart once more was joyous in the Presence of your Lord? Ah, then I know your own beauty has been turned to ashes and all your comeliness has disappeared, for when the Lord restores a soul, that soul also restores the Lord to His proper place—and the Lord alone is exalted in that day.

But at this rate my time will all be gone before I am half through my story! Let me therefore hasten to say, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord is exalted *when a Church begins to sigh and cry for the Lord's Presence*. I hope that the power of the Lord is not forsaking us in any measure here, but it is my fret, my jealousy lest He should in any wise depart from us—lest the spirit of prayer should go from us—lest love to souls should leave us and there should not be abundant conversions in the School and in the ministry and everywhere around our borders. Should such a time of dearth ever come to us, it will be a grand thing when we as a Church can get together and begin to groan and cry for the Lord to return in power! When a church feels it *must* get a blessing—I hope we are feeling it now—in proportion as that desire grows into an agony, the Lord alone will be exalted in that day! The preacher will feel—indeed he does feel every day more and more—his own unworthiness and inability for such a work. Every other worker will, in proportion as the desire for God's Glory shall increase, feel himself to be less and less and still less and less in his own esteem. Oh, when we once come to wish for souls, nobody cares about being important, nobody wishes to be in the front—everybody wants to be there if he can serve God, but he does not want any place of honor, or court any badge of distinction by which he shall be known! A church in agony for souls wants only to see men converted—she does not care how or by whom the work is done as long as the people are brought to Christ! Then is the Lord alone exalted!

When the blessing comes—and it is a notable day when it comes—when the Word of God is with power and men are stricken down and begin to cry for mercy—when the inquirers are many and the converts are multiplied and God blesses each Brother and each Sister with success in soul-winning—oh, then at such times the Lord alone is exalted! I believe that whenever God sends prosperity to the Church and any of the members of the Church begin to ascribe the success to themselves, the blessing is almost sure to go. God will not bless proud workers. If you are going to have a part of the fish for yourself, you may cast the net where you like, but you shall take nothing. But when you are fishing for your Master, He will fill your net to the fullest!

I often think—and therein am I glad in days of sorrow—that when God means to bless any of us, He generally lowers us into the very dust. *When we are willing to be nothing*, then the Lord alone is exalted in that day. If you that are cooks were about to serve a dinner, you would not use a dish, I am sure, until first of all you had cleaned it. You would first wipe it right out, then you would set it on the shelf—and when you

needed a goodly dish with which to serve up goodly meat, you would reach down for the empty dish that you had well wiped, would you not? Some of us do not get quite wiped out of our last success and so we have no more. We still retain a flavor of our last self-congratulation and so the Master will not use us. When He puts us in hot water, makes us see our filth and then wipes us right out and we, perhaps, are inclined to say, "Lord, I am now good-for-nothing," we shall be more likely to be of some service to Him! Perhaps He will put us on the shelf for a while. He can easily do that with some of us—a little twinge of pain and sickness—and we are useless! We seem to say, "Lord, what am I but an empty, cracked dish?" Ah, but then He comes and takes us down and uses us—and that is worth waiting for! I always expect a greater blessing when there is greater soul-humbling among us. Would not you be glad to be humbled, dear Brother, if God would use you more as a consequence? Today I saw, as I went home, some old crocks and broken bricks and pieces of all sorts of earthenware put by the side of the road because the road is going to be widened, and I thought to myself, "If the Lord would only use me as an old broken crock to help to make a roadway for Him to ride through London, so that He might be glorified, I would be glad to be thus honored." Do you not feel so too? Well, perhaps He will take you at your word one of these days! Brother, if God humbles you in order to use you, you may not like it as much as you think you will, but still, that is how we should demean ourselves. We should be willing to be anything, or to be nothing, according to His will.

When Christians feel they must somehow live to the glory of God, I know there is a blessing coming—yes, that the blessing *has* come, for then the Lord alone is exalted! When the man of God says, "I must not live any longer for saving money or simply to bring up my children respectably, or to get a subsistence for myself," then the Lord is exalted. And when Christians feel that they cannot live for a party or for a section of the Church, but that they must live for God and Christ, and for the pure Word of the Gospel and that everything else must go overboard except that which is for the glory of God, then we may be sure that the Lord has come among us and that He is working mightily! Behold, these are the signs! When He has insulted all pride, dimmed all human glory and magnified Himself, then indeed we have times of refreshing from His Presence and the Lord alone is exalted in that day!

Now I have almost done. But I want you to notice that there is a day coming—it will come very soon to some of our venerable friends around me. It will come very soon—perhaps quite soon to some of us in middle life who are still in health—the day *when we shall be called to go upstairs* because the Master has a message for us. When we read the message, it will say, "The time has come for you to gather up your feet in your bed and to meet your father's God." O Brothers and Sisters, the Lord alone will be exalted in that day if we are, indeed, His people! I fancy I see the dying minister when they bring his sermons up to him. Can he glory in them? He says, "I bless God that He enabled me to preach His Truth. '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,' but I cannot glory in these." If you shall bring up to him the number of

his converts and shall tell him of the churches that he built up and the places that he has evangelized, I will tell you what he will say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Take the best saint among us and put him on the borders of Emmanuel's land and let him hear the bells of Heaven ring out the never-ending Sabbath—listen whether he will talk about himself or about the little Church to which he belongs as if it were the whole Church of God! Oh no, no, no, a thousand times no! On the borders of Emmanuel's land all the glory is to the Lord alone! Redeeming blood, electing love, effectual calling, persevering Grace—all these will be sung about, but there will be no songs about ourselves or anything else but God when we come there! Mother, are you making an idol of that baby? You will not be able to do that when you come near your departing hour. Christian man, are you making an idol of anything you have in this world? It will be utterly abolished then! Anything wherein you are trusting and finding comfort will fail you then! The Lord alone will then be your stay and your song! The Lord alone! If you feel the bottom as you wade into the river, you will feel that it is good. But, by-and-by, you will be where there is no bottom—the river will be a river to swim in and then will you need to know that underneath you are the everlasting arms! If you are sure of this, you will take that mighty plunge as when a swimmer stretches out his hands to swim—and you will be in Heaven in a moment!

And, Beloved, *when we get into Glory*, the Lord alone will be exalted there! What a difference will come over us in the matter of those little things wherein we glory now. Petty trifles sometimes lift us up very high. Oh, how loftily we carry our heads sometimes, poor fools that we are, because of this thing in which we are superior to some fellow worm, or that thing in which we have not erred as some other man has done! But oh, up there, up there, up there, all harps will be for Jesus! All the vials shall be full of odors for Jesus! Harps and tongues, voices and strings, all for the Three-One God! All for the Lord alone! Free Grace begins to teach us here that God alone must be exalted—and when we have learned that lesson, well then, Glory will come in to cap the whole and make us feel that it were absurd even to imagine that any person or anything could share the glory with the Infinite Majesty of God!

There, now, I have done. Only I would ask you this. Is there one here that will not give God all the glory? If so, dear Brother, you *cannot* be saved. Salvation may almost hinge upon this question—Are you willing to be saved so that the Lord alone shall be exalted in your salvation? Are you willing no more to trust in your good works, your prayers, your tears, your feelings or anything else of your own, but to come and trust in the finished work of Jesus and give yourself up absolutely and entirely to be His? Are you willing to be His servant, His property forever, that henceforth your only glory may be in His dear name, your only boasting in His Cross? If so, He accepts you and He will save you! But if you must have the glory, then you shall not have the salvation! Where, then, will *your* glory be? He that glories in himself shall perish, but he that will glory only in the Lord shall live forever! God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 2.

1, 2. *The word that Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.* What grand hopes are kindled in our bosoms by words like these! The Church has always been as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, but still she has not been known in all parts of the world and she has never been known with that universal eminence which attaches to the things of this world—the things of pomp and show. But the day shall come when she shall be the highest of the high! Her mountain shall be established "on the tops of the mountains"—when she shall be best known of all the known and shall become what she was always meant to be—the metropolis of the whole world, the center to which all kindreds shall flow! Not the Jews alone shall then possess the oracles of God, but all nations shall flow unto it!

3. *And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.* In these happy days which have, in a measure, begun, but which in their fullness have not yet dawned upon us, the Spirit of the Lord will work in the hearts of multitudes of men a desire after God. They will be willing to worship Him—they will say, "Let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah." They will be anxious to learn what He would teach. This shall be the reason why they go—"He will teach us of His ways." They shall not only wish to learn, but be quick to practice—"and we will walk in His paths." Sometimes we have to complain of the masses of mankind forsaking the worship of God altogether. And too often those that come together come with some inferior motive—not that they may be taught of God. And even some that are, in a manner, taught, are slow to obey. The Lord teaches them by His ministers but they do not walk in His paths. Blessed days when all this shall be reversed and the multitudes shall flock to the Church and to the Christ!

4. *And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.* They shall not save their weapons for future use, or believe in the theory that the best way to preserve peace is to be prepared for war—but they shall beat their swords into plowshares and turn their spears into pruning hooks. The spirit which created war shall be conquered. "Why are there wars and fighting among you? Come they not because of your lusts?" When lust and envy and hatred shall be dethroned and the Spirit of Christ shall be dominant over the world, then shall they learn war no more—

"O happy day!
O long-expected day begin!"

Let each one of us labor mightily according as the Spirit works in us to bring about a consummation so devoutly to be wished.

5. *O house of Jacob, come you, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.* The Jew shall come. Long rejecting the Messiah, yet shall he, with the Gentile, walk in the light of Jehovah. Now the theme changes. We are led to see why it is that a happy state of things does not exist at this moment, and did not exist in the land of Judah. Sin—sin is the cause of the mischief—idolatry—the setting up of something in the place of God!

6. *Therefore You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with ways from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines and they are pleased with the children of foreigners.* The nations then had their soothsayers and fortunetellers. The people of God ought not to have so degraded themselves, but they did and, therefore, they provoked Him—and they sought out foreigners and entered into league with them, whereas the Lord had bidden them be a people separate unto Himself. It always goes ill with those who profess to be God's people when they forget their separated character and join with the world.

7, 8. *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures. Their land is also full of horses neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols.* How these things generally go together! If a nation prospers and gets wealthy, it is so apt to seek external worship of a gaudy kind for itself. It must then have its ritualism and its idols, for if men have their gold and have their chariots, the simple worship of the unseen God seems to be beneath the dignity of their taste!

8, 9. *They worship the work of their own hands that which their own fingers have made: And the people bow down, and each man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not.* Mark the indignant spirit of the Prophet, as if he had been an Elijah, or had the mind of a John Knox of later days. It seemed as if he could not ask God to forgive such a stupendous folly as the setting up of visible objects of worship, and the turning away from the true invisible God. O idolatry, what an accursed sin you are! And how rampant are you in this land at this day!

10-12. *Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, for fear of the LORD and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of Hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:* Whatever God does or does not do, there is one role of His procedure from which He never deviates, namely, to cast down the proud and those who boast from their high places. He condescends to the humble and He has a tender eye to the contrite, but wherever man, the creature, dares to think himself great, God will bare His arm to overthrow him, or puff at him—for a puff will do it—and he shall pass away.

13-16. *And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon*

every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish and upon all pleasant pictures. No matter what it is that man sets up, however good or great, if he dares to bring it into competition with God, God's hand is against him and He will break it in pieces! Whenever God comes out of His secret place, this is always the end of it. He came against Babylon and against Nineveh. Yes, ask the traveler who has wonderingly descended into those vast mounds, "Where are those mighty monarchies now?" Where is the power of Sennacherib and where the might of Nebuchadnezzar? They have gone. The dust is their sole monument. Turn, in later days to the great power of Rome and as one walks through Rome, that vast mausoleum of an empire—where one treads at every step upon an empire's dust—what do you think but that God has broken the iron kingdom and made what seemed to be an omnipotent power to pass away from off the face of the earth? Woe unto all that is great and all that is high and all that exalts itself above God! Whether a temporal power, or a spiritual, it shall pass away like a dream of the night, or a vision of the air, for the Lord IS—and all else is *nothing*.

17-20. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.* The worshipper of idols shall be ashamed of them. The precious metal shall not save them—the work of art for which so many plead—"It is true the thing is defiling and idolatrous," say some, "but look at the skill, the taste, the handicraft, the precious metal!" When God makes bare His arm, they shall fling even gold and silver to the moles and to the bats!

21, 22. *To go into the clefts of the rock, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His Majesty when He arises to shake terribly the earth. Sever yourself from such a man, whose breath is in his nostrils for of what account is he?"* What a rebuke this is to kingcraft and especially to priestcraft. "For of what account is he?" You may lay what hands you will on him, you may gird him with what robes you please and you may pour upon him your anointing oil and your sacred chrisms—but what is he, after all, but a man whose breath is in his nostrils? Sever yourself from such a man, "*for of what account is he*?"

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

THE SINGING ARMY
NO. 2923

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1905.

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"And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord."
2 Chronicles 20:4.

JERUSALEM was startled by sudden news. There had for a great while been quiet preparations made in the distant countries beyond Jordan. Upon its mountains, Edom had been getting ready—the workshops of Petra had been ringing with the hammer, the enemies of Israel had been beating their pruning hooks into spears and swords and they were now coming down in hordes. There were three great nations and these were assisted by the odds and ends of all the nations round about so that a great company eager for plunder was drawn up in battle. They had heard about the riches of the temple at Jerusalem. They knew that the people of Judea had for years been flourishing and they were now coming to kill and to destroy and to sack and to plunder. They were like the grasshoppers or the locusts for multitude. What were the people of God to do? How were these poor Judeans to defend themselves? Their immediate resort was to their God. They do not appear to have looked up their armor and their swords with any particular anxiety. The fact was that the case was so altogether hopeless, as far as they were concerned, that it was no use looking to anything beneath the skies. And as they were driven from all manifest earthly resorts, they were compelled to lift up their eyes to God.

And their godly king Jehoshaphat aided them in so doing. A general fast was proclaimed and the preparation to meet the hosts of Moab, Ammon and Edom was prayer! No doubt if the Ammonites had heard of it, they would have laughed. Edom would have scoffed at it and Moab would have cursed those that made supplication. "What? Do they suppose that their prayers can defeat us?" would have been the sneer of their adversaries. Yet this was Israel's artillery—this was their eighty-one ton gun! When it was ready, it would throw one bolt, and only one—and that would crush three nations at once! God's people resorted only to the invisible arm—the arm Omnipotent—and they did well and wisely.

Now, if the Lord shall teach us to imitate them and, by His Grace, enable us in doing it, we shall have learned a great lesson! The preacher needs to learn it as much as anybody and he prays that each one of you may also be scholars in the School of Faith and become very proficient in the Divine art of prayer and praise!

I. First, then, HOW DID THEY ASK FOR HELP? They asked for their help, as you know, by a general fast and prayer. But I mean, what was the style of that prayer in which they approached the Lord?

And the reply is, first, *they asked for help, expressing their confidence*. "O Lord God of our fathers, are not You God in Heaven? And rule not You over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in Your hand is there not power and might so that none is able to withstand You?" If we begin by doubting, our prayer will limp. Faith is the tendon of Achilles and if that is cut, it is not possible for us to wrestle with God. But as long as we have that strong sinew, that mighty tendon unhurt, we can prevail with God in prayer. It is a rule of the Kingdom, though God often goes beyond it, "According to your faith be it done unto you." I have known Him give us a hundred times as much as our faith, but, Brothers and Sisters, I have never known Him give us less! That could not possibly be. This is His *minimum* rule, I may say, "According to your faith be it unto you." When, therefore, in time of trouble you ask help of God, ask it believing that He is able to give it! Ask it expecting that He will bestow it. Do not grieve the Spirit of God by unworthy doubts and mistrusts—these things will be like fiery arrows in your own soul and drink up the very life of your strength. However hard the struggle and difficult the trial, if you seek the Lord, seek Him in the confidence He deserves.

Then *they sought God, pleading His past acts*. This is a fashion of prayer which has been very common among the saints and it has proved to be very potent. "Are not You our God who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people, Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham, Your friend forever?" Remember what God has done for you and then say, as a sweet refrain, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." When you are praying, recollect what He was yesterday if you cannot see that He is comfortable towards you today. If there are no present manifestations of Divine favor, recall the former days—the days of old—the years of the right hand of the Most High. He has been gracious to you—can you tell how gracious? He has abounded towards you in loving-kindness, tenderness and faithfulness—He has never been a wilderness or a land of drought unto you. Well, then, if in six troubles He has delivered you, will you not trust Him for seven? If you get to 60 troubles, cannot you trust Him for sixty-one? You have been carried, some of you, I see, till gray hairs are on your head. How long do you expect to live? Do you think you have got an odd 10 years left? Well, do you think that the Lord who has blessed you 70 years will not keep you the other ten? We say that we ought always to trust a man until he deceives us. We reckon a man honest till we find him otherwise. Let it be so with God, I beseech you! Since we have found Him good, faithful, true, kind, tender—let us not think harshly of Him now that we have come into strains, but let us come to Him thus and say, "Are not You our God? Did not You bring us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay? Did You not bring us up out of the Egypt of our sin? Surely You have not brought us into the wilderness to destroy us? Will You leave us now? True, we are unworthy, but we always were so and if You needed a reason for leaving us, You have had ten thousand reasons long ago! Lord,

do not be angry with Your servants—do not cast us away." That is the style of pleading which prevails! Imitate these men of old who asked help by recalling the past.

Proceeding a little farther in their prayer, we see that *they pleaded the promise of God*, which promise was made at the time when Solomon dedicated the Temple. "That if when evil comes upon us, we cry unto You in our affliction, then You will hear and help." He that gets the promise of God and grasps God with the promise—he does and must prevail. I have known a man sometimes unable to grasp anything—the object has slipped away, his hands have been slippery—and I have seen him as he has taken up some sand in his hands and then he has been able to get a grip. I like to plunge my hands into the promises—then I find myself able to grasp with a grip of determination the mighty faithfulness of God! An omnipotent plea with God is, "Do as You have said." You know how a man nails you when he brings your very words before you. "There," he says, "that is what you said you would do! Of your own free will you pledged yourself to do this." Why then you cannot get away from it, for it is the way with the saints that if they swear to their own hurt they change not—they must be true to the words they speak even if it is to their own damage! Of the saints' Master it is always true. Has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good? Here then is a mighty instrument to be used in prayer! "Lord, You have said this or that. You have said it, now do as You have said. You have said, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.' You have said, 'He shall deliver you in six troubles, and in seven there shall no evil touch you.' You have said, 'Surely in blessing I will bless you.' You have said, 'The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' You have said, 'Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days so shall your strength be.' Lord, there is Your promise for it." With such a plea you must prevail with a faithful God!

Again, as these people asked for help, *they confessed they own unhappy condition*. There is a great power in that. One of the strongest pleas with generosity is the urgency of poverty. And one of the most prevailing arguments to be used in prayer with God is a truthful statement of our condition—a confession of our sad estate. So they said to the Lord these words, "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: therefore our eyes are upon You." They had no might and they had no plan. "We have no might, neither know we what to do." Sometimes even if you cannot do the thing, it is a little comfort to know how it might be done if you had the power—but these perplexed people neither could do it, nor knew how to do it! They were nonplussed. A little nation like Judah, surrounded by these powerful enemies, truly had no might. Their weakness and ignorance were great pleas—the logic was Divine. "Neither know we what to do: therefore our eyes are upon You." It was as if they had said, "If we could do it ourselves, well, You might very well say, 'Go and do it. What did I give you the strength for, but that you could use the strength in doing it?' But when we have no

strength and neither know we what to do, we come and just lay the case down at Your feet and say, 'There it is—our eyes are upon You.'"

Perhaps you think that is not praying. I tell you it is the most powerful form of prayer, just to set your case before God, just to lay bare all your sorrow and all your needs and then say, "Lord, there it is." You know a man must not beg in the streets of London—the police will not have it—and I daresay that is a very wise regulation. But what does the needy man do? Have you not seen him? He is dressed like a countryman and looks half-starved. And his knees can be seen through an old pair of corduroys as he stoops. He does not beg, not he—he only sits down at the corner of the road. He knows quite well that the very sight of his condition is enough. There are one or two persons about the streets of London whose faces are a fortune to them—pale, thin and woebegone—they appeal more eloquently than words! I was going to say that there is a man who comes to the Tabernacle who is just of the same sort. I could point him out, but I do not see him now. But he does come here and the very way in which he shivers—the remarkable manner in which he looks ill, though he is not ill—takes in people who are continually being duped by his appearance! All the world knows that it is the look of the thing, the very appearance and show of sorrow that prevails with people more than any words that are used!

Now, when you cannot pray in words, go and lay bare your sorrow before God—just go and show your soul. Tell God what it is that burdens and distresses you and you will prevail with the bounteous heart of our God who is not moved by eloquence of words and oratory of tongue—but is swift to answer the true oratory, the true eloquence of real distress—and who is as wise to detect sham misery as to succor real sorrow!

I wonder whether I recall to some of you any particular times of trial? To myself I do. If I do not to you, at any rate, there is one common affliction which has overwhelmed us all—that is the great affliction of sin. When sin, with its multitudinous host of offenses, becomes manifest to us under conviction and we do not know how to meet one single sin or to answer one of a thousand of the charges that might be brought against us. When we feel that we have no might whatever and perhaps we realize that through sin we have brought ourselves into such peculiar circumstances that we do not know how to get out of it, though we feel that we must get out somehow. When we go to the right that seems blocked up and the left seems equally closed to us—when to go back we dare not or to go forward we cannot—then how wonderfully God clears the way! In what a marvelous manner we find our enemies all dead that we thought were going to kill us! And as for those that were going to rob us, we are enriched by them! Instead of taking us for a spoil, there they fall and their spoil becomes our right and we take it home with us rejoicing. Oh, what wonders God can do! He loves us to state the difficulty we are in, so that when He gets us out of it, we may remember that we were in such a condition! It was a real disaster and a time of real trial—and yet the Lord redeemed us from it.

What did they do after asking for help, after pleading the promise and confessing their condition? Why, *they expressed their confidence in God.*

They said, "Our eyes are upon You." What did they mean by that? They meant, "Lord, if help does come, it must come from You. We are looking to You for it. It cannot come from anywhere else, so we look to You. But we believe it will come. Men will not look for that which they know will not come. We feel sure it will come, but we do not know how, so we are looking. We do not know when, but we are looking. We do not know what You would have us do, but as the servant looks to her mistress, so are we looking to You, Lord. Lord, we are looking." That is a grand posture!

Do you not know that is the way you are saved—by looking unto Jesus? And that is the way you have got to be saved, all the way between here and Heaven. Whatever trouble comes, looking is to save you. Looking, often waiting, looking like the weary watcher from the tower when he wants to see the gray tints of the coming morning, when the night is long and he is weary, but still looking. "Our eyes are upon You." They are full of tears, but still they are upon You. They are getting hazy, too, with sleep, but still they are upon You—such eyes as we have. We do look to You." I have sometimes blessed the Lord that He has not said, "See Jesus—see Me and be saved." What He has said is, "Look." Sometimes if you cannot see you have done your part if you have looked—looked into the darkness. "Lord, that Cross of Yours, it would give me such joy if I could see it. I cannot quite see it—it looms very indistinctly on my gaze—but I do look." It is *looking*, you know, that saves, for as we look, the eyes get stronger and we are enlightened. And so in this case they looked and they found deliverance. God help us, Brothers and Sisters, to do the same!

That is how they asked for help.

II. Now, secondly, HOW DID THEY RECEIVE HELP?

Their help came to them, first, by a message from God. *They received a fresh assurance of God's goodness*. A new Prophet was raised up and he spoke with new words. "Be not afraid, not dismayed," he said, "by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's." Now, in our case, we shall not have a new promise—that would not be possible—

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

But you will have that promise sweetly laid home to your soul and the Spirit of God will bear witness with that promise, and so strengthen and comfort you that you will get deliverance even before deliverance comes because it often happens that to be saved *from* the fear of the trouble is the main business! To be quieted, calmed and assured is really to be saved from the sting of trial. The trial itself is nothing if it does not bring a sting to your soul. If your heart is not troubled, then there is not much trouble in anything else. All the poverty and all the pain in the world would prevail nothing if the evil of it did not enter into the soul and vex it. So, in this emergency, God began to answer His people by quieting them. "Be not afraid nor dismayed, for the battle is not yours but God's: the Lord will be with you."

As that gracious promise calmed their fears so that they were able, without fear, to face the impending attack, *they then received distinct*

direction what to do on the morrow, which was to be the day of the assault. That direction was, "Go out to meet the foe." How often has God given His people deliverance by quieting them as to their course of action. Already the step they have taken has delivered them before they know it. The Israelites, by then marching out to meet the foe—and marching out with songs and hosannas, as we shall see—were doing the best possible thing to rout their foes! As we have already said, there is no doubt that their enemies were unable to comprehend such a defense as this—they must have supposed that there was some treachery or ambush intended—and so they began to slay each other! And Israel had nothing to do but to keep on singing!

Then came the real Providence—*they received actual deliverance*. When the people of Judah came to their foes they found there were no foes. There they all lay dead! None of the men of might could raise their hands against those whom God had favored. After this fashion will God deliver you, Brothers and Sisters—in answer to prayer He will be your defense! Therefore, sing unto His name! Did not He deliver you thus when you went out to meet the great army of your sins? You saw that Christ had put them away and your heart danced within you as you said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for He has slain our sins and they can curse us no more." So has it been with a great many troubles that have appeared to you to be overwhelming! When you have come to them, lo, they have disappeared! They have been cleared out of your way as you have advanced and you have had nothing to do but to sing and praise the name of the Lord!

III. And now, thirdly, and this is the main point, let us note HOW THEY ACTED AFTER THEY HAD PRAYED AND HEARD GOD'S VOICE. They asked for help and they had it! How did they then behave?

Well first, as soon as they had an assurance that God would deliver them, *they worshipped*. That is one of the intentions of trial—to revive in us the spirit of devotion and communion with God. And mercy, when it comes on the back of a great trouble, leads us sweetly to prayer. I guarantee you there had not been such a piece of worship in all Jerusalem as there was that day, when, after that young son of the Levites had stood and delivered the Word of the Lord, the king bowed his head and all the people bowed their heads and did homage to the God of Israel! You could have heard the sound even of the wind among the trees at the time, for they were as hushed and as quiet as you were just now. Oh, when you know the Lord means to deliver you, bow your head and just give Him the quiet, deep, solemn worship of your spirit! I do not suppose we shall ever fall into Quakers' worship in our public assemblies, though an occasional experience of it would do you a world of good—to sit still before the Lord and to adore, and to adore, and to adore again and again, and still again, braces the spirit and clears the soul for the understanding of eternal realities! They worshipped, but why did they do it? They were not delivered. No, but they were *sure they were going to be delivered*. Their enemies were not dead. No, they were all alive, but they were sure *they would be dead*, so they had worship—and their devotion rose from trustful and grateful hearts! May we get into a

worshipping frame of mind and be kept in it. Then God will appear for our help.

As soon as the worship had closed, or rather before it had quite closed, *they began to praise*. As we read just now, up went the loud voices of the trained singers under the leadership of the chief musician and they praised the name of the Lord. They sang, as we do—

"For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

That is the way you should deal with God. Before the deliverance comes, praise Him. Praise Him for what is coming! Adore Him for what He is going to do! No song is so sweet, I think, in the ear of God as the song of a man who blesses Him for "Grace he has not tasted yet"—for what he has not got, but what he is sure will come! The praise of gratitude for the past is sweet, but that praise is sweeter which adores God for the future in full confidence that it shall be well. Therefore, take down your harps from the willows, O you people, and praise you the name of the Lord, though the fig tree still does not blossom and the cattle still die in the stall and the sheep still perish from the folds—though there should be to you no income to meet your needs and you should be brought almost to necessity's door—still bless the Lord whose mighty Providence cannot fail and shall not fail as long as there is one of His children to be provided for! Your song while you are still in distress will be sweet music to the ear of God!

After they had worshipped and sung, the next thing these people did was to act—*they went forth marching*. If there were unbelievers in Jerusalem, I know what they said. They stood at the gates and they said, "Well, this is foolishness! These Moabites and Ammonites are come to kill you and they will do it, but you might as well wait till they get here. You are just going to deliver yourselves up." That would be the idea of unbelief and that is also what it sometimes seems to our little faith when we go and commit ourselves to God." What? Are you going on your knees to confess your guilt before God and admit that you deserve to be lost? Are you going to withdraw every excuse and apology, every trust of your own and give yourself up, as it were, to destruction?" Yes, that is exactly what to do and it is the highest wisdom to do it! We are going out of the city marching away according to orders and if, as you say, we are to give ourselves up, so we will!

Perhaps, in your case, you are going to do an action of which everybody else says, "Well, now, that will be very foolish. You should be crafty. You should show a little cunning." "No," you say, "I cannot do other than I am bid. I must do the right." Probably that will turn out to be the very best thing in the world to have done. The nearest way between any two points is by a straight line, the straightway will always be better than the crooked way! In the long run it is always so. Go right out, then, in the name of God! Meet your difficulties calmly and fairly. Do not have any plans or tricks, but just commit yourselves to God—that is the way by which you may in confidence expect to find deliverance. These people of old went out of the city.

But now, notice again, that as they went out, *they went out singing*. They sang before they left the city, sang as they left the city and when the adversary came in sight they began to sing again. The trumpet sounded and the harps rang out their notes and the minstrels again shouted for joy. And this was the song—

"For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure!"

It must have had a grand significance when they sang that passage, "To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever." Why, every singer, as he sang those lines which look to us like a mere repetition, must have felt how applicable they were to their present condition when there was a Moabite and an Edomite and an Ammonite to be overthrown in the name of the mighty God whose mercy endures forever! So they kept on singing.

You will observe that while they were singing, God had worked the great deliverance for them. When the singing ceased, *they prepared to gather up the spoil*. What a different employment from what they expected! You can see them stripping the bodies, taking off the helmets of gold and the leg armor of brass—the jewels from the ears and from about the necks of the princes. They stripped the dead of their Babylonian garments and their wedges of gold. They heaped up the tents—the rich tents of the eastern nations—till they said to one another, "We know not what to do." But the difficulty was different from what might have befallen them at the first. Then they did not know what to do because of their weakness in the presence of their foes—now the difficulty was because of the greatness of the spoil! "We cannot carry it home," they would say to each other, "there is too much of it. It will take us days and days to stock away this wondrous booty!" Now, child of God, it shall be so with you also. I do not know how, but if you can only trust God and praise Him and go straight ahead, you shall see such wondrous things that you shall be utterly astonished!

Then what will you do? Why, you will at once again begin praising the Lord, for so did they. *They went back singing.* "They came back to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the House of the Lord." When God has done great things for you and brought you through your present difficulty, you must be sure to repay Him in the courts of His House with your loudest music and your most exultant notes—blessing again and again the name of the Lord!

After that *they had rest*. In the narrative it is added, "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about." His enemies were afraid to come and touch him anymore. After a very sharp storm it generally happens that there is long rest. So shall it be with all the Lord's people. You will get through this trouble, Brother, and afterwards it will be smooth sailing for a very long time. I have known a child of God have a very cyclone—it has seemed as if he must be utterly destroyed. But after it was over there has not been a ripple of the calm of his life. People have envied him and wondered at his quietness! He had

had all his storms at once and when they were over he had come into smooth water that never seemed ruffled. Perhaps you will have the same experience—only ask the Great Pilot of the Galilean Lake to steer you safely through your tempest and then, when the storm shall cease at His bidding, you shall be glad because you are quiet—so will He bring you to your desired haven.

I have been desirous to speak these comfortable words to God's children, for well I know how they are tried. And I pray the Lord, the Comforter, to apply the word to their troubled hearts. But, I never can finish my discourse without having the very sad thought that there are always in our congregation some to whom these comfortable things do not belong. They are not Believers. They have never trusted in Christ. If this is so with you—if this is so—ah, Friend, you have to fight your own battles! You have to bear your own briars, you have to carry your own burdens. And when you come at the Last Great Day before the Judgment Seat, you will have to answer for your own sins and to bear your own punishment! God have mercy upon you and deliver you from such a condition as this. It is a bad condition to live in—it is a terrible condition to die in. May you be brought to receive Christ for your Substitute and your Surety, and glorify His name forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 20; PSALM 47.

2 Chronicles 20:1-3. *It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There comes a great multitude against you from beyond the sea on this side of Syria; and, behold they are in Hazazon Tamar, which is En Gedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.* An angry God is to be sought. Even though He smite us, we must turn to Him. It is from the hand that wields the rod that we are to expect deliverance, if it ever comes at all.

4. *And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.* The host of enemies were so enormous that they threatened to eat up all the land. The men of Judah could not keep them out. They would sack and storm and burn and destroy right and left. You see the great peril. What a heavy chastisement it must have been to the king to see his land thus in danger of being destroyed. But they had begun to pray.

5-12. *And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the House of the LORD, before the new court, and said, O LORD God of our fathers, are not You God in Heaven? And rule not You over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in Your hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand You? Are not You our God who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham, Your friend forever? And they dwelt*

therein and have built You a sanctuary therein for Your name, saying, If, when evil comes upon us as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house and in Your Presence, (for Your name is in this house), and cry unto You in our affliction, then You will hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but You turned from them, and destroyed them not. Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon You. What a prayer it is! How argumentative! How it pleads his case as an advocate in a court of law, appealing to the mercy of God as logically as if it were to be argued out of the Divine heart. Oh, how good it would be if we learned to pray like this—in this earnest, importunate fashion! May the Lord teach us to pray as He taught His disciples!

13. *And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives and their children.* It must have been a wonderful sight—the vast crowd—the pleading king—his voice heard afar, and the men and the women. But to my mind, the most touching thing of all is the little children standing there, making their silent appeal to God that He would not let the babies be destroyed—that He would not suffer the young children to be slain by the cruel hosts that now threatened the land. Young children's prayers are powerful. Little ones, may God teach you how to pray!

14. *Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation.* Perhaps he had never delivered a prophecy before. This is his first sermon, but the Spirit of God was with him and he could not hold his tongue.

15-17. *And he said, Hearken you, all Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat, Thus says the LORD unto You, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. Tomorrow go you down against them: behold they come up by the cliff of Ziz and you shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Jerusalem. You shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand you still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.* Oh, how those words must have fallen on the weary ears of those who were in such trouble! And how glad those ears must have been to hear such a message of wondrous mercy and so near at hand, too! "Tomorrow." Imminent danger brings eminent mercy and when the lion is about to leap upon his prey, then comes the lion slayer and breaks his teeth and delivers his lamb even from between his jaws! Glory be to God for such promises as He gives to His people in times of trouble, even such promises as He gave here.

18. *And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD,*

worshipping the LORD. What a sight! That is the kind of ritualism one likes—when the posture is suggested by the feelings—when the man feels that there is nothing else to do but to bow before the Lord! The king could not speak, he was too full of gratitude—too joyous at the thought that God had so appeared for him. And he felt that the only thing he could do was in silence to bow his head and prostrate himself before God. Have you not sometimes felt so full of gratitude that you could not express yourself?—

"A sacred silence checks our songs
And praise sits silent on our tongues."

Now, while they were worshipping, and just as they had finished that silent adoration, the joy-strains were heard. They had taken a breath!

19. *And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.* Here, again, we seem to be carried by great waves of excitement and devotion. One moment we are sinking down in adoration, now all rising up to listen to the loud voice of God's priests and Levites. But they have to wait for the morrow.

20, 21. *And they rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me O Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, Believe in the LORD your God, so shall you be established; believe His Prophets, so shall you prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say Praise the LORD; for His mercy endures forever.* So you can see them marching out of the city gate with the king at their head and, as they go out, the army is marching with banners and with songs and hosannas! This is their style of going out to meet the foe!

22, 23. *And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir which were come against Judah and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Mount Seir, everyone helped to destroy each other.* There were three or four nations and some jealousy or mistrust must have manifested itself. Or some mistake had been made and the motley host divided itself into self-destroying bands. The Israelites had nothing to do but to sing! Perhaps their very singing was the cause of that disruption among the bands. They could not make it out. They had seen the people rush to battle with discordant cries, but these were marching along as if they were coming to a wedding feast, singing hymns and chants. That was a new style of fighting. So the Moabites and the Ammonites thought that there must be something wrong. "Surely there must be some confederates in the camp," they would say. They suspected each other, as bad men very soon do, and so they fell afoul of one another and spared the Israelites the trouble of killing them.

24-26. *And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude and, behold, they were dead*

bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called The Valley of Berachah unto this day. This is the Valley of Blessing—surely an appropriate name worthy of long remembrance!

27. *Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy.* Another march of hosannas. What a wonderful sight it must have been! We have read of the Battle of the Spurs, but here is the Battle of the Song—the battle of praise! How wondrously it was won! Jehoshaphat is now in the forefront of those who go back singing. He feels he must sing the loudest who has had such signal mercy after his sin.

27-30. *For the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the House of the LORD. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.* Now, it is a long piece we have read, but I think it would not be complete if I did not read you the song which they sang. In all probability it was the 47th Psalm. You can almost hear them singing it as they are marching back.

Psalm 47:1-9. *O clap your hands all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; He is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing you praises with understanding. God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted.* The delivered people give God all the glory. He reigns, and He it is who subdues the people. Let Him be exalted in the congregations of the people and praised in the assembly of the elders now and evermore!

—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.

PREVENTING GRACE
NO. 2924

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1862.

"And David said to Abigail, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed is your advice, and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed, and from avenging myself with my own hand."
1 Samuel 25:32, 33.

I MUST tell you the story, for if you do not realize the circumstances, you will not understand these words. David was in the position of an outlaw in his county. He knew that he was one day to be king over Israel, but he had such reverence for Saul, the Lord's' anointed, that he would do nothing that would look like usurpation, or seem in any way to injure the reigning monarch. Some 400 restless spirits who had been impoverished by the tyrannical government of Saul, persons who were in debt and generally discontented, came to him in the caves of Adullam and there formed an army of freebooters of which David was the head. A little while afterwards, 200 others, men like-minded, came and united themselves with this force so that David found himself at the head of an army of 600 men of war, all of them valiant men, ready for exploits. You will see he was in a very difficult position—he must find work for these men. They were soldiers of fortune and they must be employed, yet it was impossible for him to act like a traitor—he would not lead his men against his king. He would not begin a revolution in order to provide for his followers.

What, then, must he do if he desired to still be loyal to the king and, at the same time, not to disband his men? He occupied his forces in peacefully guarding the herds of the great sheep-masters who fed their flocks on the high steeps of Carmel. This is not a thing uncommon in the East even today. Certain sheikhs, with their body of followers, sometimes undertake to keep off the Bedouin Arabs and other marauders who attack the flocks of the sheep-master and, of course, they expect to have some kind of remuneration for their trouble.

Now, all through the time that the sheep were in the pasture, David and his men watched over the flocks of a certain sheep-master called Nabal. When the time came round for shearing the flocks, David sent some of his followers to Nabal, to the feast of sheep shearing, presenting his request that some contribution might be sent for the support of his men on account of their having taken care of Nabal's flocks which otherwise would certainly have been diminished by systematic plunder. But Nabal had got all the good he wanted from David and he refrained

not from answering David's messenger in a most rude, surly manner. "There are many servants," he said, "now-a-days, that break away, every man, from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not where they are?"

Such a churlish message could not fail to nettle David. Indeed, we know that it stung him to the quick. He had not run away from his master, but his master had driven him away and, as one who was apart from Saul, but yet was not Saul's antagonist, he was doing the best he could to maintain the peace. His blood boiled over. "Have I guarded the flocks of this miserable wretch," he said, "all this time, and kept my men there merely to attend his sheep, when they might have been profitable at some other work? And now, when I send to him, instead of giving me a donation, he answers me in this churlish manner!" Then, turning to his men, he said, "Gird you on, every man, his sword, we will show this fellow how to treat us." So, leaving 200 men to guard the caves, 400 marched out, David at the head, his hot blood all ablaze within him, his anger showing in his face. "God do so to me," he said, "and more, also, if I leave so much as a dog of that man's house alive by the morning light!" He sallied forth doubtless with the full intent to destroy Nabal, to make his house a heap of ruins and then to devastate the sheep-master's estate! What a false position for a child of God! But David was naturally impulsive and somehow men that have any life in them do sometimes get their tempers aroused. We hear of some people that are as quiet and as peaceful and as easy as a pond of stagnant water—certainly their peace does not flow like a river, and their righteousness is never lashed to fury like the waves of the sea. David was not one of these.

As the son of Jesse rashly pursues the man of Mount Carmel, he meets a woman, Nabal's wife. Perhaps a hard thought comes over him to smite her, but no—she is a woman—David cannot strike her! And, what is more, she is at his feet, asking him to lay all the blame at her door. Then she goes on to tell him that her husband is a very foolish and churlish man and she hopes David will not take offense at his words. She has brought him a present and she tells him that when he shall come to be king, it will be a great ease to his mind to think he never fought his own battles, but only the Lord's. She reminds him of the future and so she makes him forget the present. After a while his heart yields to quiet reflections—he acts rather as a saint than as a soldier, putting up his sword into the sheath and leaving the matter with his God. Righteous vengeance was soon asserted, when barbarous revenge was stopped, for ten days afterwards Nabal died. The Lord Himself dealt out retributive justice to the adversary, while the Lord's servant was held back from indiscriminate slaughter.

That is all we shall have occasion to say about the narrative. It suggests our subject, which is "Preventing Grace"—the Grace which God sends to prevent saints and sinners from running into sin. I hope before the service is over many of us, in looking back upon our past lives, will gratefully bless the Lord—bless His Providence and bless the man or the woman whom He has sent to teach us and to keep us back from evil—

that we shall thank Him because we have oftentimes been turned back from doing the wrong thing and by an overruling counsel been led of Him in the paths of righteousness.

Of this preventing Grace we shall speak in two ways. We will deal first of all with the people of God and with them but briefly, though they are the only persons who will ever be able to recognize the value and feel thankfulness for this precious benefit. Then we shall see how Grace often prevents even men who are *not* followers of Jesus.

I. PREVENTING GRACE IS ENJOYED BY ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Dear Friends, some of us can bless God at this hour that preventing Grace came to us in the shape of *a godly education*. We heard no blasphemies when we lay in the cradle, no curses startled us from our dreams. Many of us saw no drunkenness beneath the roof of our father's house, no vulgar books were put in our way. Many of you were trained from your youth up to know the Scriptures like Timothy—and some of you have even heard something of the voice of God speaking to you as He did to Samuel. Blessed be God for a holy mother! Blessed be God for an affectionate, prayerful father! Blessed be you of the Lord, you that brought us forth for God and blessed is your advice, for you have kept us from many a sin!

Since then, preventing Grace has come in the shape of godly associations. We need, none of us, to be very proud of what we are if we think what we might have been had we been put in other positions! If, instead of being bound apprentice to a good master and afterwards brought into association with religious people in the Sunday school, in the Bible Class and in the congregation, your lot had been thrown where you could pick up your education in the street and take your college degree in the coal-hole or the theater—who can tell but you had been as black a sinner as those whom you now pass by in the street, wondering that they are so vile? Much of a man's character comes from other men. What we are is not all of ourselves. We are deep in debt to others. Indeed, what man is there upon whom there have not been a hundred fingers to mold him and a thousand influences to make his plastic character what it is? I know that the Grace of God is a thing that makes a man right before God, but I know, also, that holy associations (or ever Grace comes into our heart to renew us) prevent us from indulging in sins into which, under other circumstances, we should certainly have plunged!

In extolling preventing Grace, what shall I say, dear Friends, besides this, of the *Providential circumstances* which have kept us from sin? There have been times with some of us in our younger days before we knew Christ, when the temptation was very strong, but the opportunity was not near. And at other times the opportunity has been before our eyes, but there was no temptation. God help the man that has the temptation and the opportunity at the same time! Many and many a man has received the preventing and restraining Grace of God when the devil has been hindered from throwing the two dice at one time. It is of Grace that at one time there has been the fire in the heart, but no fuel, while at another there has been the fuel but the fire did not burn just at that time

so as to make it convenient or desirable for the man to sin. Oh, Friends, the river of our life has been winding and tortuous in its course! Had it wound in another way, it had been very different from what it is and, perhaps, a word—as we say, "an accident," a chance hit—may have turned the whole of it! Now we can say that our moral reputation is unblemished, whereas otherwise we should have had to lament that we had been immoral, debauched and depraved if it had not been for this preventing Grace of God working through Providential circumstances.

There is a fountain which is the father of two rivers and these two rivers both take their rise in a lake at the top of a hill. Both rivers start from the same place, but when they end their course they are some five hundred miles apart. Behold this drop of water! There it lies. Which way shall it go? Shall it go down that stream and find its way to yonder sea, or down this stream to another destiny? It needs but a motion of a bird's wing to move that drop either way and it shall go rolling onward into yonder sea, or it shall find another channel and pursue its course far apart. So has it been with us. The Grace of God—preventing Grace had much to do with the Providence which puts us in such-and-such a channel instead of casting us into another that allowed us to come into contact with holy people rather than to emaciate us with the vilest of the vile! This is a hard blow at our self-righteousness. If we had not had our hearts changed and if Providential circumstances had been a little different, we might have been lost before now.

But besides the power of conversion to change life, how much Believers owe to the Grace of God exercised through *trial and suffering*! They would have gone astray, but they were barred down by affliction. They would have leaped the hedges of God's Law, but they were clogged by some adversity. Some men owe much to the fact that they were never in good health. A blind eye, or a crippled leg, or a maimed arm may have been in the hands of God a great blessing in keeping some of you back from iniquities in which otherwise you might have indulged! We never know what innumerable streams of good flow from that well which we call Marah, but which God often makes to be an Elim to our souls—

"Determined to save He watched over my path,
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

I suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that in looking back you can say, "I can see the finger of God in a great many places where I might have ruined myself—there, and there, and there—though I knew Him not, His arms were underneath me. He guided me with His eyes. He led me by His right hand that I might not be utterly destroyed."

Now, Christian, if you would think of this a little, *you would be very grateful, indeed, to God for this*. I know if you had sinned even more, the blood of Christ could wash your guilt away—and if your iniquities had been still greater, you would not have overreached the power of Divine Love. But think now how good it is for you that you were not allowed—I speak, of course, only to some of you—to go so far! How much sorrow you have been spared! From what evil habits have you been saved! What temptations are now kept away from you which, if God had not kept you back from sin in former days, might otherwise had overwhelmed you!

Perhaps there is a man here who is a Christian and though he knows he is redeemed, he would give his right arm if he could forget his unregenerate days. There are some men who might say, "I would give my eyes if I could forget what they have seen, and lose my ears if I could remember no more what they have heard." Why, there is a snatch of an old song that will come over you when you are in prayer! And when you are trying to get right up to Heaven there is some old black remembrance of the merriment or dissipation of the former days that checks your flight and is as a clog to the eagle and will not let it mount! There is many a man who might have been a leader in God's camp who is afraid to come out and who, if he had come out, would have but little force because of the weakness some old habit has brought upon him. He feels he cannot do what he would for Christ because of the past. If this to not your experience, then thank God for preventing Grace!

I preached this morning to the chief of sinners, I was glad to do it, but whenever I do, I find some who wish they had been greater sinners—not because they love sin, but because they think they would then see a greater change in themselves when the Grace of God lays hold of them. Instead of this, thank God most devoutly you are big enough sinners as you are. There is enough of vileness and corruption. There is enough of base depravity. There is enough of abominable sin in you now! Thank God if you have not been allowed to give vent to the evil within you and run to an excess of riot. I write every day among my mercies that I was taught to run in wisdom's way.

But, once again, dear Friend, if you have not been permitted to run into outrageous folly, *do not think that you are any nearer Christ because of this*. Do not imagine that you are to be saved in any different way from the most outrageous drunk or the most depraved of harlots! There is the same way to Heaven for you who are highly esteemed among men as for the man who lies rotting in a jail for his crime. I tell you, Sirs, you who think you have done no wrong, you must go to Heaven by the blood and righteousness of Christ as much as the convict at the hulks! And when you get to Glory you shall have no more right to boast of your own merits or your own goodness than the thief who went from the cross to Glory, or that woman that was a sinner and loved much because she was much forgiven! "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." And while it is cause for congratulation that you may not have wandered so far into sin as others, it is also cause for trembling, for verily I say unto you, publicans and harlots often enter the Kingdom of Heaven before Pharisees! Some who were the vilest of the vile have come to Christ—have penitently accepted His righteousness while others robed in their own righteousness have gone down to Hell and perished with a double destruction with the rags of their righteousness about them!

I hope I have in no way whatever said anything which on the one hand detracts from the value of an early religious training and preventing Grace, nor anything on the other hand which detracts from the Grace which saves the very vilest of the vile. I feel that sometimes when we are preaching, we seem to look after the scum and the riffraff and we forget

many others. I would not forget one of you, my dear Hearers, who hear me Sabbath after Sabbath. God is my Witness, if I thought I had missed any one of you I would be too glad to preach a sermon only for that one person, if I might but win his soul. What did I say? Preach a sermon? I would preach 50 sermons! I would preach my whole life but to win one of you and think myself well paid with such a blessed reward for such easy toil. But whether you are great sinners or little sinners outwardly, remember you are all vile in the inner nature—and the same Grace is presented to you all. "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

II. The second part of our discourse is to be addressed to those who as yet have not experienced the Grace of God in its constraining and quickening power. They, too, in a very real sense have received the preventing Grace of God, for THE PREVENTING GRACE OF GOD IS UNIVERSAL.

Without the preventing Grace of God to restrain man, he would be unbearable, and if it were not for the preventing Grace of God in society, a nation would be an impossibility, and a well-ordered commonwealth would be a thing for which we might long, but should never be able to realize. Men would be little better, we believe, than the beasts of the forest, tearing and devouring one another if the Grace of God did not keep them in check. And this, I think, is proved by the fact that the further you recede from the Light of the Gospel—the further you get from the agencies which preventing Grace is most likely to use—the more cruel and savage men are toward each other. I thank God that this is a land where preventing Grace is felt even by the very worst. I do not believe there is a burglar or a murderer but has been the subject of it, but has had to strive against it and against his own conscience before he could consummate his crime and give himself up to iniquity. You have had preventing Grace keeping you back from sin. Sinner, if *you* cannot thank God for this, *we* can! We bless the Lord that He restrains you and does not permit you to be worse than you are. We pray that this preventing Grace may never be taken from you, or else you shall be like some wild horse that has desired to dash over the precipice, who, when the rein is laid upon his neck, leaps to his doom and destroys himself and as many as are attached to him.

Yet, while it is universal, *this preventing Grace of God is much detested and abhorred by some men*. Some can hardly tolerate the restrictions which Christianity has imposed upon the nation! They are vexed that they have to shut up shop on Sunday and, by a sort of custom, are compelled to go and hear the Word of God. They wish they lived in some place where they could do just as they liked. The wife who wants her husband and family to go up and hear the Gospel is thought harshly of because of it. Some men would even like, if they could, to have a family that was all the devil's—but somehow or other God will not let them have their way. The godless man gets a godly wife and he is angry. By-and-by it turns out that one of the children receives God's saving Graces and he cannot bear the thought of it. I have seen men in spiritual things just like madmen of Bedlam. God knew that those men would ruin

themselves if they were let alone, so, first of all, he straitjacketed them with poverty, that they could not do what they would. Then, afterwards, when they began to tear and foam, He put them into a godly family, as maniacs are put into a padded room, so that, dash themselves as they will, they cannot hurt themselves! These men cannot get loose, but they will strain at their bonds and foam and gnash because God has hold of them—and will not let the devil get the full mastery of them as they would like. O Sinner, the day may come when God will say of you, "Let him have his own way." If He should give you up, then your doom will be sealed forever and your fate more desperate than words can describe! God help you and keep you from yourself, or else you will soon destroy yourself and go post haste to destruction!

But to turn to a more cheerful view of it, *in many persons this preventing Grace leads to something higher*. After preventing Grace has kept you back from sin, in comes *quickening* Grace and shows you the hatefulness of sin. And after that comes *pardoning* Grace and gives you power to believe in Jesus and, lo, your sins are put away! May God grant that this may be the case with some of you who have got no further yet than preventing Grace. Be grateful for that, thank God with all your heart for it! May it lead you to repentance. May it lead you to put your trust in Jesus and in Him only! Then you will pass from the mere prevention in which Grace is a shackle, to the liberty in which Grace becomes a shield and a sword, the joy and the sun of your life! May the long-suffering of God lead you to repentance!

But once again, to turn to the solemn chord once more, where it does not lead to higher things, *preventing Grace increases the responsibility of the man who receives it*. If a man will go over hedge and ditch to Hell, he shall find it a hard fall when he gets to the edge. If, when we put poison out of the way and remove everything with which a man can destroy himself, yet he will tear open his own veins, he is a suicide, indeed! Who shall pity him? And when God hedges you about, if you break the hedges—when He puts a bit in your mouth, if you stand chomping it until at last you get it from your jaws and turn to your own way—this will not be done without bringing on your head at the Last Great Day thunders of curses from the universe that shall judge you and the full lightning of wraths from the hand of God who shall condemn you!

I fear there are some here who are sinning against the Light of God. You are not without warnings in this land, not without calls and wooing invitations—the time was when you might have gone into many of the churches in London and not have heard the Gospel so that you could understand it, but now in the corners of the streets and in the theatres you may hear it if you will. And God is my Witness when I say there is one place where you can hear it preached with earnestness and I rejoice to know there are thousands of others! Souls, if you perish, it is not for lack of invitations to Christ! If you will not have Christ, it is a willful rejection! If you will be lost, blame not the minister—lay it not at our door—we are clear of your blood! We shake our garments of the dust of your souls! We will not be responsible for you. We warn you, we cry

aloud to you and if you will not hear, but will go and turn to the downward road, on your own heads be your doom forever and ever!

But instead of enlarging on these and other points, I will try, as God shall help me, to give you a little advice, in the hope that some who have come up, perhaps to a cattle show, or the Handel Festival, or the Great Exhibition, may get more than they came for! Who can tell, some of you may have to say in time and eternity, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your advice!"

Now, young man fresh from the country, you have a scheme in your head and you are going to carry it out tomorrow. If my prayer for you is heard you will not do so! You have come up to London to have a merry time of it—I hope you will have a merry time of another sort! Consider your ways. Think! Why will you go willfully and with your eyes open into that sin? It may be the last sin you will ever commit! It may be that you will die in the act. Great God, how prophetic these words may be! Am I pronouncing the doom of some soul here? Such things have happened and it may be that they will happen again. Oh, I pray you, Friend, stay your hand. Shall I fall down upon my knees and pray you to stop, for an impulse is upon me to speak thus—do not, do not, it is for your life! Back with your hand, man, for fear of the viper's tooth! You are playing on the hole of the asp, but his tongue is ready and his fang shall envenom all your veins! By God, by Christ, by Heaven, by Hell, I entreat you, you who have intended some sin, cease from it! May this advice be blessed to you!

Have you not already had enough? What, man? Have you killed yourself and is not that enough? Are you a lost man tonight and is not that enough? Would you bury deep in sin even your last hope? The leprosy is in you now—would you make it stare in men's faces on your very forehead? Oh, stop! Stop! You have gone far enough, the wonder is that you are spared, seeing you have gone so far! What has all your indulgence up to now brought you? Is there real pleasure in sin? What has been your experience up till now? Is it not a rough road, though it promised to be a joyous one? Have you not already had enough to bear as the result of your evil conduct? Why, therefore, continue to spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? As the voice of one crying in the wilderness would I now seek to prepare the way of the Lord into your heart! Cease from evil, man! Consider your sin and repent of it, for I hope that to you the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

What if, instead of going into sin tonight, you should take my advice and seek the Savior and find Him? If God bless you, you shall be saved, but if you have shut your ears to God's pleading, it shall not be my fault. Man! Man! You are lost and ruined by the Fall, but there is One who is able to save, even to the uttermost, those that come to Him. To come to Christ is to trust Him. I have preached this Gospel for many years and I do not think I ever finished a sermon except in one way—by trying to explain what is meant by this simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Young man, you have the idea that you are to do 20 things. You have been trying to get ready for Christ—that is not the Gospel. That is the Law! The Gospel is trust Jesus Christ, trust Jesus Christ! He died upon

the Cross that He might bear the punishment of the sins of all who believe in Him. So to believe in Him is to trust Him. Trust Him and then it is certain that your sins were laid on Christ and that He suffered in your place. Come to Jesus, come to Jesus, Sinner, come now!

What if this should be the time when the Lord shall meet with you? Write it down, you angels, in your golden tablets! Record the birthday of a soul! Take down your harps, you bright ones! Strike the chords with a new and Heaven-born ardor. Cherubim and seraphim, lift up your voices to notes untried as yet while God Himself breaks forth into a song, rejoicing in singing over them that come unto Him through Jesus Christ, His Son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Believe now, you in this area and you in these galleries. Oh, that you would believe in Jesus now! Thank God if you have not gone to the great lengths some have gone, but remember you cannot be saved except through faith in Jesus! If you have gone to the greatest lengths, thank God you have not yet gone too far, for He can still reach you. He has a long arm and He can find you in the very depths of your iniquity. Trust Him, Sinner, trust Him, now, and there shall be joy in Heaven over sinners that repent more than over 99 just persons that need no repentance! May God add His own blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JONAH 1.

Verses 1-3. *Now, the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the Presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the Presence of the LORD.* Observe the misconduct of the Prophet Jonah. He had a plain command from the Lord and he knew it to be a command, but he felt that the commission given to him would not be pleasant and honoring to himself and, therefore, he declined to comply with it. We see, from his action, how some who really know God may act as if they knew Him not. Jonah knew that God was everywhere, yet he "rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the Presence of the Lord." What strange inconsistencies there often are even in good men! Here is one who is favored with a Divine commission—one who knows God and fears Him—yet, for all that, he ventures on the fool's errand of endeavoring to escape from the Omnipresent! He "went down to Joppa," which was the port of his country, "and he found a ship going to Tarshish."

Learn from this that Providence alone is not a sufficient guide for our actions. He may have said, "It was very singular that there was a ship there going to Tarshish just when I reached the port. I gather from this that God was not so very disinclined for me to go to Tarshish." Precepts, not Providences, are to guide Believers. And when Christians quote a Providence against a Precept—which is to set God against God—they act

most strangely. There are devil's providences as well as Divine Providences, and there are tempting providences as well as assisting Providences, so learn to judge between the one and the other.

4. *But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.* Learn, hence, that "Omnipotence has servants everywhere." The Lord is never short of sheriff's officers to arrest His fugitives and on that occasion He "sent out a great wind into the sea." "The wind blows where it wishes." That is true, but it is also true that the wind blows where God wishes—and He knew how to send that great wind to the particular ship. No doubt many ships were on the Mediterranean at that time, but possibly unto none of them was the storm sent save unto the one which carried Jonah, son of Amittai! We say, "Every bullet has its billet," and this great wind was sent to pursue the fugitive Prophet.

5. *Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god.* If there is ever a special time for prayer, it is a time of need. Nature seems then to compel men to utter prayer of such a sort as it is, for it is but nature's prayer at the best! "The mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god."

5. *And cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them.* Life is precious and a man will give up everything else in order to save it. Satan spoke the truth when he said, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life." From the action of these mariners we may learn that sometimes we may lighten our ship for the safety of our souls. When we have less to carry, we probably shall sail more safely. Losses and crosses may turn out to be our greatest gains. Let the ill-gotten ingots go to the bottom of the sea and lo, the ship rights herself at once!

5. *But Jonah was gone down into the depth of the ship; and he lay and was fast asleep.* The greatest sinner on that ship appeared to be the least concerned about the storm which had come because of him! He did not even seem to know that there was a storm, for he had "gone down into the depth of the ship; and he lay and was fast asleep."

6. *So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What are you doing, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God. Perhaps your God will think upon us, that we perish not.* It is hard when sinners have to rebuke saints! And when an uncircumcised Gentile can address a Prophet of God in language like this!

7. *And they said everyone to his fellow, Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah.* We commend not the action of these men in casting lots, but we admire the Providence by which the lot fell upon Jonah. Solomon says, "The lot is cast into the lap," but he did not say that it was right that lots should be cast into the lap—and he very properly added—"but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

8. *Then they said unto him, Tell us, we pray you for whose cause this evil is upon us, What is your occupation? And from where have you come? What is your country? And of what people are you?* I do not know whether these men had traded with those who then lived in these islands, but

they had a very English custom of not judging a man before they had heard him speak. It would be well if we all practiced it more—so that before we condemn men, we were willing to hear their side of the story. Considering that there was such a storm raging, the questions put to Jonah were remarkably calm. They were very comprehensive and went to the very root of the matter.

9. *And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew.* That let them know from where he came and what his country was.

9. *And I fear the LORD, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.* That, I suppose, must be regarded as his occupation. And what a blessed occupation it is—to be occupied with the fear of the Lord! So, you see that though Jonah was not properly following his occupation while he was on board that ship, yet he did not hesitate to avow, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land." The child of God, even when he gets where he ought not to be, if you test him and try him, will stand to his colors. He will confess that he is, after all, a servant of the living God.

10. *Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why have you done this?* Jonah had to go through this catechism, question after question, and this was the hardest of them all. "Why have you done this?" Could you, dear Friend, submit every action of your life to this test? "Why have you done this?" I am afraid that there are some actions, which we have performed for which we could not give a reason, or the reasons for which we would not like to give to our fellow men, much less to our God!

10, 11. *For the men knew that he fled from the Presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm to us?* Here is another question! the catechism is not yet finished and this is one of the most difficult questions of all.

11, 12. *For the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm to you.* Notwithstanding all his faults, Jonah was an eminent type of Christ. We know that from our Lord's own words, for he was as long in the belly of the whale as Christ was in the heart of the earth. Here he seems to be a type of our Savior! "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea: so shall the sea be calm to you."

12, 13. *For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land.* They showed a deal of good feeling in all their treatment of Jonah. They could not bear to take away a fellow creature's life, so they pulled and tugged in order to get the ship to land.

13. *But they could not: for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.* Their safety lay in the sacrifice—not in the labor. They rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but their efforts were of no avail. If they would cast Jonah overboard, then they would be safe.

14, 15. *They then cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech You, O LORD, we beseech You, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not*

upon us innocent blood: for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You. So they took up Jonah. Put the emphasis on the first phrase, "So they took up Jonah"—that is, with great reluctance, with much pity and sorrow, not daring to do such a deed as that wantonly and with a light heart. When men do deeds like this on a far greater scale and go to war with a light heart, they will have a heavy heart before long. If ever you have to cast a brother out of the Church—if ever you have to relinquish the friendship of any man—do it as these men did with Jonah—patiently, and carefully. Investigate the matter and do not act until you are driven to it after consulting the Lord.

15, 16. *And cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.* Jonah had been the means of causing a greater change than he expected! His conduct and punishment had been a warning to those thoughtless sailors. They could not but believe in the God who had thus followed up His fugitive servant.

17. *Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.* He prepared a storm, He prepared a fish and we afterwards read that He prepared a gourd and He prepared a worm. In the great things of life and in the little things, God is always present! The swimming of a great fish in the sea is, surely, not a thing that is subject to law. If ever there is free agency in this world, it must certainly be in the wanderings of such a huge creature that follows its own instincts and plows its way through the great wastes of the wide and open sea! Yes, that is true. Yet there is a Divine predestination concerning all its movements. Over every motion of the fin of every minnow, predestination presides! There is no distinction of little or great in God's sight—He that wings an angel guides a sparrow! "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."

17. *And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.* So round about the truant Prophet was the preventing Grace of Jehovah.

—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.

REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST
NO. 2925

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26, 1876.

"Why did you doubt?"
Matthew 14:31.

OUR Lord did not begin His dealings with Peter in this emergency by asking him that question. He first stretched out His hand and saved him from his peril and *then* He said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" When a man is in trouble, help him out, first, and then blame him for having got into it, if you feel it necessary to do so! It is cruel to bring your censure to bear upon sinking Peter. First give him your help, lest he perish in the sea. And when you have done that, you may chide him afterwards for any fault that you perceive in him. This is always the way with our Master. He gives liberally and upbraids not, except when there shall come to be a special reason for our spiritual profit, when a little upbraiding may do us good. Now I am going, first, to use our text and then I am going to alter it. I shall first speak to God's people, and say, "Why did you doubt, O Christian?" And then put it into another tense altogether, and address it to the unconverted, and say, "Why *do* you doubt, O you who know the Gospel, but have not yet believed it?"

I. LET US USE THE TEXT AND QUESTION GOD'S PEOPLE—"Why did you doubt?" I am probably addressing some Brothers and Sisters—perhaps a great many who have been through a season of profound gloom and in the midst of that gloom there has been the element of spiritual evil. To be gloomy and depressed is not sinful at all, but there may have been in the midst of that, the sin of unbelief. There may have been a doubting of God—a distrust of His Providence—a questioning of His love. Now I come at this time to such a Brother or Sister and say, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Can you answer that question? Shall I help you?

First, I will suppose some reasons which, if they do exist, will justify you in having doubted. And then I will take the reasons you, yourselves assign, one by one. I shall put them to you to know whether the supposition is allowable.

You may doubt *if on former occasions you have found God unfaithful to His promises.* If He has lied to you—if, after having said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," you have found, say on one occasion at least, that He has utterly failed you and forsaken you—then you are perfectly justified in doubting Him in the future and you were justified in doubting Him just now. What do you say to this supposition? I would not ask you to speak what is not true, even for God, Himself, for there is nothing

more detestable in God's sight than for us to attempt to honor Him by a lie. A pious fraud is a most impious blasphemy. No, speak the truth. Has the Lord been a wilderness or a land of darkness to you? Has He said and has He not done it? Can you put your finger upon a single promise and say, "I relied upon this and I found it failed me." He said that they that trusted in Him would never be ashamed nor confounded. Can you say that you did trust Him in some particular event and the failure you experienced made you to be ashamed? Brothers and Sisters, I know what you will say to that supposition. You are grieved almost to hear it made. You rise up with loving indignation and you say, "God is faithful and true! He has not gone back from His promise in any single instance." Then, Brothers and Sisters, I will put it very softly—and I have reasons for doing it very softly—"O you of little faith, if it is so, why did you doubt? If He helped you before, why did you doubt Him in the next trouble? If He fed the five thousand with the loaves and the fishes, why did you think that He could not also make you walk the waters of the sea?

There is another supposition. You may doubt *if your case is a new one and so superlatively difficult that it is quite certain that God cannot help you in it*. You require something more than Omnipotence and the case is so perplexing that even Omniscience cannot see a way out of it! Now, as I make that supposition, my heart is laughing at the very absurdity of the terms I use, for if we say *Omni-potence*, that is all power. It is not possible that anything could be beyond that. And if we say *Omni-science*, that is all wisdom. It is not even imaginable that anything can surpass that! So I think I had better dismiss this supposition at once. Only it is sometimes put in Scripture by way of question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear." When you answer, "I know that God is able and I know that God is wise to help me," then I must whisper that question again, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

But I will suppose something else, that you may doubt *if God has abolished the promises*. Dear Brother, is it true that the Bible has run out and become like an old almanac that is done with—that God has spoken somewhere in the dark places of the earth and has said that the seed of Jacob may seek His face in vain and that He will not be held to His Covenant or bound to a single promise that He has made—that He has revoked them all? You are astonished that I should even utter such a supposition! Your soul rises indignantly to repel the imagination, for you say, "All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, amen, unto the Glory of God by us." You know and you are assured that He cannot change. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," and you are quite certain that He speaks the truth when He says, "My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My lips." "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent." You are persuaded of all this, my dear Brothers and Sisters, are you not? Then all these promises being true and all confirmed with the sprinkled blood of Christ, I must have your ear yet again while I just whisper into it, "Why, then, did you doubt? Why did you doubt?"

There is only one more supposition and it is the worst of all. You may doubt *if God Himself has entirely changed*—a supposition which has been put by the Psalmist in other language, "Will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Now, do you believe for a single moment that God is changed in His love or in the objects of it? Do you think that He has cast away His people whom He did foreknow, that Christ will lose that which He bought with His precious blood? That He will strike off the precious stones of His breastplate the names which from eternity were written there? That He will forget the children of His choice when He said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you"? And, again, "the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you"? And yet again, "I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed"? Do you not remember reading the words, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"? Well, Brothers and Sisters, since those things are so, I shall have to come back to my old question, and say, "O you of little faith, with an unchanged God to trust to, why did you doubt?"

Now, I cannot think of any other supposition that might make it justifiable to doubt, so now I am going to hear or I will repeat on your behalf—some of the answers to the question which, perhaps, you would give.

First, I hear one say, "I doubted because *my sinful life became unusually clear and distinct to me*. I hope I have been converted, have felt my need of Christ and have put my trust in Him. But I never had such a sight of myself as I had a little while ago. It seemed as if the fountains of the great deep were broken up. I saw that I had sinned foully and fallen far—my best actions I discovered to be polluted and the whole of my life to be marred through and through with an evil spirit and with everything that was contrary to the mind of God. When I saw sin like that, then it was that I doubted." Yes, dear Brother, I know your feelings and such doubts as yours often—too often—come upon men. But did you not know, was it not told you from the beginning, that your sin was such that you were condemned in the sight of God and accursed by His Law? Did you not know that in spite of your sin, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief? Did you not know God willed not the death of any sinner and that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"? Yes, you did know it and, therefore, I can only dismiss that excuse by saying that since you did know that with all your sin, the boundless Atonement was able to meet it—since you did know that with all your blackness, the fountain filled with blood had power to wash it out—"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

"Ah," you say, "but it was not quite a sight of my past sin—it was because of my sinfulness by nature. I thought after I was converted that I

would not feel any sin within me, or that if I did know its presence by experience, that I would conquer it. Instead of that it has been a fight with me every day and only the other day, when I was exposed to temptation, I was carried right off my feet. When I got alone in my chamber and saw how badly I had acted, I looked into my heart and discovered it to be still full of all manner of evil. And though I hope there is some Grace within me, yet there is so much of the old nature that I know not what to do! That is why I doubt." Yes, but, my dear Brother or Sister, whichever you may be, did you not know of old that the Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil in you and that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on? Did you not know that the Spirit of God is given to help our infirmities and that He sanctifies us and all the elect people of God—that from day to day He leads us to the fountain for sin and for uncleanness in order to be cleansed from sin and that He brings us the power to overcome sin? Did you not know that Christ is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His Presence with exceeding joy? Yes, you did know that and therefore that meets all difficulty—and I have to say to you again that the excuse will not hold water. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

"Ah, Sir," says one, *"you do not know everything. I doubted because I have been in a case such as never happened to anybody before.* I was in a dreadful trouble. O Sir, my trouble was so peculiar that I could not tell it to anybody and I would not have liked to have done so. Wave after wave swept over me. I could not see any way of escape from it at all. It was as extraordinary problem that I am sure that I must be *the* man that has seen affliction peculiarly marked out from all the rest." Yes, dear Friend, that is very likely. I know a great many that have entertained the same opinion of themselves that you do of yourself—and I have even sometimes put myself down in the category, though you may not think so. But do not you know that it is said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all"? Did you never read, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? Did you never hear of Gad, of whom it is said that, "a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last"? Have you not read, "They shall surely gather together against you, but not by Me. Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." Did you not know that? If you did not, there was the Book which you might have searched to find the promise. And knowing all that, dear Friend, though your case may be peculiar, you should not have given place to doubt at all, for you have a unique Savior! His people are a peculiar people, but He is a peculiarly glorious Deliverer and Captain to them and He will bring all of them safely to the eternal Glory. Therefore, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I can suppose another person answering on quite another score. He says, "Ah, Sir, I doubted in anticipation of the trouble *because I felt I could not bear the trial.* I felt that I should sink under it if it did happen.

O Sir, I had a fear upon me that if it did occur I should perish." Yes, I too know that experience. How did it turn out? Did the dreaded ill occur? "No," you say. Then why did you need to be crossing the bridge before you came to it? "Oh, but it did occur," you say. Have you perished by it, then, Brother? "No," you are compelled to answer. "I found such strange assistance given in the time of need and such singular succors just when I was in my deepest temptation. You know, Sir, I had looked for the trouble, but I never expected to find such friends as God raised up and such remarkable helps as He found for me." Ah, I see, God has given you two eyes and you shut one of them! You had only looked at the dark side—you did not look at the bright side. "Oh, but," perhaps you say, "I did not think there was any bright side." No, I know you did not, but God knew that it was there! Has not He said to you of old, many times, "Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you"? That is to say whether there is a bright side to it or not, cast it on the Lord and it will be well with you! "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "Trust in the Lord and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." You may say, in confidence, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," for He has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." Well, you knew of this and so I come back to my question, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I could multiply these cases, but I ask each friend who has been doubting to state his own reason to his own heart—he will easily be able to find an answer.

Now, I want your ear just a minute or two in order to see how your doubts and fears look under certain aspects. "Why did you doubt?"

Look at your doubts in the light of your conversion. You remember when you first knew the Lord. You remember those happy days and weeks when you were first converted—it was the time of your spiritual honeymoon. Suppose, at those times, somebody had said to you, "You will doubt the Savior." You would have said, "Never! Why, the wonders of God's Grace to me in saving such a lost wretch as I am are so extraordinary that others may doubt, but I never shall." Well, then, just look at these doubts in that light.

After that you had a severe trial, but now you have got out of the difficulty which troubled you, have you not? You have gained the shore again after your buffeting with the waves. Now I want you to *look at your doubts in the light of your deliverance.* The preacher need scarcely tell how disgusted he has been with himself when he has passed through a trial to think that he could not have left it in the hands of God—he began tinkering with the matter himself and made a failure of it because he tried to meet the need with his own wisdom which was nothing but perfect folly and ignorance! Do you not feel the same? Could not you set yourself up for a scarecrow and laugh at yourself? I am sure you could if the Lord has delivered you.

Once more. *How do you feel about your doubts when you get into Jesus Christ's bosom*—when your head is where the head of John was and the Lord is looking at you and saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting

love"? Suppose the next thing He said was, "Why did you doubt?" Why, you would look at Him with tears in your eyes and say, "Dear Master, I pray You do not say anything about it, I am so ashamed of my doubt. Oh, let it be forgotten. I never had any cause to distrust You. I grieve to think that I should ever have got into a state where such doubts were possible."

I will put you in another position. *How do you feel about your doubts when you try to teach other people?* Here is a dear, doubting Sister, or Brother and you are trying to comfort the downcast soul. Do you think about yourself when you needed comfort—when you were down in that very way? It is a dreadful thing for a man, when he is very sad and low-spirited, if some Christian Brother goes and cuts a bit out of the man's own sermons and sends it to him. I have had that experience myself, sometimes, and, as I have read my own words, I have said, "What a fool I am!" That is wonderfully near the truth when you say it about yourself, Brother. I do not think we have ever hit the nail on the head much more clearly than when we say we are foolish and ignorant—for that is exactly what we are—only with a dash of sin with the folly when we begin to doubt the ever blessed God who ought to be trusted with very implicit confidence, even as a little child trusts to its mother's love! Never ought a doubt to come into our hearts towards our Savior!

And *how do you think your doubts will look when you get to Heaven and look back at them*? Mrs. Hannah More tells us that she went into a carpet factory and when she looked at the carpet, she could not make out any design and she thought that there had been some mistake. There were long pieces that seemed to have no beauty in them whatever! But the manufacturer said, "Madam, I will take you round to the other side"—then she saw the beauty of the pattern that was being woven into the fabric! Well now, while you and I are here, we are full of doubts because we cannot make the pattern out. We are on the wrong side of the carpet! But when we get to Heaven and see all that God intended and worked for us, I think that even in Heaven we shall call ourselves fools and say, "How could I have judged before my time that splendid design of Providence which was hidden in the Infinite Wisdom and Love of God's gracious heart? How could I have been dissatisfied with that which was working my lasting good?" Why, then, did you doubt?

Two or three words just to say that I think that I can give the reason why some Christians occasionally doubt. Perhaps their brain is weary. I pity them, but they must not pity themselves too much. Perhaps they have not been living near to God. Perhaps they were getting rather proud and thought that if they walked on the water they must be fine fellows. Perhaps they took their eyes off their Master. I reckon that was what Peter did. He began to look at the winds and the waves and, therefore, he could not be looking at Christ, too. Perhaps they began to walk by sight, instead of by faith—that is enough to make anybody sink! There must have been some cause or other, but, whatever cause it was, it is cause for sorrow, cause for regret, cause for repentance—for the Lord deserves to be implicitly trusted. In answer to His question, "Why did you doubt?"

we give this reply, "Good Lord, forgive Your servants in this thing and lead us in quietness and patience to possess our souls."

Thus much to the people of God.

II. Now LET US SLIGHTLY ALTER THE TEXT AND QUESTION THOSE THAT ARE NOT GOD'S PEOPLE. We will pause a minute and use the text in another tense. The Lord Jesus Christ has been into this world and done a great deal for sinners and, as the result of what He has done, He has bid us go and proclaim everywhere free salvation through His precious blood. He declares that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. Many know all about this. They are well acquainted with the truth of Substitution and the way in which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. But they are still full of doubts. They have not believed. Dear Friend, I think I can give you some good reasons for your doubting if I am allowed a little scope for imagination.

And I suppose, first of all, that *you have heard of a number of others that have been to Christ and have believed in Him and yet have perished.* If you have really known such persons, you are perfectly justified in not believing in Christ. You have a brother, I suppose, that trusted Christ and yet died in despair. You have a sister, perhaps, that put all her confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet was not saved. Now, I am absolutely certain that nothing of the kind has ever occurred. I am equally certain that beneath the cover of Heaven, during all time since Adam fell, there has never been a solitary instance of a soul sincerely seeking the mercy of God through Jesus Christ and putting its trust in Him and yet missing eternal salvation! So if you cannot have that reason, why do you continue to doubt?

I will suppose another reason, namely, that *you yourself have been to God with earnest prayer, seeking salvation and trusting in Jesus and yet you have been refused.* Now, I am sure that that is not so—absolutely sure! I remember the instance of a man who did not even believe in God or, at least, he *thought* he did not, but he was awakened to a sense of his danger and he went to God with some such prayer as this—"O God," he said, "if there is a God, convince me of Your Being. Lead me to Yourself, if it is that I have sinned against You and You are angry with me—and I fear it is so. And if You have sent Your Son to be an Atonement for sin, let me know the power of that Atonement." He said that that was all he dared to say at first—but he ended in solid faith and in a renewed heart and life! No matter how far off a man may be from God, if there is a hearty and earnest seeking after Him through Jesus Christ, he will find Him. You have not tried it—I am sure you have not tried it. If you had done so, you would have succeeded. Were it possible that a man had tried simple trust in Christ and were not saved, then, indeed, he might give a reason why he doubts. But you have no such reason.

I cannot think of any other except that you have been informed that the blood of Jesus Christ has lost its power. Have you been assured that the Gospel is abrogated? Have you been given to understand that the New Testament is a dead letter? Have you been persuaded that the gates

of Mercy are shut? Have you been led to believe that the invitations of Grace are no more to be given? "Oh, no," you say, "our state were wretched, indeed, if that were the case." Well, then, Brother, Sister, as long as there is blood in the fountain, why do you doubt its power to cleanse you? As long as there is good news for sinners, why do you write bitter things against yourself? As long as a promise stands and there is the invitation, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely," why do you doubt? Surely, if these things are as the Bible declares—that the Lord is ready to have mercy upon the very chief of sinners who come and put their trust in Jesus Christ—you have no cause whatever to not come!

Well, now, I am inclined here to quit your reasons, as I cannot suppose any others that are not conspicuously false. But I can imagine that you suppose that *you have such great and special sins that you cannot think Christ can save you.* Now I undertake to say this from a very wide experience and observation of persons converted to God—that if you will mention any sin that you have committed, I will mention someone who fell into that same sin and who has been saved from it. If you mention the peculiar aggravations connected with your life, I think that even my own observation will enable me to mention some person who, if not exactly in that form, yet in some other equally bad, has gone as far into sin as you have done and yet has been saved, who, though guilty of unmentionable crimes, has yet been washed in the blood of the Lamb and made whiter than snow! O Beloved, we cannot be telling you always of what we know, but we do sometimes delight to think that there are cases in Holy Scripture which we may tell of as much as we like! There is cruel, savage Manasseh! There is blood-thirsty, threat-breathing Saul! There is the woman that was a sinner! And there is the dying thief that rejoiced to find cleansing in the wounds of Christ! And why should *you* not be forgiven? There is no cause for doubt!

"But my point," says one, "is, Can this be for *me*?" *You believe the Gospel is true, but you doubt whether it is for you.* Well, no, it is not for you if you are not a sinner. If you can say, "I am not guilty," then farewell to all hope, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners! If you are a sinner, surely He came to save such as you are! The blessings of the Gospel Covenant are directed to the lost. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Can you not get in there? Perhaps you remember Mr. Whitfield's speech to his brother who had long been in distress of mind, who said at last, across the table, "George, I am lost." George said, "I am glad to hear it," and answering his brother's startled expression, he continued, "because the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." That brief utterance of the Gospel lifted his brother out of despair into a clear and abiding hope in Jesus Christ! Perhaps you have heard of Mr. Whitfield, again, in the Countess of Huntingdon's house when some great lord complained to her ladyship that Mr. Whitfield had used most extraordinary language in his last sermon—most repulsive to men of taste. Mr. Whitfield said he was there to answer for himself and he asked what the expression was that he had used. "Why," said the nobleman, "you said that Jesus Christ was willing to receive the devil's castaways." "Yes," he said, "I did say that, and I

mean to say it again. Did Your Ladyship observe that I was called out of the room a few minutes ago because the bell rang?" "Yes," said the Countess. "And when I went to the door," continued Mr. Whitfield, "a poor creature stood there who had been living in a state of sin and had come to such a condition that even those that associated with her before were unwilling to come near her. She had become unfit even for the lowest work to which the devil, himself, could put her—and she found all her old companions had cast her away. She heard me preach in Tottenham Court and use that expression. It exactly fitted her case. She felt that she was one of the castaways of the devil, himself, and so she sought to tell of pardoning Grace and dying love."

You see, then, that Christ can save to the uttermost! Ah, it is so. It is so! If you have gone far into sin, weep over it. Confess it before God with deep repentance, but come to Jesus Christ just as you are and, whoever you may be, there is no room for doubting! The door of the Ark was a big door. There was room for the hare to go through who went in quickly. And room for the snail to go through with his slow pace. But there was plenty of room for the elephant when he came marching along—there was a chamber on purpose for him and fodder on purpose for him. And so, you elephantine sinners, there is a door big enough for you to come into the house of Mercy! There is provision made and a place for you—and without you, the company will not be complete within the Ark of Saving Grace.

May God bless that open declaration of the Gospel to some poor devil's castaway who has got into a corner of the tabernacle tonight! May such be able to find hope in my Master, Jesus Christ.

Well, now, I think I hear another say, "But I have a cause for doubt which has not yet been mentioned." I think I can guess it. *You doubt because you have so many times refused Christ that you say you cannot expect Him to receive you now.* That is the reason, is it not? "I have gone into great sin, Sir," you say, or, "I have been trying to save myself by my self-righteousness and my good works. And I cannot expect Him to receive me now." You think Christ is like the sons of men such as you have known. Once a man went to a stable keeper and asked him what would be the price of a horse and gig for the day. "So much," he answered. The enquirer went round the town to see if he could not get one cheaper and when he found that he could not make a better bargain, he came back and said that he would have the one which he had asked for at the first. "No," said the owner, "you will not. You have been going everywhere else and now you may go where you have been. I do not want your business."

You fancy that Jesus Christ is like that, do you? You have been round to Moses and asked him the expense and you find that you cannot meet the claims of the Law. And you have been round to the pope and asked him the price and you find that ceremonies do not satisfy you. You have tried the Oxford way to Heaven and tried the Roman way to Heaven, but they do not suit you. You cannot get there by them and now you think you dare not come to Christ because you have so long neglected Him.

But you may—He is willing to have you at any price! No, he is willing to have you at *no* price and if you will come at no price, come without money and without price He is still willing and able to receive you, for the Gospel peals out yet these clarion notes, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!" O you who doubt Christ, why do you doubt?

Now I will say no more but this. The way to deal with this state of mind of everlasting doubt and hesitation is to end it—to end it once and for all! Repent, dear Hearer, and may the Spirit of God help you to do so now! Repent of ever having disbelieved the Son of God. Repent of ever having distrusted the blood of Jesus Christ. Repent of ever having doubted the power of the Omnipotent Spirit of God!

I know not to whom this Word will come with power, but, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I command you to leave off doubting Him and to begin to believe in Him at once! Cease your doubts without a moment's deliberation! You believe Christ Jesus to be God. I know you do. You believe what the Scripture says concerning Him—that He is a Savior able to save. Man, by the living God I charge you not to perpetrate such an insult to Christ as to go on doubting Him! You have the burden of all your sin, but He is a Savior! Trust Him with it, trust Him now! "No," you say, "I will get home and pray." Do not wait for that! I wish you to pray when you get home as much as ever you like, but, first of all, believe in Jesus Christ! Trust Him on the spot. "Oh," says one, "it will be a venture." Venture, then, Friend—venture! "May I pass in by the gate of mercy?" asks another. Pass through it, whether you may or not, for there never was a soul sent back for coming to Christ by mistake! Never was heard of such a thing as a soul attempting to pass in by the portal of faith and Jesus Christ saying, "Ho, there! What are you doing? You have no right to trust Me. You are not one of My elect. You must go back and you must not dare to trust Me. You are not the kind of man I want." There was never such a case known and there never will be such a case, for Christ's own words are, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." That is any, "him," in all the world that comes to Christ, He never will, He never can cast him or her out! I would make a dash for it, Sinner, if I were you! Sink or swim, neck or nothing, here it is. "I do believe—I must believe—in Jesus Christ and if I perish, I shall still be clinging to His Cross." You will never perish there! May the Lord of Covenant Mercy draw you to this tonight, or drive you to it. I care not which—so long as you get to it and Christ becomes All-in-All to your souls! Let us pray for that.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:14-33.

Verse 14. *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.* Different persons take different views of multitudes according to the state of their minds. Many an officer, when he sees a multitude, considers how long it would take to march them from a certain place. Another man begins

calculating how much food they will all need. Another begins to estimate their wealth, another to calculate what per cent will die in the year. But the Lord Jesus Christ's heart was so full of pity and mercy that the thing for Him to do as He looked upon them was to have compassion upon them. He healed their sick and helped them in their sorrows.

15. *And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food.* This really meant "Get us out of the difficulty." There was no hope that so many of them could get food in the villages and the disciples as good as said, "We cannot bear to see them starving. Help us to forget it."

16. *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; you give them to eat.* "You do not know what you can do, seeing I am with you," the Lord answered. "You can feed them all." O Christian Church, never give up the most difficult problem! It may be worked out. The city may be evangelized, crowded as it is! The nations may to brought to Christ, superstitious though they are, for He is with us!

17, 18. *And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them here to Me.* He will not work without us. Whatever little gift or ability we have must be consecrated. Christ could easily have made loaves and fishes without taking their little stock, but that is not His way of working. "Bring what you have here to Me." Whenever we have a Church that brings all its store to Christ—(when shall we ever see such a Church?)—then He will be pleased to make enough for the multitude!

19-21. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass and took the five loaves, and the two fishes and looking up to Heaven, He blessed, and broke it, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.* A wonderful evening that must have been! Just as the sun's slanting rays would fall upon the mighty mass of people, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, was scattering His beams of mercy over them at the same time! To Him it is nothing to feed five thousand—nothing to do it with five loaves! Where He is present, we may expect wonders, unless, indeed, our unbelief should hamper Him, for sometimes it is too sadly true He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. O my Soul, chide yourself if you have ever thus hampered the hands of Christ!

22, 23. *And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain by Himself to pray.* It was a very busy day that He had had. If you read the narrative for yourself, you will be astonished at the number of miracles which He worked that day—and all of them in addition to the preaching—so he must have been well worn with weariness, but He sought rather, the rest and refreshment of prayer than that of sleep.

23, 24. *And when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* It did not matter, however. For if His disciples are in a storm, so long as Christ is praying for them, all the storms in the world are unable to sink them! They had a good Protector. From the outlook of that hill, His eyes, which could see through the distance, observed and regulated every breath of wind and every wave upon the lake.

25, 26. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit!* "A phantom!" Having all the superstition so natural to sailors, they thought that this was something quite supernatural and boded ill to them.

26-28. *And they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.* Strange impulse! It showed genuine faith mixed with that imperfection and presumption which was so common a feature in Peter's character. However, his Master admired the confidence.

29, 30. *And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!* When he began to be afraid he began to sink. As long as his confidence in his Master lasted, he could walk the waves.

31-33. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, of a truth You are the Son of God.* Well might they worship, for they had seen abundant proof of His Deity. They worshipped Him, saying, "of a truth You are the Son of God." They could not have meant by this, "You are a superior person, an excellent character." They would not, if they were Jews, have worshipped a mere man, for of all things you ever saw in this life, you never saw a Jew that would worship any form that was visible to the eye! The captivity of Babylon delivered the Hebrew race from idolatry altogether. They may fall into superstition of another sort, but never into idolatry. Mark that. There has not been since that time a man of Jewish race who would have worshipped Christ if he had not believed Him to be God.

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

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

THE LOVE OF OUR ESPOUSALS
NO. 2926

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 30, 1876.

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the Lord: I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."
Jeremiah 2:2.

BRETHREN, we may forget the past, but God does not. He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth." God's mercies come to us in such a constant stream—they are so many and so varied that we are very apt to have a feeble memory towards them. But the Lord remembers what He has done for us and He expects a return. He remembers the kindness which He showed to us in our youth—for so some interpreters read this passage—and He remembers the love which He manifested towards us in the days of our espousals. As the husbandman remembers how he plowed the land—how he dug about the tree and fed it and, therefore, looks for a better harvest, or a larger crop of fruit, so does God remember what He did for us in our youth—how some of us were trained in godly households—sent to schools where the main part of our education was the fear of God—tenderly kept out of the way of temptation—fostered and nurtured in every good word and work. God remembers this.

If some now present are making no worthy return—when the Lord looks upon them for fruit He sees that they are bringing forth but wild grapes, though they may forget their indebtedness and their responsibility—let them remember that God remembers all of it and expects some response from them. Think, too, that there shall come a day when the Divine memory will touch our sleeping memory into activity—God will say to us, as Abraham said to Dives, "Son, remember"—and that remembrance may be the worm that never dies within the conscience and fuel for the fire that never shall be quenched! If men and women would but remember now what God did for them in years gone by, and remember what manner of people they ought to be in consequence of the mercy which has been lavished upon them, it would save them many regrets. It might, indeed, save them endless remorse!

I do not, however, think that that is exactly the meaning of the passage in the Hebrew. Our translators have, I believe, hit upon its real meaning which is that *God remembers* what we have done towards Him. He remembers our kindness and love to Him in the days of our espousals. He here alluded to the early history of the nation of Israel, when, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, they came out of Egypt,

passed through the Red Sea and traveled the great and howling wilderness wherein were pits and all manner of dangers. Led by the fiery cloudy pillar, they faithfully traversed the roads which God marked out for them until they came to be settled in the land which He had given them by a Covenant of salt.

Those first days of the Israelite nation were heroic times. Most nations have a grandeur about their early history. Indeed, it is often so grand that our modern doubters consign the whole of it to the region of myth and suppose that it is a mass of exaggeration! The early history of Switzerland and its William Tell, for instance, has been disputed, though I no more doubt the existence of William Tell than I do my own. Even the early history of England has come under many clouds and questions—and all because there was something heroic about it.

The early history of every Christian denomination is also exceedingly bright. If you take up, for instance, one of modern times, the Methodists, there is no page of Methodist history that can compare with the first, when they suffered and yet as boldly proclaimed the Gospel everywhere with a self-denying zeal worthy of Apostolic times! I think I might say that it is generally so with almost every church. "You did run well: who did hinder you?" Under the leadership of some one man whom the Lord clothes with power, as He did the Judges, one after the other, in the history of Israel, great things are done and marvels are worked. But soon there comes lukewarmness—a gradual slipping back into the ordinary and the commonplace—alas, I might almost say into declension and backsliding!

Now, as it has been with nations, that they have a great and heroic history at first and as it has generally been with churches that the primitive glory is the brightest, so is it often with individual Christians. "They begin—oh, with what zeal!—with what energy!—with what prayerfulness!—with what consecration! If they do not begin so, the more is the pity, for they do not often improve upon their beginnings. But many do begin so and, after a while, the runner runs into a wall and the walker sits down, at last, in the Arbor of Ease and no longer runs with diligence the race that is set before him.

The point I want to call your attention to is this—that the Lord sees His people when they are in that good state, notes it down and remembers it, makes a record of it and says, "I remember you as you were years ago. I remember you, young man, when you were young. I remember you, woman, when you were yet a girl. I remember you—the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals—when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." God remembers those zealous times, those happy seasons, those enthusiastic hours! And if we have come to an ebb, if we are now cold and almost dead and have forgotten the better days—God has not forgotten them! He keeps a record of them for divers uses, some of which us we will try to think of now as God may help us.

I. Our first head, then, is THE LORD'S COMMENDATION OF THE YOUTH OF HIS PEOPLE. He commends Israel for what she used to be and He commends each Believer for what he used to be if he used to be as Israel once was.

God is never slow to commend His children when He can commend them. It is marvelous how the Lord sometimes seems to shut His eyes to the *faults* of His children when He would give them praise. You recollect Sarah, when she laughed and said, "Shall I have pleasure, my lord being old, also?" It was an unbelieving, wicked laugh, and yet the Holy Spirit commends Sarah and says of her that she called her husband "lord." He puts down that which was the only good point about it and seems almost to wink at her mocking doubt because she called her husband, "lord." Sometimes the Lord puts His eyes on what is good in His children and speaks of only that. As to what is wrong in them, there are other times when He will bring those wrongs to remembrance and chasten them in order to put their sin away. But when He is commending, He will fix His eyes on the pearl and not touch the oyster shell—He will see the star and say nothing about the black sky in which it shines!

Well, Beloved, when the Israelites came out of Egypt they were a long, long way from being what they ought to be. It was difficult to make them believe in Moses. They were ready enough to quarrel with him when the count of the bricks was increased and, even after all the miracles, no sooner did they get out of Egypt than they began to be afraid as they heard Pharaoh's rattling chariots approaching! Then they were not far in the wilderness before they began to murmur because they had no water—and in a short time they murmured again because they wanted flesh to eat instead of the manna which God had given them. But now, the Lord seeing them altogether wandering away, looks back even upon that imperfect condition with something of satisfaction and wishes that, notwithstanding the faults of that early period, they were still as they were then. "I remember," He says, "the kindness of your youth." But has He forgotten their unkindness? Yes—that was His own promise. "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.'" He has forgotten them. Does He not remember when, instead of coming after Him in the wilderness, they said, "Make us gods which shall go before us"? Yes, but He does not mention that, for He says, "I will cast all their sins behind My back." He remembers now only the excellence of their former state and so, Beloved, He will remember whatever excellence there was in our first estate when we first came to Christ—in spite of all its failure and imperfection.

Now what can there be in our early life for God to remember?

Well, I trust there is to be remembered at this present moment *the love of our espousals.* Let me call it to your mind. Do you recollect your first love? Oh, how clear it was—how warm! How undivided! How wholly given up to Christ! Did you love the Savior? You had been much forgiven and, oh, you did love Him! You could not be enough with Him, or think too much of Him, or even say too much about Him. Did you love Him? Why, if any scoffed at you for His sake, you were pleased beyond measure! You would have been willing to go to prison for Him! Yes, to have died for Him. Did you love Him in your first days? Why, you know how you shared of your substance with great delight for His cause. You sometimes wished you had a thousand times as much and then you would have thought it a mere trifle to lay it all at His feet. There was a

great breaking of alabaster boxes in those early days and often was the house filled with the perfume of the ointment!

You even grew angry if you heard anybody speak a word against Him and His cause! Sometimes you had a zeal that went far beyond your knowledge and you did some things in the earnestness of your soul which were not altogether wise. But you did love Him. Oh, how you loved Him! The zeal of His House did eat you up—every passion and power that you possessed seemed to be altogether consecrated to Him! Did you love Him? Why, you loved the meanest of His people—there was not a lamb in all the flock you would have disdained to feed. You loved His Book—the smallest promise charmed you. You loved His House—you used to wish that all the week were Sundays and that every Sunday lasted a month. You wished to be in the land—

"Where congregations never break up
And Sabbaths have no end,"

because you could not take your fill of His sweet love. You wanted more and still more. That was the love of your espousals. God remembers it and looks back upon it and commends it. And I want you, with whom it may have been 25 years ago, as well as you with whom it is only lately, to look back upon it and remember it, too. I hope there are some who are in the middle of this spiritual honeymoon even now. May it last forever with you! May you never grow cold. May you never wander from your Lord. But where it is a thing of the past, remember it and think of it now with pleasure. Perhaps I might add that some of you should also think of it with regret and shame.

The Lord commends His people because, in addition to that love, there seems to have been much exultation and delight and many acts corresponding to the love. He remembers *the kindness of our youth*. "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals." I think it means not only that these people of old loved Him, but that they *showed* that love. Just see them when they have passed through the Red Sea and, for the first time, set their foot upon the desert sand of the other side. Miriam takes her timbrel and all the daughters of Israel go forth in dancing! And they sing, with shouts, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He cast into the sea." "He is my God and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Those were high days! How they exulted in that dear and glorious name! Why, there was not, throughout all their camp, a dog that dared move his tongue against Jehovah that day! Even those who worshipped the star of their god Remphan remained silent. Even the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt who knew not the Lord kept very quiet. The whole host seemed to be exulting in the Lord. There was not merely love, but it was love that overflowed. Their cup ran over. It was love that set the joy-bells ringing and brought out the timbrel and the harp again and again and again, that they might praise the Lord who had destroyed their enemies!

Do you remember the experience in your own life that answered to this? I do, well. I go back in thought to the time when I felt as light as a feather—when my very soul felt like the dancing snowflakes that fell around me on that morning when first I was washed in the blood of the

Lamb. Oh, the exultation I had in His salvation! Then did I wish that rocks and hills would break their everlasting silence to extol Him. No music then was like His charming name, nor half so sweet to me, nor is there now, blessed be His Grace! There are some, alas, who have gone back from that point who must, nevertheless, recollect those times of ecstatic joy when first they knew the Lord. The Lord remembers it too. "I remember it," He says, "I remember it." As the husband remembers the first love of his wife and, perhaps, tells her of it to bring back the sweet, young, fresh feeling again, so does the Lord remind any of you who have become cold about those blessed days, in the hope of compelling you to similar kindness towards Him now.

Then, observe, He goes on to speak about how closely His people followed Him. He remembers *the reality of our fellowship*. "When you went after Me." In those days we said and not only said it, but actually carried it out into action—

"In all my Lord's appointed ways
My journey I'll pursue."

"Where He goes, I go," we said. "Where He bids me go, I go. Only let me be able by Grace to follow the example of Jesus Christ and it shall be my delight to put my foot down where He puts His and to tread in His footsteps with sedulous and anxious care." Do you remember when you used to feel afraid to put one foot before another lest you should go aside? And whenever you did anything you always sought His guidance? How you often took the words out of your mouth and looked at them before you spoke them, lest you should say anything but what He allowed. Oh, that was a blessed time! I wish that carefulness, that watching of your soul, that intense desire to be right before the Lord even in little things and in nothing to offend the jealous heart of the Lover of your soul would always continue. We are never healthier than when we have a conscience quick as the apple of an eye, when our whole nature is delicately sensitive even to the thought of sin. Just as the sensitive plant begins to curl up its leaves the moment it is touched, as at those times our soul is wary, and coy, and tender at the faintest approach of sin. It was so at first and God commends us for it, for He says that we followed Him closely. He still commends us for it, where He finds such Grace abiding.

He commends the people, in fact, because they came out in order to follow Him. He remembers *the steadfastness of our purpose*. "When you went after Me in the wilderness," He says, which signifies that the ancient people came out from Egypt in order to follow God. Was it not a grand thing when every Israelite—for there was not one left behind—left his house and his home for God? It may not have been a very comfortable home, perhaps, for they had been dwelling among the pots and among the brick kilns, but everyone left his home. You would have thought that somebody would have said, "Poor as it is, it is where my children were born and I do not want to leave it." But they all went out! Some of them turned all their little property into jewels so as to make it portable—and came away with the little dough that they had made up in what our version calls their kneading troughs. "Not a hoof was left behind," it is said. That is to say, no man left so much as a lamb, or a

sheep, or an ox—they came out, all of them, with all that they had. It was a wonderful thing that God's power over them led them to make such a famous and perfect exodus!

But it was also so with us in our first days. We came right out from the world. Perhaps we were rather noted in worldly circles—we had gone deep into its pleasures. There were a great many who thought us jolly good fellows and reckoned that we should never turn Methodist—*never*. But we snapped every tie, cut every connection, broke every link and out we came! You recollect what it cost some of you in those days? Perhaps you were in a workshop and you had to run the gauntlet of the sneers of all the men. Everybody knew about it, but you did not care a button whether all the devils in Hell knew about it! You defied them all. You gloried in the change. Perhaps you were a man walking in another rank of society. You thought it rather hard at first, but, by-and-by, you said, "If this is to be vile, I will be still viler," and you came right out. Perhaps you lost friends by your conversion, or lost prestige—got on the wrong side of the door of society, as they call it, and found yourself dead to it—no longer one of its world. But that did not fret you a bit, you would have given up fifty thousands of such poor wretched worlds as this world to have Christ! You felt sorry you could not surrender so much as the martyrs did when they went to prison and to death—you almost wished you could do so, for it seemed such a blessed thing to come boldly out for Christ. You did not think, then, about the leeks and the garlic and the onions. Some of your older brethren have got that flavor in their noses a little and they have begun to think about the delicacies of Egypt. But in your early days, in the time of the love of your espousals, what cared you for leeks and garlic and onions? You were looking after that Heavenly manna! You were drawing from the eternal fountain, water that flowed from the Rock which God had smitten for you. You were satisfied, then, with the unseen things that faith grasped—and you were glad in the prospect of the good land towards which you had steadfastly set your face. Alas, if it is not so now!

But still the Lord remembers *the reality of our early faith*. The Israelites came out with great truthfulness and self-denial. Whatever they had, whether little or much, they had to leave it all—for what? Well, for an inheritance, but then the inheritance was all in the clouds. What did they get? As far as they could see, they were only to go into a wilderness, into a land that was not sown. Carnal reason would have met them and said, "Now, you are never going to do it! What? Going into the wilderness of Zin? It is full of fiery serpents! It is said to be a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man ever passed through and where no man dwells! Are you going after God there? Why, the experience of God's people is full of troubles and trials and conflicts. You do not mean to say you are going after God *there*?"

Old Atheist, too, perhaps came and met you when you started and said that there was no Heaven, that there was no brave country such as you had read of. And those twin brothers, Timorous and Mistrust, said that there were lions and giants on the way and that you had better go back. Then came another and he said that it was a rough road and there

were dragons to be encountered, and Apollyon, the arch-enemy, to be fought. Nobody knew what of evil there was not—everything that was dreadful was there! "If you want to save your skin, you had better go back. Do not go forward," they said. "Why, you ought to hear some of those who have been pilgrims, talk—they tell dreadful tales. There are some of them with very long faces and they know, you know. And if they have to confess such things, well, you had better mind what you are doing." But the children of Israel, every one of them, followed the Lord into the wilderness wherein there was no water and plunged right in—a land of which they knew nothing. They went out boldly because of their faith in Jehovah that led the way.

Was not that what we did, too, in the days of our espousals? Yes, blessed be God! We counted the cost and then we said that we would follow our Lord whatever it might mean. We would watch with Him one hour, or all hours, and would drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, or do anything and everything if but He would let us be numbered with His disciples and partake of His Glory at the last! Yes, we said it deliberately, some of us. We looked over all our prospects and it did seem like ruin if we followed Him. We saw that many of our comforts must go and they have gone. We knew that there would be conflicts and we find that there have been. We knew all that, but we loved Christ so much that we were something of the mind of holy Mr. Rutherford who says, in one of his loving letters to his Lord, "If there were seven Hells to go through to get to You, my Lord, give me but the word and I will wade through them." That was just how you felt in those days, was it not? It is how some of us feel now. There are those who do not feel quite so earnest as they did, but the Lord remembers the love of their espousals when they went after Him into the wilderness.

And then He remembers *the bloom of our early holiness*. "Israel was holiness to the Lord," and we, too, sought to give to the Lord the first fruits of our increase. We strove to live near to God and forsake every false way. Even some professors thought we were too nice and too precise, but we have learned since that it is not very probable that any of us shall err in that direction! We made a conscience of our thoughts, a conscience of our words—and we were always asking this man and the other, who, we thought, knew better than we did, whether such a thing might be right or not, for fear we should be mistaken. We desired in everything to reflect the image of Christ and to be obedient to His will. Well, now, this is how it was and this is what God remembers with pleasure and would have us remember, too!

God delights in the thought of the fervent love we gave Him when we knew first Him, our thoughtful and practical kindness towards His name, our steadfast resolve to follow Him at all lengths, our faith which took His least word as a warrant for action and our holiness which shrank even from the approach of sin. Happy are we if these things still abide with us. But if we have lost them, the Lord, like some fond mother recalling the infant days of her children, remembers them and beckons us back to our first love and our first works.

II. Now, WHY SHOULD WE ALSO REMEMBER OUR EARLY DAYS? That shall make our second point upon which, however, we will not prolong our discourse.

Let us hope that to some of us the text may be *a word of rebuke*. The Lord remembers what you were. He contrasts it with what you *are* and He asks you the reason for this falling off. I hope you noticed the words while I was reading the chapter. He says, "What iniquity have you found in Me that you have gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity and have become vain?" Remember how He rebukes you and says, "My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water." Now, if you have declined like this, Brothers and Sisters, though you have not given up religion, blessed be God—though you still dare make a profession and can do it honestly—yet if you are not as earnest, nor as holy, nor as loving, nor as prayerful as you used to be, God would chide you! Have you good reason for this? I am sure you have not and it has a very ugly look, for other people who do not know, will say, "Ah, you see, the thing is very fine when there is a novelty about it, and it is very pretty when you do not know much about it. But these old Christians have gone farther and they have fared worse! They have got more into the heart of the thing and they have found that it was not what they thought it was."

Oh, you are like the bad spies—you bring up an evil report of the land! Your gradual cooling down says to the outside world that Christ is not what we say He is and so we, poor ministers, suffer very much because of you! For we may preach hardest, but they do not believe our exhortations as they believe your lies! I tell you that one backsliding Christian does more harm to the Church of God than one minister can ever undo! And the dear children who are living near to God are often exposed to scorn through those of you that are settled upon your lees. You are never seen at Prayer Meetings anymore. You do not care much about an extra service in the week. You are so busy now, although you are not busier than you used to be—you never speak of Jesus Christ to others as you once used to do. Is Christ worse than He was? Does He deserve less at your hands? Do you owe Him less? Are you not, indeed, more in debt than you ever were to His rich mercy and free Grace? The more He does for you, are you going to do the less for Him? Because you are getting older, or have received more mercies, are you going to be less grateful? Is it to be true that the young people are to outshine you? The more you know and the more you grow, are you to love the less? Oh, I beseech you by the love of Jesus Christ and by His heart of mercy, do not allow it to be so, my Beloved, but pray that, by the Holy Spirit, you may be brought back to where you were—no, that you may be carried forward to something far beyond what you used to be when first you knew the Lord! So our text should come home as a word of rebuke.

Then, this Word of God should be used as *a word of warning.* Dear young Christian people, you who have just joined the Church, I think I hear you say, "Oh, it is dreadful that anybody should have less love to Christ than they used to have." It *is* dreadful and I mourn over it. But I stand in doubt when I hear you say, "It shall never be so with me. If I

forget my Lord and love Him less than I do now, let my right hand forget its cunning. It cannot be! Why, I shall go from strength to strength, and I shall love Him more and more! I know I shall, and I shall do more as my circumstances improve, as my opportunities increase and as my gifts are multiplied." That is what you say and it is what you ought to say—but unless you are very careful, it is not what you will do! Oh, how deceived I have been in some members of this Church. Not that they have gone into sin. Not that they are any discredit to the Christian name as far as outward acts are concerned. But there is not that bottom of deep spiritual life and there is not that growth of fruitfulness, and there is not that zeal for God that I really thought I would see in them, especially in those that were great sinners and in those that have had marvelous joy and deep experience. They ought to be—ah, well I will not say, "they"—we *all* ought to be very different from what we are—so do not let us depend upon the strength of resolution, or on our present emotion, but let us commit ourselves unto the Lord who alone is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy!

Rejoice not, O young man, in your spiritual youth. Exult not, O new convert, in the strength of your love. Ask the Lord to keep these as strong as they are and to make them infinitely stronger—that you may really go from strength to strength! But if you at any time trust your own heart, you will be a fool! I would to God that we might realize what Christian experience always ought to be, namely, ascending and yet ascending, and yet still ascending—loving, and then loving so much that the first love seems to be eclipsed and then loving more till that better love seems but second-rate! And then loving yet more till all that went before, when heaped together, seems as nothing compared to what we have reached! Doing and daring—yielding up and resigning—exactly as God may call us, each time with greater joy and greater zest. Having life and having it yet more abundantly. I wish that Darwin's theory might be carried out in us as Christians until, as he talks of an oyster developing into an Archbishop of Canterbury, we who at our conversion were little better than the oyster, should go on developing, developing and developing in spiritual things until we should know what John meant, who said, "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." God grant you such development as that and preserve you from backsliding, and to His name shall be the praise!

I only hope that some of the words I have spoken, if not directly uttered to the unconverted, may glance in their hearts and lead them to seek a Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 2:1-19.

Verses 1-3. *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals when you went*

after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first fruits of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; all shall come upon them, says the LORD. God remembered what Israel used to be in those good days when the Lord alone did lead them and there was no strange god among them. Now He bids them remember from whence they had fallen and repent and do their first works lest He come unto them in wrath. Oh, Beloved, if you ever lived near to God—if you ever rested your head on Christ's bosom and have now wandered away from Him and are spiritually cold and dead, begin to chide yourself, for the Lord Himself, in the word before us, does chide you. He calls you to a sorrowful remembrance of the position from which you have descended—the heights of Grace from which you have come down! Breathe the prayer that He would restore you again. "Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?"

4, 5. *Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain?* He asks them whether there was any fault in Him—any failure in keeping His promise—whether He had dealt unjustly or unmercifully with them that they had thus gone away from Him and walked after vanity.

6. *Neither said they; Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?* Ought they not always to have remembered the wonderful wilderness journey where God seemed to multiply His miracles in the midst of their great necessities? Some of you have passed through a wilderness, too, yet you have been richly supplied. You have had to admire the constancy of the Divine Goodness. God has not ever failed you, even in your worst circumstances. Do not let it be said of you that you never say, "Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt." On the contrary, always fly to Him when you are in time of trouble. Remember that this is the way to glorify God. "He shall call upon Me and I will answer him" is one of God's own promises. And then He adds—"and he shall glorify Me."

7, 8. *And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof but when you entered, you defiled the land, and made My heritage an abomination. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.* Was not this very shameful that in Canaan, which God had chosen beyond all countries for its fertility that He might give it to His own people forever, there they began to set up idols and altars to other gods? And the priests, whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, and the prophets who above all men were bound to have spoken in the name of the Lord joined the people in their sin. They even urged them to worship Baal—that dummy deity, unworthy of a moment's respect who should not have been so much as thought of by God's people. They ought not even to have taken the name of Baal into their lips. Do you not see yourselves here, O backsliders? If you ever knew the

Lord and have gone back to the world. If you have submitted yourselves again to the powers thereof and sinned with a high hand, have you not acted most shamefully towards your God? And ought you not, with a blushing countenance and weeping eyes to return to Him and ask mercy at His hands?

9-11. *But I will yet plead with you, says the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the Isles of Chittim and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.* How powerfully this is put! No other nation gave up its gods. Though they were not gods, but mere images of clay or gold, they would not change them. They stuck to their idolatries with wonderful pertinacity—but God's people gave up the true God to worship the demons of the nations round about! And is it not an unhappy thing that there are now some who at least call themselves God's people who go back to the world and seem to be more in love with it than ever they were? It is a horrible thing that is done! I have heard of a chieftain of an Indian tribe whose nephew was converted to the faith but who, after a short time, fell into sin and renounced his profession—the old chief used to always answer all the teaching of the missionary with this argument—"My nephew tried it and gave it up. He ought to know." Well, when this was told to the young man, it broke his heart and happily brought him back to the God he had forsaken! Perhaps there are some in the world who are gathering excuses for continuing in sin from the unhappy conduct of such as backslide. "Look at him," they say, "how hot and zealous he was—and look what he is now." Can you bear the thought, backslider? If there remains a spark of love to Christ in your soul, you will feel bitterly the sorrow that others should make an excuse for blasphemy and for rebellion against Christ out of your evil conduct. Oh, pray tonight—"Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit."

12, 13. *Be astonished O you Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils—they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* If a man should change for the better, his selfishness might be a little excuse for leaving his old love. But when he changes for the worse—leaves a fountain for a cistern—a flowing fountain for a broken cistern that holds nothing—why, there is madness in his sin! "Be astonished, O you Heavens and be horribly afraid."

14-17. *Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitants. Also the children of Noah and Tahapanes have broken the crown of your head. Have you not procured this unto yourself in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you by the way?* The people of Israel had got into a dreadful state of poverty and famine and oppression. Their enemies had so destroyed the land that it was full of lions that even roared in the very streets where once men and women and children abounded. And God

says to them, "Is not this the result of your own sin? Was it so when you lived near to Me? Have you not brought this upon yourself by your sin?" So, child of God, if you are unhappy tonight—if you are mourning—if you cannot find comfort in the world—no comfort in God, either, "have you not procured this unto yourself? When you did live near to God, when prayer was continual, when you did watch your conduct, when you did go softly asking God to guide you from day to day, was it not better with you then than now? Then your peace was like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. If it is not so now, have you not procured this unto yourself in that you have forsaken the Lord your God when He led you by the way?

18. *And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?* For instead of going to the fountain of living waters, they were hoping to be helped by the Egyptians or helped by the Assyrians. Just as there are some Christians who try to drink the muddy waters of sinful pleasure and of carnal lust, they are beginning to think the muddy river very sweet and to like the taste of it. It is a deadly evil when professing Christians begin to do as others do and to mix with the world and feel pleasure in it. There will be a blight upon you if you turn from God! Misery will dog your steps before long if you are, indeed, a child of God.

19. *Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord GOD of Hosts.* A very solemn passage. May we lay it to heart. Not only is there guilt in our sin for which we shall have to answer at God's Judgment Seat, but there is evil in it which will come swiftly upon our own heads even here, "Be sure your sin will find you out." The thing you think will be your strength will be your scourge. What you dream of as pleasure will prove to be your plague. If you have ever known the joy of God's service, all this shall be doubly true of you—you shall never again be able to find satisfaction in the world and God, the God whom you did once delight in—will let your own wickedness correct you and your backslidings reprove you because He wishes you to come back to His side, and to drink again of the living waters which you have so foolishly forsaken.

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

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

LOVE AT LEISURE
NO. 2927

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1905.

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

"Mary,* who also *sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His Word."
Luke 10:39.

MARY was full of a love to Christ which could be very active and self-sacrificing. I have read to you of her pouring the precious box of spikenard upon our Lord for His anointing. She was, therefore, one who not only waited and listened, but she served the Lord after her sort and fashion. If she had been simply contemplative and nothing more, we might, perhaps, have considered her somewhat of a one-sided character—and while pointing to that which was good in her as an example, we might have had to comment on her deficiencies. But she did more than sit at the Master's feet. Beloved, if we ever serve the Lord as Mary did, we shall do well.

Now, since she was able thus to serve, she becomes a safe example for us in this other matter of restful faith. The portion of her life occupied in sitting at her Master's feet may instruct and help us. I feel I can safely hold her up to you as an example in all respects and the more so because of the particular incident just now before us where she received the Master's express commendation. He also praised her for bringing the box of ointment but, on this occasion, He praised her, too, saying that she had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her. He could not have more conspicuously set His seal of approval on her conduct than He did. I am not going to say much about *her*, but I want to speak to those of you who love the Lord as Mary did, to try if I cannot entice you for your own rest and for your own encouragement into following her example in this particular incident, namely, that of sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have already said you can see that the example is only part of her life—one side of it. At another time I may take the other side and exhort you to also follow her in that, but for this next hour or so, I want you to leave out the other side of her character and stick only to this. Consider it well, for I am persuaded that this is the true preparation for the other—that contemplation and rest at the Savior's feet will give you strength which will enable you afterwards to anoint His feet according as your heart's love shall dictate.

On this occasion, then, we have only to do with Mary sitting at our Savior's feet. There shall be four heads which you will not forget—love at leisure sitting down. Love in lowliness, sitting at Jesus' feet. Love

listening—she heard His Words. Love learning—she heard His Words to a most blessed purpose. All the while she chose the good part.

I. First, then, LOVE AT LEISURE. That is a point which I want you especially to notice. You that have families to feed and clothe know how, all day long, you are busy—very busy, perhaps. The husband is away from early morning till the evening comes. The children have gone to school and the wife is occupied in a hundred household things. But now the evening meal is over and there is a warm fire burning in the hearth. Is it not one of the most pleasant sights of English interiors to see the family gathered around the fire to just sit still for a little while to talk and to indulge in those domestic loves which are the charm of that sweet English word, "home"? May an Englishman never ceases to think of the word, "home," as the most musical word that ever dropped from mortal lips! Now love is quiet and still and, I was about to say, careless. Outside it has to watch its words, but inside it is playful, it is at ease, it disports itself, fearless of all adversaries. It takes its rest. The armor is put off and the soldier feels the day's battle is done. He stands not on his guard any longer. He is among those that love him and he feels that he is free. I do not know what life would be if there were not some of those sweet leisure moments when love has nothing else to do except to love—those intervals, these oases in the desert of life wherein to love is to be happy and to be loved is to be doubly blest!

Now, Christian people ought to have such times. *Let us put aside our service for awhile.* I am afraid that even those who are busy in the Master's work and are not occupied much with lower things, yet overlook the necessity for love to be at leisure. Now tonight, at any rate, you that work longest and toil most and have to think the hardest can ask the Lord to make this a leisure time between you and Jesus. You are not called upon to help Martha to prepare the banquet. Just sit still—sit still and rest at Jesus' feet and let nothing else occupy the next hour but sitting still and loving and being loved by Him.

Can we not get rid of worldly cares? We have had enough of them during the six days—let us cast the whole burden of them upon our Lord. Let us roll them up and leave them all at the Throne of Grace. They will keep till tomorrow and there is no doubt whatever that they will plague us enough, then, unless we have faith enough to master them. But now put them on the shelf. Say, "I have nothing to do with you now—any one of you. You may just be quiet. My soul has gone away from you up to the Savior's bosom, there to rest and to delight herself in Him."

And then *let us try to banish all church cares also.* Holy cares should not always trouble us. As I came here just now, I said to myself, "I will try tonight not to think about how I shall preach, or how this part of the sermon may suit one class of my Hearers or that part another. I will just be like Lazarus was, of whom it is written that, 'Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.'" You know that the preacher to such a congregation as this may often find himself like Martha, combined with much serving if he forgets that he is but a servant of the Master and has

only to do His bidding. You may well excuse us. But it must not be so tonight. Whether you are deacon or elder, or preacher, or hearer, you must have nothing to do tonight with anything outside of our blessed Lord and our own hearts! Our love shall claim this time for her own rest. No, Martha, even though you are getting ready to feast Christ, we will not hear the clatter of dishes or the preparation of the festival. We must now just sit there at His feet and look up, and have no eyes except for Him, no ears except for Him, no heart except for Him. It shall be love's leisure night tonight!

And, in truth, Beloved, we have plenty of reason for resting. *Let us sit at Jesus' feet because our salvation is complete.* He said, "it is finished," and He knew that He had worked it all. The ransom price is paid for you, O my Soul! Not one drop has been withheld of the blood that is your purchase. The robe of righteousness is woven from top to bottom—there is not one thread for you to add. It is written, "You are complete in Him" and however frail we are, yet we are "perfect in Christ Jesus," and in spite of all our sin, we are "accepted in the Beloved." If it is so, O Love, have you not room for leisure? Is not this thought a sofa upon which you may stretch yourself and find that there is space enough for you to take your fullest ease? Your rest is not like the peace of the ungodly of whom it is said, "The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it." Here is perfect rest for you—a couch long enough and broad enough for all your need! And if, perhaps, you should remember, O my Heart, that you have sin yet to overcome and corruption within you yet to combat, remember this night that Christ has put away *all* your sin, for He is "the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes" and that He has overcome the world on your behalf and said to you, "Be of good cheer." You have to fight, but your foe is a routed foe! It is a broken-headed dragon that you have to go to battle with and the victory is sure, for your Savior has pledged Himself to it! You may well take your leisure, for the past is blotted out and the future is secure! You are a member of Christ's body and as such you cannot die! You are a sheep of His pasture and as such He will never lose you! You are a jewel of His crown and as such He will never take His eyes or His heart off of you! Surely, then, you may take your leisure.

Let us also rest because we have received so much from our Master. Be sure to remember, O heart that would have leisure for love, that though you have many mercies to receive, there are not as many to come as you have already had! You have great things yet to learn, but not such great things as you have already been taught. He that has found Christ Jesus to be his Savior has found more than he will ever again find, even though he finds a Heaven, since even Heaven itself is in the loins of Christ and he that gets Jesus has got an eternity of bliss in him! If God gave you Christ, all else is small compared with the gift you already have. Take your leisure, then, and rejoice in your Lord, Himself, and in His Infinite perfections.

As to the Lord's work, we may well take leisure for love, because it is His work. It will go on rightly enough. It is His work, the saving of those souls. It is well that we are so eager—it were better if we were more eager. But just now we may lay even our eagerness aside, for it is not ours to save—it is His—and He will do it. He will soon give you to see of the travail of His soul. Christ will not die in vain. Election's decree shall not be frustrated and Redemption's purpose shall not be turned aside. Therefore rest.

Besides, my Heart, *what can you do, after all*? You are so little and so altogether insignificant. If you worry yourself into your grave what can you accomplish? God did well enough before you were born and He will do well enough when you are gone Home. Therefore fret not yourself. I have sometimes heard of ministers that have been quite exhausted by the preparation of a single Sunday sermon. I am told, indeed, that one sermon on a Sunday is as much as any man can possibly prepare! It is such laborious work to elaborate a sermon! And then I say to myself, "Did my Lord and Master require His servants to preach such sermons as that? Is it not probable that they would do a great deal more good if they never tried to do any such fine things, but just talked out of their hearts of the simplest Truths of His blessed Gospel!"

I turn to the Old Testament and I find that He told His priests to wear white linen, but He also told them never to wear anything that caused sweat, from which I gather that He did not want His priests in the Temple to be puffing and blowing and sweating and boiling like a set of Negro slaves. He meant that His service, although they threw their strength into it, should never be wearisome to them! He is not a taskmaster, like Pharaoh, exacting his tale of bricks and then again a double tale, giving his servants no straw wherewith to make them. No, but He says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Therefore it seems to me that with all the work His people do—and they ought to do it so as to pour their whole life on His head like a box of precious spikenard, yet He did not mean them to go up and down about His service, stewing and worrying and killing their very lives out of them about this and that and the other!

They will do His service a great deal better if they will very often come and sit down at His feet and say, "Now I have nothing to do but to love Him—nothing to do but to receive His love into my soul." Oh, if you will seek after such quiet communion you will be sure to work with a holy might that shall consume you! First take in the strength by having these blessed times of leisure at the Savior's feet. "He that believes shall not make haste." He shall have such peace and restfulness, such quiet and calm, that he shall be in no hurry of fear or fright, but he shall be like the great Eternal who, with all that He does—and He works up to now and guides the whole universe which is full of stupendous wonders—yet never breaks the eternal leisure in which His supreme mind forever dwells!

Well, if we cannot keep up such leisure as that, at least let us have it tonight. I invite you, persuade you and entreat you, Beloved Mary and others like you, to do nothing but just enjoy the leisure of love and sit at Jesus' feet.

II. The second thing is LOVE IN ITS LOWLINESS. Love needs to spend her time with Christ. She picks her place and her place is down at His feet. She does not come to sit at the table with Him, like Lazarus, but she sits down on the ground at His feet.

Observe that *love in this case does not take the position of honor*. She is not a busy housewife, managing affairs, but a lowly worshipper who can only love. Some of us have to be managers for Christ—managing this and managing that—but perhaps love is most at home when she forgets that she has anything to manage. She leaves it to manage itself, or better still, she trusts the Lord to manage it all and just subsides from a manager into a disciple, from a worker into a penitent, from a giver into a receiver, from a somebody, which Grace has made her, to a nobody, glad to be nothing, content to be at His feet, to let Him be everything, while self sinks and sinks away. Do not let me only talk about this, Beloved, but let it be done! Love your Lord now. Let your hearts remember Him. Behold His robes of love, all crimsoned with His heart's blood. You shall take your choice whether you look up to Him on the Cross, or on the Throne. Let it be as suits your mind best tonight, but in any case say unto Him, "Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that You have loved me so?"

Sit near your Lord, but sit at His feet. Let such words as these be upon your lips, "Lord, I am not worthy to be called by Your Grace. I am not worthy to be written in Your Book of Life. I am not worthy that You should waste a thought on me, much less that You should shed Your blood for me. I remember now what I was when You did first deal with me. I was cold, careless and hard towards You, but very wanton and eager towards the world, giving my heart away to a thousand lovers and seeking comfort everywhere except in You. And when You did come to me, I did not receive You. When You did knock at my door, I did not open to You, though Your head was wet with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night. And, oh, since through Your Grace I have admitted You and You and I have been joined together in bonds of blessed union, yet how ill have I treated You! O my Lord! How little have I done for You! How little have I loved You! I could faint in Your Presence to think that if You did examine me and question me, I could not answer You one of a thousand questions You might ask me. Your book accuses me of negligence in reading it. Your Throne of Grace accuses me of slackness in prayer. The assemblies of Your people accuse me that I have not been hearty in worshipping. There is nothing, either in Providence or in Nature, or in Grace, but what might bring some accusation against me! The world itself might blame me that my example so little rebukes it and my very family might charge that I do not bless my household as I

should." That is right, dear Brother, dear Sister. Sink! Go on sinking. Be little. Be less. Be less still. Be still less. Be least of all. Be *nothing*!

Lift up your eyes from your lowly place to Him who merits all your praise. Say to Him, "But what are You, Beloved, that You should have thought of me before the earth was? That You should take me to Yourself to be Yours and then for me, should leave the royalties of Heaven for the poverties of earth and should even go down to the grave, that You might lift me up and make me to sit with You at Your right hand? Oh, what wonders You have worked in me and I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies! And yet You have given me great and unspeakable blessings. If You had only let me be a doorkeeper in Your house, I had been happy, but You have set me among princes! If You had given me the crumbs from Your table, as dogs are fed, I had been satisfied, but You have put me among the children! If You had said that I might just stand outside the gates of Heaven now and then, on gala days, to hear Your voice, it would have been bliss for me! But now You have promised me that I shall be with You where You are, to behold Your Glory and to be a partake of it, world without end." Do not such thoughts as these make you sink? I do not know how it is with you, but the more I think of the Lord's mercies, the more I grow downward. I could weep to think that He should lavish so much on one that gives Him no return at all, for so it seems to my heart that it is with me. What do you think of yourself? What is your faith, your love, your liberality, your prayers, your works? Dare you call them anything? Do you imagine that the Lord is pleased with your past? Would He not rather say to you, "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have made Me to serve with your sins and wearied Me with your iniquities." So we sit down again at His feet and from that place we would not wish to rise. Love's leisure shall be spent in acts of humiliation. We will bow at the feet that were pierced for our redemption!

III. But now, in the third place, here is LOVE LISTENING. She is down there in the place of humility, but she is where she can catch each word as it falls, and she is there with one purpose. She wishes to hear all that Christ has to say and she wishes to hear it close at hand. She wants to hear the very tones in which He speaks and the accents with which He delivers each precept. She loves to look up and see those eyes which have such meaning in them and that blessed Countenance which speaks as much as the lips themselves. And so she sits there and she looks with her eyes toward Him as a handmaid's eyes are to her mistress. And then, with her ears and her eyes, she drinks in what He has to say.

Now, Beloved, I want you to do that. Say in prayer now, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." And then with your ears open, *hear what He says by His Word*. Perhaps there is some text that has come home to your soul today. Hear it. Hear it well. It would not be much use for anyone to try to preach a sermon in the center of the city in the middle of the day. If you stood near St. Paul's Cathedral with all that traffic going by and all that rumbling, roaring and shouting, why, the big bell, itself, might speak and you would hardly hear it! But when it is night and all is

still, then you can hear the city clocks strike and you might hear a man's voice even though it was not a very strong one, if he went through the streets and delivered a message with which he had been entrusted. Well, our blessed Lord often takes advantage of those quiet times when the man has a broken leg and cannot get to work, but must be still in the hospital. Or when the woman is unable to get about the house to attend to her ordinary duties, but is so helpless that she cannot do anything else but think. Then comes the Lord and He begins to bring to our remembrance what we have done in days past—and to talk with us as He never has the opportunity of doing at any other time. But it is far more blessed to find time ourselves, so that the Lord will not need to afflict us in order to get us quickly at His feet! Oftentimes the Good Shepherd, in caring for the sheep, "*makes* us lie down," but He is glad when we come of our own accord that we may rest and listen to His Word.

Listen to what He is saying to you by Providence. Perhaps a dear child is sick at home, or you have losses and crosses in business. It may not seem to you as if these things come from your loving Lord, but they are perhaps the pressure of His hand to draw you to His side that He may tell you His secret. Perhaps it has been mercy that has come to you in another way. You have been prospered, you have been converted, you have had much joy in your family. Well, the Lord has a voice in all that He does to His people, so listen tonight. If you listen you will be obliged to say, "What shall I render to the Lord for His benefits to me?"

Listen also to what the Spirit says in your soul. Listen, for it is not till you get your soul quiet that you can hear what the Spirit of God is saying. I have known such a clatter of worldliness or pride, or some other noise in the soul of man, that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit has been drowned to the serious detriment of the disciple. Now, I hope you have really done with all your cares and left them outside the Tabernacle tonight, that even the cares about your class in the Sunday school and about your preaching engagement tomorrow, and everything else, have been put aside and that now you are just sitting down at Jesus' feet and listening. While you listen in that fashion, in lowly spirit at His feet, you are likely to hear Him say some words to you which, perhaps, may change the whole tenor of your life! I do not know what God the Lord will speak, but, "He will speak peace to His people." Sometimes He speaks in such a way that a turbid life has become clear. A life of perplexity has become decided and distinctly happy. And a life of weakness has become a career of strengths. And a life that seemed wasted for a while has suddenly sprung up into eminent usefulness! Keep your ears open, Mary! Keep your ears open, Brother, and you will hear what Jesus Christ has to say!

But now let me say, while you are sitting and listening, *you will do well to listen as much to Him as to what He has to say,* for Christ Himself is the Word and His whole life is a voice! Oh, sit down, sit down and listen! I wish I had not to talk tonight and could sit down and do it for myself and just look up at Him, God over all, blessed forever, and yet

Brother to my soul, a partaker of flesh and blood! This very fact, that He is Incarnate, speaks to me! That God is in human flesh speaks comfort to my soul, such as no words could ever convey! God in my nature! God become my Brother, my Helper, my Head, my All! Could not my soul leap out of the body for joy at the Incarnation if there were nothing else but that revealed to us?

Now let me look up again and see my Lord with His wounds, as Mary did not see Him, but as we now may—with hands and feet pierced, with scarred side and marred visage—tokens of the ransom price paid in His pangs and griefs and death. Is it not amazing to see your sin forever blotted out and blotted out so fully, and blotted out by such means as this? Why, if there were not an audible word, those wounds are mouths which speak His love! The most eloquent mouths that ever spoke are the wounds of Christ. Listen! Listen! Every drop of blood says, "Peace." Every wound says, "Pardon. Life. Eternal life."

And now see your Beloved once again. He is risen from the dead and His wounds bleed no more! Yes, He has gone into Glory and He sits at the right hand of God, even of the Father! It is well for you, dear Brother or Sister, that you cannot literally sit at His feet in that guise, for if you could only see Him as He is, I know what would happen to you—even that which happened to John when he saw Him with His head and His hair white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet as if they burned in a furnace. You would swoon away! John says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

You cannot sit at those feet of Glory till you have left this mortal clay, or until it has been made like unto His glorious body! But you may in faith do so—and what will His Glory say to you? It will say, "This is what you shall receive. This is what you shall share. This is what you shall see forever and ever." He will say to you—even to you who mourn your insignificance and in lowliness sit at His feet—"Beloved, you shall partake of the Glory which the Father gave Me, even that which I had with Him before the world was. Soon, when a few more moons have waxed and waned, soon you shall be with Me where I am."

Oh, what bliss is this! Never mind Martha's frowns! Forget her for the moment and keep on sitting at Jesus' feet! She may come in and grumble and say that something is neglected—tell her she should not neglect it then, but now your business is not with plates or pots, but to do as your Master has permitted you to do, namely, to sit at His feet and listen to Him!

IV. So I close by saying, in the fourth place, that here is LOVE LEARNING. While she listened she was being taught, because she sat at Jesus' feet with her heart all warm—sitting in the posture of lowliness she was, as few could hear them—*hearing words so as to spy out their secret meaning*. You know the difference between a man's voice at a distance, saying something, and his being very near you. You know how much the face can say, the eyes can say and the lips can say—and there is many a deaf man that has heard another speak though he has never heard a sound—he has known the meaning by the very movement of the

lips and the gleams of the countenance. Ah, and if you get into such near fellowship with Christ as to sit at His feet, you will get His meaning! When the letter kills others, you will see the secret meaning that is hidden within and you will rejoice.

She got at His meaning and then she was *hearing the words so as to drink in the meaning*. "They sit down at Your feet," says the old Scripture, "everyone shall receive of Your words." Beloved, that is a great promise—to receive of His Words. Some people hear the words but do not receive them—but there sat Mary where, as the words fell, they dropped upon her as snowflakes drop into the sea and are absorbed! So each word of Jesus dropped into her soul and became part and parcel of her nature—they fired and filled her very being!

What she learned she remembered. *We see love learning what she will treasure up.* Mary never forgot what she heard that day. It remained with her forever. It seasoned her whole life. The words of her Master were with her all the days she was watching. All the days she was waiting, she was waiting after they had been spoken. They kept her watching and waiting till, at last, love's instinct told her that the time was come and then she went upstairs where she had put away the choice ointment for which she spent her money. She had laid it up and kept it till the time should come—and just before the Savior's death and burial she fetched it down, the gift which she had hoarded up for Him—and she poured it out in adoration.

As she sat at His feet, she resolved to love Him more and more. *Love was learning to love better.* As she had listened and learned, the learning had crystallized itself into resolves to be, among women, the most devoted to Him. Perhaps, little by little, she had laid aside this great price which she had paid for the spikenard. Be it as it may, it was dear to her, and she brought it down when the time was come and put it all on Him with a joyous liberality and love. Well, now, I want you to learn of Jesus after that fashion and, by-and-by, when the time comes, you, too, may do some deed for Christ that shall fill the house in which you dwell with sweet perfume. Yes, shall fill the *earth* with it, so that if man scents it not, yet God Himself shall be delighted with the fragrance you pour, out of love, upon His Son!

We are going to have Communion. Here are the emblems of His blessed body and blood and I hope they will help us to have nothing to do but to think of Him—nothing to do but to be lowly in His Presence—nothing to do but to listen to His words and to drink in His teaching.

But there are some here that do not love Him. It may be that God will lay you low by affliction in order to bring you to the feet of Jesus. Perhaps He will allow disaster and disappointment to overtake you in the world, to win you to Himself. If any of you have had this experience, or are passing through it just now, do not trifle with it, I pray you, for, while we are in this life, if the Lord comes to us to remind us of our sin, He does it in the greatness of His mercy and in order that He may bring salvation to us! It will be quite another thing, in the next life, if you die

unrepentant and unforgiven. Then you may, indeed, dread the coming of God to bring your sin to remembrance! But while you are here, if the Lord is so speaking to you, incline your ears and listen to His voice, however harshly it may seem to sound in your ears. Even if He should strip you, be glad to be stripped by Him. If He should wound you, and bruise you, willingly give yourself up to be wounded and bruised by Him. Yes, even if He should slay you, rejoice to be slain by Him, for remember that He clothes those whom He strips, He heals those whom He wounds and He makes alive those whom He kills! So it is a blessed thing to undergo all those terrible operations of Law-work at the hands of the Most High, for it is in that way that He comes to those whom He means to bless.

I cannot preach to you, for the time has gone, but do you know, I think one of the most dreadful things that can ever be said of man is that he does not love Christ. I should be sorry to enter on my list of friends the man that did not love his mother—no, I could not call him a man. Dead is that heart to every noble sentiment that loves not her that bore him! And yet there might be some justifiable cause to excuse even that. But not to love the Christ, the God that stooped to bleed for man—this is inexcusable! I dare not tonight utter, as my own, what Paul said, but, very pointedly and solemnly, I would remind you who love not Christ of it. Paul says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema Maranatha"—cursed at the coming. Sometimes when I think of my Lord and my heart grows hot with admiration of His self-denying love, I think I could almost invoke the imprecation on the head of him that does not, would not, could not love the Christ of God! But better than that I will ask His blessing for you and so I say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Here our sermon closes. And may God's blessing rest on it.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 63; LUKE 10:38-42; JOHN 12:1-8.

I will read the 63rd Psalm first, as somewhat representing the state of heart into which I would we could all come tonight.

Psalm 63:1. *O God, You are my God.* Read that sentence how you will, it is unspeakably precious. If we say, "O God, You are my *God*," it brings out the possession which the Believer has in God. If we say, "O God, You are *my* God," it shows the greatness of the possession which we thus have in having this God to be our God forever and ever. And if we say "O God, *You* are my God," it leads us to think of God and not of His gifts as our chief good.

1, 2. *Early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* Long after the old times over again—for those times of Heaven upon earth—those special seasons when the Lord made the veil between us and Heaven to be very thin, indeed, and allowed us almost to see His face. "To see Your power

and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary." Well, then, let us go to the sanctuary again, or make the place where we are a sanctuary. Even the stony pillar may mark the site of Bethel and every spot may be hallowed ground.

3-5. *Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* Satisfaction, absolute satisfaction! Satiety of every desire, full to the brim to the running over only because God is our God! We need nothing beyond that to make our mouth praise with joyful lips.

6, 7. *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches. Because You had been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* If I cannot see Your face, the shadow of Your wing shall be enough for me, for they shall shelter me from all harm and I will, yes, I will rejoice. Under the wings we are near the heart of God and he who know God's heart of love must be glad.

8-10. *My soul follows hard after You: Your right hand upholds me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foes.* All our sins and all other things or beings that are the enemies of our soul! Christ has overcome and He will leave them upon the field.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* Now a short passage in the New Testament about Mary, the sister of Martha.

Luke 10:38-40. *Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.* Agitated, distressed Martha was afraid that something would go wrong with the dinner. She had too much on her hands—too much on her brain. That led her to blame her sister, Mary, and to try to get the Lord to blame her, too. There is a strong tincture of self-righteousness in Martha's speech.

41, 42. *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, 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.* I shall not tell her to leave My instruction, said our Lord, or to get up from the position which she occupies. No, you may go about your work, she is honoring Me as much as you are, if not more. This did not mean that Mary was perfect, or that Martha was wholly to be condemned. Both needed to learn much from Jesus and Mary was more in the way of it. Still Martha was doing good service. But you will see that Mary could do something for Christ, too, when the time came.

John 12:1, 2. *Then Jesus, six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from*

the dead. There they made Him a supper, and Martha served: and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Martha served—she had not given that up. She was a wondrous housewife and she did well to keep to her occupation. Lazarus had been dead and had been raised again. But he was not the center of interest—"He that raised him up was there."

3-7. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which would betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying has she kept this.* Somebody or other always seemed to object to Mary! If Martha does not do it, Judas will. To be found guilty of excess of love to Christ is such a blessed criminality that I wish we might be executed for it! It were sweet to be put to death for such a crime! It was that that Christ died of—He was found guilty of excess of love.

8. *For the poor you always have with you; but Me you have not always.* It is not every day that you can do something personally and distinctly for Christ, Himself, and therefore, whenever the occasion serves you, be sure to be there to avail yourself of it! True, you can serve Him indirectly by aiding His poor saints. Still, something for *Him*—for Him, *Himself*—should often be devised as Mary devised this service that day.

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

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"And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. They feared the LORD and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from which they were carried away. Unto this day they continue practicing the same rituals: they fear not the LORD."
2 Kings 17:25, 33, 34.

THE world is full of deceptions and counterfeits. We have had to protect ourselves by law against adulterations of the most common articles of food, but all the laws in the world will not be able to protect us against the constant, the almost universal deceit which is found in daily life. Men seem continually to be set on making the worse appear the better—putting the bitter for the sweet and the sweet for the bitter. If any man shall go through this world with his eyes shut, believing all that he hears, he will find himself the dupe of a thousand knaves. You must keep your eyes open—you must carry a test with you by which you shall be able to discern between things that differ, or else in the ordinary affairs of life you will soon be brought to bankruptcy and poverty.

In the highest regions, also, where we have to do with spiritual and eternal things, there are even worse cheats than anywhere else! That old enemy of God and man who is rightly said to be a liar from the beginning, takes care to use falsehood in order, if it were possible, to deceive even the very elect. If there is a Christ, he sets up an antichrist. If there is a Church of Christ, he makes a world's church that shall mimic it. If there is a Gospel, he, too, comes with his good news and sets up "another gospel, which is not another." In the matters which concern the inner man—in the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul—Satan is also adept at deception there. He can imitate repentance with remorse. He can match faith with credulity. He can mimic assurance with presumption. He can give us the pleasures of this world instead of the joy of the Lord and, instead of a simple confidence in Christ, he can offer us that which may look remarkably like it, and yet, after all, be confidence in self. Hence, one of the very first things that a man has to do if he would be right at last is to search his own heart, to test and try that which he supposes to be there whether it is the work of God or not—whether his spot is the spot of God's children or only a vile imitation of it.

Conversion which is absolutely necessary to salvation—conversion by which man turns from sin to righteousness, from self to Christ, from the world to Heaven, from rebellion to obedience—conversion which we must

all experience if we are to be right towards God, for, "except you are converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven"—conversion, too, has been mimicked in many ways. In this discourse we are going to look at one instance in which the false has been put for the true in order that by the light of that instance, as by a beacon, we may be warned off this dangerous rock! Another man's shipwreck ought always to be a beacon to us—so where these Samaritans failed, let us take heed unto ourselves lest we fall after the same fashion.

We shall have three points which will follow the order of the narrative. We shall look, first, at their first estate—"They feared not the Lord." Secondly, their sham conversion—"They feared the Lord and served their own gods." Thirdly, their real state while they professed thus to be converted—"They feared not the Lord."

I. First, then, let us observe these Samaritans in THEIR FIRST ESTATE. They were brought, very likely much against their will, from different parts of the Assyrian empire and they were put down as colonists in the various towns which had formerly been occupied by the tribes of Israel. There they were compelled to dwell. They do not appear to have had any reverence for God at all. *They were wholly indifferent.* "They feared not the Lord." They scarcely knew His name and they seem to have made no inquiries. They found that the land was good and they tilled it. The vines were fruitful and they pruned them. The houses were built and they inhabited them. And thus they settled down. What did it matter to them about Jehovah? Who was He and what was He? No doubt there had been a people living there who more or less had reverenced His name, but what was that to them? They were strangers. It had never crossed their mind that they should be interfered with at all in the matter of worshipping Jehovah and so they lived altogether carelessly and indifferently. How many there are that are doing the same today—many who are altogether thoughtless about Divine things, taken up with trifles—occupied only with the things of this life. It does not seem to enter into their heads that they are immortal—that they will have to live in another state. As to their having a Creator and One who daily preserves them in life, no doubt they believe it, but they are not concerned about it! Practically they say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?" That was the condition of these Samaritans at the first. They were altogether indifferent to the matter. It never troubled them at all.

They had no fear of God. They may have heard of some that trembled at Jehovah, but they never trembled. Perhaps they heard that He was a God whose worship was very troublesome, whose laws were very strict, whose subjects often had to mourn because they rebelled and, therefore, they did not want to know too much about Him lest they should be drawn into the same exercise of heart and have to confess the same sins and fall into the same sorrows. They knew not and they did not want to know. They were not troubled.

I should not wonder that when they began to hear something about Him, they *even ridiculed Jehovah.* Had not their gods overcome the God

of the land? Had they not taken possession of these fair cities? Had not the hosts of Assyria scattered, like clouds before the wind, all the companies that the men of Israel could bring against them? So they would have a sneer for the Israelites and the men of Judah—and for their God and their worship. Any religion they had only went as far as to lead them to despise the only true religion and to meet it with jest and sarcasm. That was all. "They feared not the Lord."

Yet there was this point. *They had come to live near a people that did fear the Lord*, for at that time the people of Judah were, in a great measure, right towards the Lord God of Hosts. Hezekiah, I suppose, was then upon the throne—a king who in all things walked before the Lord and sought to uphold, in singleness of heart, the worship of the one only God. These strangers coming into the neighborhood where the ancient faith of God's people prevailed must have found it dangerous to their indifference and perilous to their skepticism and their false belief. So have I known men without religion or the fear of God, or any respect whatever for Divine things, who have been brought, in the order of Providence, into a society where there have been true piety and fervent religion. That always means trouble for their impiety and disturbance for their indifference. They receive some sparks from that fire into their souls and who knows whether the sparks may not light a fire that will burn down the wood and the hay and the stubble that are within their spirits? It ought to be a very hard thing for a man to live near us, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and to remain indifferent to religion. The preacher ought to preach so that it shall be almost an impossibility for his hearer to be altogether careless. You Christian people should set such an example in your households that it shall be next door to an impossibility for son or daughter or servant to remain at peace while they remain out of God and out of Christ in a state of sin! These people feared not the Lord, but the point that would be sure to bring them difficulty was that they had come near to the people of Judah that *did* fear God—near to a commonwealth that was presided over by Hezekiah, who feared the Lord with all his heart and all his soul!

II. Now, secondly, we come to THEIR CONVERSION. In the 33rd verse we read, "They feared the Lord," but there is a very ugly, "and," after it which shows that it was a sham conversion! "They feared the Lord and served their own gods." Still, it was a sort of conversion—it meant, at any rate, an outward change.

How came it about? If you read the chapter, as we have done just now, [See *Exposition* immediately following this sermon.] you will find that *their conversion was caused entirely by terror.* The country had been devastated. War had raged all over it for years. The cities and villages had become uninhabited and, consequently, the wild beasts had come down from the mountains and had so multiplied that lions became a terror throughout the land! Imagining that every country had a different god, these people said, "The god of the land must have sent these lions among us." Yes. And the sacred writer does not hesitate to say that God *did* send the lions among them, for even common things which can be

readily accounted for in the order of Nature must, nevertheless, be ascribed to God. He did send lions among them and it was these lions that converted them! Their teeth and fangs and fiery eyes and the thunders of their roars converted them. They must have a god to deliver them! They could not bear the lions, therefore they must fear the Lord who could send lions and who, perhaps, would cease to send them.

Now, dear Friends, always be somewhat diffident of your own conversion if you can trace it only and solely to motives of terror. Here is one man who never would have feared God if disease had not come into the house, if a child had not died. Then another and another—it seemed as if they would all sicken—and so he became religious. Another went into business and, for a while, he was very prosperous, but the tide turned and he lost his money. Bankruptcy stared him in the face. He made a second effort, only to fail again, and then he seemed to feel as if the lions were out against him, so he turned religious! Another had seen his children grow up and, having trained them for the world they went to the world—his son almost broke his heart! His daughter so acted as well near to bring his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! Everything seemed to go badly with him and so he said he would go to church or go to the meeting or something. He turned religious because the lions were out! Still another who had been a very healthy, strong man, and had never thought about religion at all—he had an "accident," he had a fit, or he was attacked with a disease of which he had been warned that in all probability it would be fatal, by-and-by, and there did not seem any cure for it. He got worse and worse, and so, well, he thought he would be religious!

There was something sensible in the resolution—no, it was a most proper resolution had it been but carried out rightly and in the way of the Truth of God. But you see, in all these cases there was no sense of having done wrong. There was no desire to do right. It was the lions, the lions, the lions! If there had been no lions, there would have been no religion! If there had been no lions, there would have been no seeking the Lord. If there had been no lions, there would have been no needing to know the manner of the god of the land. Such men have no desire after God, nothing of the kind! The thing that drives them is just that awful lion—the dread of death is upon them and the dread of something after death, the judgment to come—nothing else. Now some are really brought to God by terrors, but many are only brought into a condition of sham conversion—the root of their religion has been nothing else but the lions.

Now, notice that *their conversion was attended with ignorance*. What little sincerity there was—and there was a measure of sincerity—was, nevertheless, dimmed by lack of knowledge. Its eyes were put out by an utter ignorance. They did not really know God at all. They looked on Jehovah as if He were but the same as the gods of Cuth and Ava and Sepharvaim, as if He were a petty god of that district, too powerful for them to dare to withstand—nothing more than that. They did not want to know Him, you notice, for their request to the king of Assyria was not that they might know about God, but that they might know "the manner"

of the god of the land. Yes, and there are lots of people who when they desire conversion, wish only to know the manner of the people who are converted. What way ought a religious man behave? What is needed to satisfy outward decencies? What are the sacraments? What are the doctrines? Their thought is altogether of *externals*. They only want to know the manner of the god of the land!

When a man is really awakened by the Holy Spirit, his cry is, "I will arise and go to my Father!" But when it is not the Spirit of God, but only fear which awakens him, his cry is, "I will arise and hide in my Father's house. I need to get into some secret chamber of His abode." The desire is not for God, Himself, you see, not for Himself, but for His "manner." I know many who are converted this way—converted to a profession, converted to a creed, converted to sacraments, to forms. But as the Lord lives, you must be turned to God, Himself, or else you are not turned aright! Ignorance of God is a fatal ignorance! Not to know Him or to *seek to know Him*, but only to know the manner and the mode of worshipping Him is a poor desire. Yet many rest satisfied with that and nothing more.

Further, these people were not only led to their conversion by fear—not only was their conversion marred by ignorance—but probably *they were instructed by an unfaithful priest*. The king of Assyria sent them one of the priests that he might teach them the religion. One of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the Lord. It looks very suspicious, *that dwelling in Bethel*. I suspect he taught them worship of the calves of Bethel—and you know that the worshippers of the calves of Bethel were the Romanists of that day, just as the pure worshippers of God in Judah were the Protestants of the day. The worshippers of the calves of Bethel did not, perhaps, worship the calves—they worshipped God under the image of an ox and they said that image of an ox signifies power and strength. "So we do not worship *it*," they would have said, "we worship God in it." They were symbol-users—worshippers of emblems—and this priest was one of them! Well it is a poor conversion which is helped on by a blinded priest.

O Brothers and Sisters, take heed *how* you hear and take heed *what* you hear! We ought not to entrust ourselves to every person who professes to be a spiritual instructor. "Try the spirits whether they are of God." I will give you one good test—see whether they search and probe you. Rest assured that the Lord has not sent those that speak smooth words and never trouble your conscience or make you search yourselves! "If you take forth the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth," says the Lord to His Prophets—but not otherwise. So this man came and he taught them, I dare say, in his own easy way. He would say, "Well, my dear fellows, you see you have all got your own gods and I am no sectarian, so as long as you worship the true God I do not mind. You may worship Nergal and Ashima and Tartak and Adrammelech and all the rest of them whenever you like. I am teaching you, you see, this is to be the recognized State religion for the present time and I will teach it to you. But do not afflict yourselves too much—it will be all right." That is

the way these got converted. No wonder that they came over so easily seeing they had such a nice comforting minister who never troubled them at all about any vital change!

Being thus converted *they adopted a good many outward ceremonies*. "So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of their high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places." They went in for doing the thing thoroughly. As it was a matter of form, when they had found out how to do it—why, they would do it! One priest would not be enough—they would make a great many and they made as many as ever they could get! And as the lowest of the land would probably be the cheapest, they selected them! Men generally have an eye to business even in these things. They set to work worshipping on every high hill though God had said that He was to have sacrifices offered nowhere but at Jerusalem. He would have one altar but they took every high place and consecrated it, and they began with great form and pomp and show to go in for the worship of Jehovah. Generally the more show the less reality—and it was so in this case.

You see, then, that this conversion, though it looked very fine, was radically unsound. Let me emphasize the reasons for this.

It was so, first, *because there was no repentance*. You do not find these people confessing that they had been wrong in worshipping, every man, his own god. They are quite willing to worship Jehovah, to have sacrifices and do the right thing, but as to any confession of sin making the place a Bochim—a place of weeping, because they had transgressed against the only living and true God—there is not a word of it! Now, my Hearer, let me speak to you about your own conversion. If you have skipped the first page of the book, namely, *repentance*, go back and begin again, for that faith which has a dry eye and never wept for sin is not the faith of God's elect! There must be repentance! It is an essential Grace—no man is truly saved who has not a hatred of the sin he loved before and who has not made a confession of it before God with an earnest prayer for pardon.

Notice again, *these converts had no expiatory sacrifice*. The true Believer—the man of Judah—had a Day of Atonement once every year and there were great sacrifice of sin-offerings whenever there had been special sin. But there is no mention of trespass-offering or sin-offering among the colonists—they had no sacrifice, no blood of expiation. Ah, Sirs, that religion that does not begin with the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a religion that will soon come to an end—and the sooner it comes to the end the better, that you may begin again on a surer foundation! A religion without the blood of Christ in it is a lifeless religion. A religion without the Atonement and reconciliation by the blood of the Covenant has missed the most essential part of true godliness! There was a radical unsoundness in the conversion of these people, for there was no repentance and no sacrifice.

Moreover, *there was no putting away of the false gods.* They did not mind worshipping Jehovah, but every man also worshipped his own god. This is not a true nor worthy service. "I will trust Christ," says one. Yes, and you mean to trust your baptismal regeneration too! That is a false

god. You will serve God, but you must indulge some secret sin! That is another false god which cannot be tolerated. If we are converted to God, we must take the hammer and smash the idols! Dagon and Nergal and Adrammelech must not stand in the same temple where stands Jehovah's Ark. All the false gods can live comfortably together, but when the living God comes, He is a jealous God and they must all fall before Him. You worship not God at all if you do not worship God alone! There must be an image-breaking in the soul if the conversion is really true. There was none of it here.

In fact, *there was no love to God* in these Samaritans. They were afraid of the lions, but their hearts did not go out to the God who could deliver them from the lions.

I wonder whether I could pick out any characters among those present who are like that—some of the Samaritan breed who are trying the fear of the Lord and serving other gods? I have known a man of this kind. He came to a place of worship and if he had been allowed, he would have joined the church and come to the Communion Table. At the same time he was a great worshipper of Bacchus—a great lover of what he called, "a little drop," though I question whether you could not have made a very considerable number of drops out of what he took! I was speaking the other day to a clergyman who said that there was a man in his parish who told him that he did not know how it was, but he never felt more spiritually minded than when he had had four or five glasses of beer. There are people of that sort about. They fear the Lord and they serve their own gods. Only think of such a thing as a Christian drunk! Can there be such a thing? Your common sense shall answer—I need not.

I have also known such a thing as this—a man—such an *excellent* man! His guinea was always ready for the cause of God. He had a very prominent pew and was very well known in connection with religion, but if you had known that he had a second house beside his own, and known the way in which he lived, you would have held him up to execration. Yet he dared to come into the House of God and if he did not actually unite himself with the church, he was prominently identified with it. At the same time he was living in the lusts of the flesh and professing to be a servant of God—fearing the Lord—keeping a bit of religion, because he was afraid of the lions—that was all. And all the while he was worshipping his own god as well.

You know the thing is also done in business. There is a man who can sing a hymn most beautifully and he can pray in the Prayer Meeting. But he can prey upon you as well. His mode of business is such that he takes advantage, cheats and sails wonderfully near the wind—yet he has the name of being a very good man. He is a religious scoundrel! Oh, that God would save our churches from this kind of people who are to be met with so often! The lions make them fear God. They are such cowards that they must be religious and yet all this while they are worshipping other gods.

I have known a woman, too—I think I may truthfully say a woman in this instance—and she has been, oh, such a dear Christian soul, only there was nobody's character safe within seven miles of her tongue—she

was always ready to slander the character of the best that lived! She was a slandering saint, a gossiping mother in Israel. God save us from such!

I cannot describe all the characters that may be suggested by those Samaritans, nor am I intending to hit anybody I know to be here just now, but if I do, I pray you take the cap and wear it and keep it on until it does not fit you any longer! Although you smile, these inconsistencies are very serious matters and, what is more, they are very common matters. Sham conversion is a thing that may be met with all over the world. Oh, we have got it on a large scale in this "Christian" England of ours which fears the Lord and yet sells opium! Fears the Lord and is the most drunken nation under Heaven! God save us from such national hypocrisy! God also save us from similar hypocrisy on a minor scale in all ranks and classes and conditions of men who attempt to fear the Lord and to serve their own gods! Such double religion will not run! It is no use—it will not work. If God is God, serve Him. And if the devil is your god, serve him! But the attempt to join the two together will never succeed, either in this world or in that which is to come!

Such is the pattern of the sham conversion which these people experienced.

III. Now, lastly, we have got before us THEIR REAL STATE AND GOD'S VERDICT UPON IT. He says, "They feared not the Lord."

No, *they insulted the Lord*. They did not fear Him. The men who worshipped God and worshipped Baal, worshipped God and Adrammelech were impiously daring! The Lord's claim is that He, only, is God, and He would have us know that the gods of the heathens are not gods. Our God made the Heavens, but as for these—they are the work of men's hands! One of the Roman emperors was willing to put up a statue of Christ in the Pantheon among all the rest of the gods and there were some who thought that that showed a kindly spirit. But what an insult to set up Christ by the side of lustful Jupiter and infamous Venus—and all the rest of these horrible gods which were only fit for a reformatory, the very best of them! And for the Samaritans to mention the name of Jehovah side by side with those cruel, bestial gods which they worshipped was not to do Him honor, but was to insult His sacred majesty! Even so, Sirs, to try and keep religion and yet to keep your sins is not to fear God but to insult Him! "Unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?" Keep clear of such trickery! If you must sin, do not add to your sins this needless and unnecessary one of making a hypocritical pretense of fearing the living God! Save yourself that superfluity of evil.

These people did not fear God for *they did not really obey Him*. Obey Him? Why, had they obeyed Him, they would have broken their gods to pieces at once! But no, they only wanted to know "the manner" of the God. They were willing to fall in with that, but as to really asking what His mind and will were—and being willing to do it—that was foreign to them. Therefore they feared not God.

They were not in Covenant relation with God, as were the Israelites. They were under His old Covenant of Works, but they were not under the

Covenant of Grace, neither did they know anything of it. God had not brought them up out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. He had never redeemed them by blood and set them apart to be His people. They did not know anything about that. There are multitudes of professed converts to religion today who know nothing about the Covenant of Grace—nothing about Redemption by blood! They cannot sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. No, they simply keep an outward ceremonial observance of the manner of the God of the land and they are content with that, but into the very vitals of religion they have not come, therefore they fear not God.

These people soon acted so as to prove this. You know what they did a few years afterwards when God had brought back His servant, Ezra, together with a company of people to begin to build the Temple. These persons first of all came and said that they would like to join in the work. But, Ezra and Nehemiah looked at them very sternly and said, "We have nothing to do with you. You cannot trace your pedigree to Abraham. You do not belong to the Covenant seed. You know nothing about it. Go about your business." Then these people showed the old spirit—they wrote letters to the various kings that were then in authority and so the building of the Temple was stopped several times. And they even tried afterwards to attack the people of Jerusalem and put an end to the building of the Temple. There are no people in the world that turn out, generally, to be such haters of real religion and of genuine Christianity as those people who are scared into a nominal religion by the lions and yet are abiding in their sins!

When the Methodists first began to preach, you know what an outcry there was against them. The great and heinous crime that they were committing was that they were insisting upon regeneration and upon holy lives. So crowds of people all over you country said, "Why, we are as religious as people can be! It is true we drink and we do all sorts of things, but you really cannot set up anything like a pure and perfect church in the world. To talk of that is mere cant, you know. There cannot be such a thing! We cannot all be consistent in our profession and there cannot be anybody that always is—it is all lies and hypocrisy to suppose that any people can be holy or can walk only in the fear of God!" And so they began to pelt the pioneer Methodists with mud and to put them in prison and to oppose them in all sorts of ways. I say it again, it is Ishmael that hates Isaac because though he is not in the line of succession, he is very near akin to him and comes of the same parents. There is no enmity like the enmity of the Samaritan to the Jew—no enmity like that of the mere moralist or the mere hypocritical professor to the man that has vital godliness, that has received the Grace of God into his soul!

Perhaps you will think that I have spoken somewhat severely, but I have spoken to myself as well as to you with this earnest desire that we may be right before the living God. There are many of us here that profess to be Christians. Are we really so? Have we real faith in Christ? Does our life prove that it is the living faith—the faith that produces good

works? Brethren, if we are, indeed, what we say we are, we have only one God. All other aims, objectives and designs are secondary. We seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. If we are, indeed, Christians, we have broken a great many idols, we have still some more to break and we must keep the hammer going till they are all broken—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your throne
And worship only Thee."

If we are real Christians, we have one only trust—we hang all our weight on Jesus, and all other trusts have been flung to the bats and the moles long ago! If we are really the servants of God, we are trying to get rid of sin! We are not harboring any lust or any false way. Though we are not perfect, yet we want to be, we long to be! There is not a willful sin that we would keep. God helping us, we desire to steer clear of everything that is contrary to His holy mind. May God grant us this thoroughness, this depth of sincerity, this real change of heart—that we be not among the Samaritan trimmers, but that of us it may to said, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile."

God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 20:1-17; 2 KINGS 17:23-41.

Exodus 20:1-3. *And God spoke all these words saying, I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.* God is the only God and no other object of worship is to be tolerated for a moment!

4-6. *You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.* Here we are forbidden to worship God under any similitude whatever. The First Commandment forbids the worship of another god. The Second strictly forbids us to worship anything which our eyes can see, under the pretense that we are thereby worshipping God. This is another offense and much more common than the First—and it is often pleaded—"Oh, we do not worship these things! We worship God whom these represent." But here it strictly forbidden to *represent* God under any form or substance whatever and to make that an object of worship.

7. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD shall not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.* A reverence for the very name of God is demanded and all things that are connected with His worship are to be kept sacred.

8-11. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all the work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your*

daughter, your maidservant, nor your manservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within the gates: for in six days the LORD made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. It is good for us that we make the Sabbath a day of rest—a day of holy worship—a day of drawing near unto God. Thus far, we have the first table, containing the duties towards God. The rest inscribed on the second table are our duties towards man.

12-14. *Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery.* These Commandments take a far wider sweep than the mere words. "You shall not kill" includes the doing of anything by which life may be shortened as well as taken away. It includes anger—every evil wish and every malicious passion. And, "You shall not commit adultery" includes every form of unchastity and impurity.

15-17. *You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor's.* It was the Tenth Commandment that convicted the Apostle Paul, for he says, "I had not known sin except the Law had said "You shall not covet." When men break the other commandments they often break this one first.

2 Kings 17:23, 24. *So was Israel carried away out of their own hand to Assyria this day. And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof.* It was a part of the tactics of the Assyrian empire to take people away from their original location and colonize them in other places—to shift them to another land so that while the Israelites were taken to Babylon, numbers of those who had lived round about Babylon were brought to live in the Samaritan province in order that nationalities might thus be broken down and patriotism might expire—thus making it easier for the Assyrian tyrant to govern the land.

25-27. *And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Then they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore He has sent lions among them, and, behold they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying Carry there one of the priests whom you brought from there; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach in the manner of the God of the land.* He did not care one single farthing himself what religion they were of, but if they did not happen to have a religion to suit the country, "Well, then, send one of the priests who used to live there who can teach them what it is." According to his notions, they could take it up just when they liked.

28-31. *Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt and the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.* It would answer no practical purpose if I were to explain the meaning of the names of these various gods. They were some of them of brute forms. Their worship was generally attended with the most lascivious rites and especially the worship of Molech or Moloch, who is mentioned under two different forms here. He was a god whose worship was consummated with the most dreadful cruelties, for children were passed through the fires and burnt in his honor.

32-38. *So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the LORD, and served their own gods after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from there. Unto this day they continue practicing the same rituals: they fear not the LORD, neither do they follow the statutes, or follow the ordinances of the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, with whom the LORD had made a Covenant, and charged them, saying, You shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them nor sacrifice to them but the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, Him shall you fear, and Him shall you worship, and to Him shall you do sacrifice. And the statues, and the ordinances, and the laws and the commandment, which He wrote for you, you shall observe to do forevermore and you shall not fear other gods. And the Covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget; neither shall you fear other gods.* How this warning comes over and over and over again! "Hear, O Israel. The Lord your God is one God." The worship of anything else under any pretext whatever, besides the one ever-blessed Trinity in unity is forever forbidden to us!

39-41. *But the LORD your God you shall fear, and He shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. Howbeit they did not listen, but they did their former manner. So these nations feared the LORD and served their engraved images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.* Trying, as far us ever they could, to link the old idolatries with the worship of the true God, which thing is the most loathsome in the sight of the Most High.

—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 CHALLENGE AND WAR CRY
NO. 2929

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1862.

"O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my Beloved brethren, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for so much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 15:55-58.

THERE is little fear that the minister of this flock should forget that man is mortal. Where men are massed in such numbers, we not only believe in mortality, we see it. We hear the funeral knell like the striking of the clock—habitually. The mower always has work in this pasture—every week the great gleaner has some ears of corn to gather in this harvest field and every time we assemble in this house we have to remember that some who were with us when we met before have crossed the flood and entered into their rest. We cannot forget this.

But, my dear Friends, there is a danger lest you should forget it. Not being able to take a glimpse over so large a company as this, if your children have been spared to you, if your house has been unvisited by death for this last 19 or 20 years, you may be apt to think that you have immunity given to you—that you will never come to the grave—that death may arrest others, but that you sit alone in some privileged security and shall see no sorrow, that the arrows may fly and strike on the right hand and on the left, but that you walk invulnerable among the dead. It is well, therefore, in order to cool the hot blood of our youth and to stir the dull blood of our old age, that we should ofttimes make a journey to the tomb and reflect on death, judgment, resurrection, and eternity. In these busy times, when men have so much to do in order to live, it may be of much service to them to think how certainly they must die. 'Tis greatly wise to talk about our last hours. The shroud, the grave, the shovel may teach us more of true wisdom than all the learned heads that ever pondered vain philosophy, or all the lips that ever uttered earth-born science!

Now, I intend tonight, as God the Holy Spirit shall enable me, to address my text first to Believers in Christ and then briefly to warn those who are as yet not included in that happy number. I must leave your conscience to judge to which class you belong. I fondly hope that no one will be so perverse as to take encouragement that does not belong to him, but that every man will be wise enough and honest enough to his own

heart to take just that truth which fits his own case and lay it home to his conscience and to his heart.

I. First of all, THE MESSAGE TO BELIEVERS. We take this text, not with the hope of exploring it, but with the thought of skimming the surface with the swallow, rather than diving into its depths like leviathan.

There are three things on the surface—A brief but unparalleled challenge given to two dreadful and invincible foes "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?" A glorious paean of splendid triumph—"Thanks be to God who gives us the victory," and a war cry addressed by a great commander to his soldiers—"Brethren, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

There is here, first, *a double challenge*: "O Death, where is your sting?" Death, you skeleton monarch, where is your sting? Fleshless rider upon the pale horse, we ask you, where is your sting? With a horrible and ghastly smile, he answers us, "My sting? You have but to open your eyes and see it and before long I shall make your flesh quiver with it when I send it in even to your very soul! Where is my sting? Is it no sting to you to know that you must leave everything you call dear on the earth, that your estates must be left behind you and your broad acres must be all renounced? Is it nothing to you that your houses and your lands, your merriments and your enjoyments, your feasts and your riots must be forsaken? That the hearth and everything that is genial in the family, friendship and the communion of generous hearts and everything that makes glad the eyes or cheers the ears must be left behind you? For your eyes—when filmed by my finger—to no more see the landscape, the rugged mountain, or the plain? For your ears, when I have sealed them in eternal silence, to no more hear the voice of them that make merry, no more hear the music or the choral hymn? You shall be deaf forever when I cast you into the grave! Is it no sting to you to leave the enjoyments of the House of God? For you no more the communion of the body and blood of Christ? For you no more the gladsome seasons when the tribes come up to the House of the Lord with willing footsteps to keep holy day and magnify Him who has loved them and given Himself for them? Is it no sting to remember that soon you must gaze, for the last time, upon the cheek which is now so fair in your sight? That soon you must take the last fond gaze of her who is the partner of your life? That you must leave everything, taking nothing with you, returning to the earth naked as you came from your mother's womb, stripped, bereft of everything, a penniless beggar, going back to the vile dust from where you did spring—is there no sting in this?"

"Where is my sting? Ask the gray-headed," the monster says, "whether they already do not feel the pangs of it! Their eyes grow weak, the strong pillars of the house of man begins to fail, the breath comes heavily, the hair is blanched—the grasshopper has become a burden and the teeth cease because they are few! Ask me where is my sting? Even the young can feel it, for, if they think at all, they know that every breath they draw is but a step towards the tomb and that their pulses—

'Like muffled drums, are beating

Funeral marches to the grave.'"

"Where is my sting?" asks Death. "Look to the widow in whose heart my sting is rankling now. The beloved of her soul has departed and she is left to mourn like a dove without her mate. Ask the fatherless where the sting of death is as they are driven into the street, received by the cold hand of public charity, scarcely housed and fed. Where is my sting? Ask the weeping child as he looks down into the coffin upon the dead face of the mother that once toiled and labored for him, who once cherished and loved him, but who has now gone to the place appointed for all living! Aha! Aha," he says, "where is my sting? You have all felt it in the departure of your best beloved ones, when you most wished to have them. The State has felt it. I smote the fellow with the crowned head and laid him low! I smote again and took away the statesman when he had returned from a distant empire laden with the spoils of many years experience! I have with my sting taken away the rich and the mighty, the beautiful and the lovely, the learned, the pious, the good, the benevolent! I have taken them away just when the world needed them the most, till I made good men say, 'The righteous perish and the godly man ceases from the earth.' Ask me where is my sting?" he cries, and drives his white horse of terror onward and dashes from us in disdain!

Yes, Death, but we still defy you, and though you have thus vented your spleen, we cry to you again, "Have at you, Death! Have at you! You have no sting, for all your boast! To Believers you are now a stingless locust! Hold awhile till we hear the other tyrant, your powerful confederate."

"O Grave, where is your victory?" From its hollow depth the Grave replies, "Ask me where is my victory? Why, O foolish son of Adam, do you not ask where is *not* my victory? From Machpelah to Gethsemane I have had my splendid triumphs. Onward, from the first age even until now I have proved to men that I am victor. Where are my triumphs? Open the soil upon which your fair world rests and see if every vault is not filled with a putrid mass of rotten mortality! Could you bring up your fellows from the grave and pile them above the sod, there would be so many dead that there would not be room for the living! Yes, heap them up, heap them up till they make a pyramid higher than the Egyptian Pharaoh ever reared—pile them up and they will outreach the Alps and salute the morning star with their dread heights of rottenness!

"Where is my victory? Ask every howling tempest as it drives the ship like a cockleshell before it. Ask every sunken rock and reef and icebound shore. Where is my victory? Ask the battlefield of yesterday, all gory with blood shed by a brother's hands, where sons of Anglo-Saxon mothers lie upon the plains of their own country, slain by their own brothers' hands! Where is my victory? From Waterloo go back to Trafalgar—stretch your wings and fly to ancient times, to Salamis and Marathon, or farther back still—speak of all that Sennacherib did, and the mighty host that went before him when he smote the loins of kings and slew hecatombs of their subjects in an hour!

"Where is my victory? There is not a spot of ground but feels it. There is not an age but must testify thereunto. The signs of it are everywhere! Look at yonder lovely nook where birds are singing and sweet flowers are springing up from the green sod. You will say, 'Death has never been here.' But what are those hillocks bound with the brown bramble? I *have* been here and here keep I my place! Look yonder where the white stones stand up like the very teeth of death and see how I have devoured my thousands! From yonder busy city they bring them out by scores each day and lay them in the tomb—and yet you ask me where is my victory? Why, you are, every one of you, captives of my perpetual triumphing! You are marching on, every one of you, downwards to my jaws! Go where you may, you are always coming down to my doors. I shall soon shut my gates upon you, every one of you. Strong and healthy men, men of brawny arms, men of massive intellect, men whose limbs totter not, though you bear mighty burdens, I shall one of these days receive you, helpless as little children—and you shall lie in your white cerements, in your wooden case—and I shall then prove to you and to the world where my victory is!"

Even as we tremblingly listen, the Grave shuts its yawning mouth and all is still save where the voice of faith, looking down upon the dry bones and believing that they shall yet live, cries, "Despite your vaunt, you braggart, your boastings are as hollow as yourself! Where is your victory? We will prove you impotent yet, O desperate Grave! You have no triumphs! Our Lord, Jehovah's Christ, the Resurrection—He has broken open your portals and made through your territories a wide passage for all Believers to the Land of Promise. What though—

'An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave,
Legions of angels can't confine me there!'"

Turn now, O Believer, and sing a paean of triumph. "The sting of death is sin." Through Jesus Christ that is forgiven. "The strength of sin is the Law." Through Christ Jesus that has ceased to thunder, for it has been fulfilled and has become our friend. Therefore, "thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Prepare, then, the voice of joyous thanksgiving! Make ready your triumphal hymn! Death, we now triumph over you. You have spoken, but now we will speak and answer you to your face! Death has no sting to a Believer. Once death was the penalty of sin—sin being forgiven, the penalty ceases and Christians do not die, now, as a punishment for their sin, but they die that they may be prepared to live! They are unclothed that they may be clothed upon with that house which is from Heaven! They leave the tenement of clay that they may inherit the eternal mansion!

There is no sting left in you, O Death, in yourself. As for all you can tell us of aches and pains and groans, we know that all these things work together for our good! As for what you tell us of your gloom and of your horror, we believe in nothing that you say, for, if Christ is with us, we will walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and fear no evil!

As you have lost your sting in yourself, O Death, so you have also lost your sting as to all that we lose by you. You tell us that we lose the sights of earth, but, skeleton king, we gain the sights of Heaven! What are the

landscapes of this dusky world compared with the azure skies, the lakes of crystal and the plains of everlasting green in the land of light and glory? What are the cities of this world—the giant cities of the West, the fairy cities of the East—what are they all compared with Jerusalem, the golden city, the pearly-gated, the city whose walls are jasper, whose very paving stones are laid with fair colors? Lose by losing earth? Surely in gaining Heaven the loss is all forgotten! You say our ears are closed—it is not so—they are opened to hear the seraph's hymns and to listen to the music of the cherubim, awful, sublime and beautiful! You say we leave behind us wealth and wit and friends. Fool that you are, 'tis wealth we gain—and all is dross we leave behind! And as for friends, we have as many—yes, and many more—and they are better, too, than those we leave on earth. We have beloved ones that have crossed the flood and at their head we have One who is better to us than a million friends, the Chief among Ten Thousand, the Altogether Lovely! As for all that you can take away, take it and welcome, since the joy which shall be revealed in us is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory! This far surpasses the light affliction of losing all that earth can give.

Death, we tell you again that your sting is taken away as to the friends we have lost. The widow, weeping, tells you that she does not feel your sting, for her husband is in Heaven and she is following him as speedily as time can carry her. The mother tells you, Death, that through Divine Grace you have no sting in her thoughts concerning her infants. She rejoices to know that at her breast there once did hang immortal spirits that now behold the Savior's face! And we say to you, Death, concerning all beloved ones who have gone, that we sorrow not over them and would not—

"Break their placid sleep,
Nor lure them from their home above."

We devoutly thank the Father of spirits, who has safely housed them beyond fear of damage and brought them to the desired haven where no rough wind or tempestuous wave shall ever rock their keel again. "Blessed," we say, as we repeat the voice from Heaven, "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." And that voice from Heaven responds again, in tones articulate, "Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."—

"Thus brighter hopes, that are not dreams,
Their light around the spirit shed
And Heaven itself breaks out in gleams
Of Glory round the dying bed."

Death, you have no sting—your pains are loosed! So what if your face is pale, your shadow dark as you flit across the chamber? So what if frail nature shrinks and shudders at your dart? Kind Jesus, help us—we cling to You and all our spirit bravely cries in calm defiance, lively faith and holy rapture—"O Death, where is your sting? Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory!"

As for the grave, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us answer its foul-mouthed boasts. We tell the grave that it has no victory in itself. 'Tis true we shall sleep in it, but we sleep as victors! We hear the shout of triumph

and we lie down as warriors taking their rest, not as vanquished ones. Christ has made the tomb, which was once a prison, a resting place for the bodies of His saints. He has made the tomb His royal closet where he bids His beloved lay aside the dusky garments of their work days till they shall be cleansed and made meet to be the garments of His everlasting holy days in Heaven! O Grave, when you do encompass our bodies, you are yourself defeated—you are our servant—call us not your slaves! We conquer before we come to nestle in your bosom. O, Grave, we have lost nothing but the like of that we committed to your keeping when we placed the slumbering forms of friends we dearly loved to lodge within your arms. Their relics are there, but they are in Heaven! Their corruption is there, but the earnest of their resurrection is on high and that which lives in deathless immortality is above! There they lie, for flesh and blood have sin—let them lie there, for flesh and blood must be purified. But they shall live and we tell you, Grave, that when the trumpet sound, you must give back our friends to us 10 times more dear than they were when, with hollow sound of, "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes," we laid them in your cold embrace. You have no victory, 'tis but a temporary triumph—you must give back your prey!

O Grave, you talk of corruption—what is it but as the fuller's bath wherein the body lies till it is made of purest white? You speak of cold vaults, darkness and damp—what are all these but fit accompaniments of the process in which the corruption shall become incorruption and the mortal, immortality? We smile at all your horrors. We salute you as the place where we shall take repose awhile rather than as the dungeon of our souls' imprisonment! O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?

I wish I could set these matters tonight in language such as Christmas Evans would have used in his glowing moments. This is a right glowing theme that might make a dumb man speak and might summon the ears of the deaf to listen! Christ has vanquished death by dying! He has disrobed the grave of its triumphal garments by wearing its cerements Himself! He consecrated the sepulcher by slumbering in its dark recess! Death is now no more the destroying angel, the tomb no more a morgue! Behold, as Samson carried the gates of Gaza to the top of Hebron—doors, posts, bars and all—so has Christ carried the gates of Death to the top of Heaven's hill—posts, bars and all—and all the legions of Hell cannot bring back the trophies which our Samson has torn away! Once bound, Himself, with cords by His own brethren, He snapped them as though they were green withs and in heaps upon heaps He has laid His enemies dead at His feet! Sin, and Death and Hell—all are vanquished by the Man that once was bound, but who now binds captivity and leads it captive! Sing unto Him, you spirits that are redeemed before the Throne of God! Lift up your hallelujahs, clap your wings, sweep your harps and say, "All hail You, vanquisher of Death, destroyer of the grave!" Let the echo reverberate to the lowest depths of Hell and let the fiends bite their fire-tormented tongues and gnash their teeth in vain, while that song is

echoed in notes like these, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?"

Now listen! Oh, listen! Heed *the war cry of our Great Captain.* "Therefore, my Beloved brethren, be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Alas for the embattled hosts of God's elect, if you, O Death, did seal the dispatch from the gory field of battle and you, O Grave, did hollow out the niche where the warrior should receive in holy fear his honorable due! "If in this life, only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

'Twere a troublous and a toilsome thing, in truth, to be steadfast if there were no reward! Christian men and women, to you is this word of admonition given. Inasmuch as you shall not die but live. Inasmuch as you are the heirs of immortality and life, Christ bids you this day be steadfast! Be steadfast in your Doctrine. Hold the Truth of God, and especially the solemn Truth of Resurrection! Hold it firmly, as with an iron grip. Be you steadfast in holiness—let nothing move you—stand for the right. Remember, if the earth reels, your hands are on the stars and, therefore, you need not lose your hold. Be you steadfast in your profession—blush not, hide not your candle under a bushel. The glory that is to be revealed will make you good amends for all the shame and contumely that the reproach of Christ may bring upon you. Be you steadfast in everything that is a matter of faith to you—steadfast in your firm belief of Christ's Redemption of your souls—steadfast in the full conviction that you are the adopted children of your Heavenly Father—steadfast in your continual perseverance in Sanctification that you may be fitted for the embrace of your Lord! Be you steadfast like mountains that never move, like the hidden pillars of granite on which, though eyes have never seen, this large globe rests! Like those under-lying rocks which bear up all the deep soil, be you everlastingly steadfast!

Temptation will come—"be you immovable." Like cedars rocked in the storm, but never uprooted—like lighthouses against which the huge waves dash and over which the mountains of foam will leap, be you bright in testimony but never stirred in steadfastness. Like some peak that glitters in the sun and soon is shivered in the lightning, yet still stand looking up to the next storm and defying the next blow! "Be you immovable." As the anvil to the stroke of the hammer, so bear you persecution, affliction, temptation—let none of these things move you, neither count your life dear unto you. Immortality! Be that your watchword as you stand in your ranks while the shot is flying and the foe is advancing. When you are bidden not to advance, but to stand still—"having done all to stand"—be this your reflection, "your life is hid with Christ in God." Immortality shall make amends for all your pain and suffering here! Resurrection shall restore all you seem to lose in the fray.

Be you "always abounding in the work of the Lord." Be you working here and there, at home and abroad—in the morning when the first ruddy streak paints the brow of the young dawn—at noon when the hot sun pours out its lavish floods of light, at eventide when the birds are going to their rest and at midnight, if there is a fallen Sister who at no

other hour can be reached. "In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand." With a heart for any strife, be first and foremost in every conflict—dash in at every skirmish and be in your rank at every decisive struggle. Hide not your face from shame and spitting! Turn not back from labor or from scorn—"in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" on earth, but that bread which you eat in Heaven, so gloriously won by the Grace of God, shall be all the sweeter for the sweat that was lavished upon it! "Always abounding in the work of the Lord."

But I hear some of you say, "To what end is all this strain?" "Ah," says one young man, "I have been steadfast and immovable and I have lost my job. Instead of being prospered by it, I have suffered loss." Well, there is another and a better land—your wrongs shall be righted there. Think of the rest which remains for the people of God! "Ah," says a mother, "but I trained up my little child and she just began to gladden my heart with her first prayer—and then she died." Refrain your eyes from weeping, for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord—she lives a better life than she could have lived with you. I, too, may ask, "To what end?" I may say that I see many brought to Christ and what becomes of them?—they die. In the college, out of our small numbers, two men we trained for the ministry have fallen asleep in Christ—one while yet a student and the other when he had but departed from us a few months. Well, but what of all this? They live! We trained them for the skies and made them choristers for eternity!

Our work is not lost. We must be steadfast, always abounding in God's work while here. It seems to me that this is the end for which the Sunday school teacher, the mother, the father, the minister should always be working. What does the farmer look for? Is he content when he sees his corn turning yellow to say, "How straight it stands! What a good harvest there is!"? No, no, he never counts what he has in his harvest till they shout the "Harvest Home." So we should think our work is never rewarded to the full till souls, saved through our means, get to Heaven and until we get there to meet them there! I see some dear Brothers and Sisters here who I have no doubt look for many souls to meet them at the gates of Paradise—and I can cast my eye over a Sister, here and there in this Church who, highly honored of God, will have young spirits to meet them at Heaven's gate and salute them joyfully as mothers in Israel! Happy, happy we who, when we wing our way to Heaven, shall hear a band behind us—and when we turn our heads, wondering who they are, shall hear each say, "You did bring me to Christ! You did teach me His blessed name! You did rescue me from sin and vice! You have led me along the golden shining path to Heaven and here I am, to share your bliss forever." Brethren, there is another and a better land"—therefore be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

II. We will pause a minute and then use our text for a very short time, indeed, for the other part of the congregation, uttering A WARNING TO UNBELIEVERS.

Where are they? Where shall I point my finger? Where shall I present my gaze? They are mingled everywhere—in almost every pew! In these aisles and in the pews we have men and woman who do not love Christ, who have not passed from death unto life. Strangers, yes, and those that hear us every Sabbath, too, to our pain and grief are here—hundreds, hundreds, hundreds that are still enemies to God and in the gall of bitterness!

Hear me, then, hear me! *To you death has a sting.* It will sting you in death. It will plague you on your pillow. It will make you toss your aching head. It will make your heart palpitate with a huge unutterable dread. You shall feel the sting and your friends shall see that you feel it by those dread expressions of awful gloom which shall come over you on the bed of death! And there will be a sting after death, a sting the moment you are dead. Summoned before your God, you shall hear your sentence and there will be a sting in judgment! When the body shall rise from the grave, then there will be a sting forever and forever, in the second death—forever and forever! Is there any man here who can measure eternity? Who can tell its everlasting years? Yet all the while there shall be a sting in death and such a sting, and such a terror, and such a misery, and such a torment as only they can know who have begun to feel it—and even they know it not, for still it is forever and forever, when twice ten thousand thousand years have gone—forever and still forever!

There *is* a sting in Death *to you* and *over you the Grave will get the victory*, for the Grave shall devour you! When you wake up from it, again, it shall not be to newness of life—it shall not be in the image of the Second Adam, but in the image of the first—and perhaps in the image of the first Adam in all the decay and loathsomeness into which death brought him! I know not in what form the wicked dead shall rise. It may be they shall, even in their bodies, be the objects of everlasting contempt, devoured by the worm that never dies, so that their very flesh will give evidence of it. O my Hearers, if these things are true, it is time that we woke up! It is time that saints woke up to try and bring you to Christ! It is high time that you also awoke up out of slumber! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," "for our God is a consuming fire." Are you ready to meet God? Are you ready for the Judgment? Can you confront the Judge? Who among you can dwell with everlasting burning, or abide with the devouring flames? Do you shudder? Do you say, "Great God save us from our sin"?

The path is easy. The path is open—God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn unto Him and live! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! Trust Jesus now and you are saved at once! Death has lost its sting in that moment and the Grave its victory! We said this morning in our simple discourse, "Repent and believe the Gospel." This is the sum of the Gospel—to repent and to know Christ. Oh, that the Spirit of God may lead everyone in this assembly to do so at this very hour and then you can walk over your graves without fear, and descend into them without dread, for you shall come up out of them with triumph! You shall ascend to Heaven with glory and so shall

you be forever with the Lord! The Lord add His own blessing for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 THESSALONIANS 3.

Verse 1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the LORD may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you.* A most important request. What can the ministers of the Gospel do if their people cease to pray for them? Even if their own prayers are heard, as they will be, and a measure of blessing be given, yet it will be but a scant measure compared with what it would be if all the saints united in their intercessions! Whenever we see the Word of God very mighty in one place it ought to encourage us to pray that it may be the same in another place, for it is the same Word and the hearts of all men are alike. The same spirit can give the same blessing in every place. Hence Paul says, "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you." Now, if any of you in your church are enjoying rich prosperity, pray for others, that they may have the same. And if you are without it, take courage from any church which you see prospering and ask the Lord to do the same things for you. Very likely if we prayed more for ministers, they would be more blessed to us. There is many a man who cannot "hear" his minister and the reason may be that God never hears him pray for his minister.

2. *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.* I really do not know which is the worst to put up with—an unreasonable man or a wicked man. A wicked man may do you all sorts of mischief, but you soon know him. But an unreasonable man—you do not know where to find him and he can attack you from all sorts of places. Alas, there are some very unreasonable Christians—very good in some points, but very stupid—and a stupid man may set a village on a blaze quite as easily as a wicked man. The stupid man's stupidity may be as dangerous as another man's design. Pray also "that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, for all men have not faith," and all men have not sense, I may also add.

3. *But the LORD is faithful.* There is the mercy. Whether men are fools or knaves, the Lord is faithful.

3. *Who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.* We are taught to pray for this Grace. We are here told that we shall have it. Since God is faithful He will keep us from evil.

4. *And we have confidence in the LORD touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you.* Our obedience to Apostolic ordinances should be of the present and of the future. It should be fixed in our souls. What the Lord has commanded in His Church by His Apostles should be carefully regarded by us.

5. *And the LORD direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* The two things go together. When we love God, we long for the Glory and the appearing of His Son. The most loving

spirits in the world have had, most, an eye to that glorious coming. Note Enoch who walked with God and prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes." Note Daniel, "a man greatly beloved," and a Seer who looked into the future and saw the Ancient of Days. Mark also John who leaned his head on Jesus' bosom—we may say of him that he spoke more of the Second Coming than all the rest of the Apostles. When the heart gets right away from earth and is set upon God, then it is that we begin to long for the manifestation of the Lord from Heaven!

6. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.* Paul had been to Thessalonica and had given oral teaching. And now he commits to the Book what he had spoken, but he bids them take care not to associate with those who willfully broke the ordinances of the Church which he had taught them. There are some brethren with whom it is ill for us to associate, lest they do us harm—and it is ill for them that we associate with them, lest we seem to assist them in their evil deeds. Especially is this so in the case of brethren of the class that he is about to describe—mischief makers, troublers, people that can always tell you the gossip of a congregation, that can tear a neighbor's character to pieces, that are able to perceive spots on the sun—people who delight in parading the fault of God's own children and are never so happy as when they are making others unhappy by what they have to say! These are the kind of people to whom you should give a wide berth.

7-9. *For yourselves know how you ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing; but worked with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.* The Apostle had a right to be supported by those among whom he labored. He always insists upon that right, but for their good, knowing the tendency of that age, he forfeited that right—and he is indignant that there should be others who did nothing whatever as to Christian ministry, but who availed themselves of the charity of the Church at Thessalonica so as to be able to live upon it without work.

10. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* A very capital rule, indeed. There are some so very spiritually minded that to soil their hands is also to soil their conscience. They are afraid of hard work. They think it is unspiritual, whereas there is nothing in the world, next to the Grace of God, that is more likely to keep men out of mischief than having plenty to do!

11. *For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.* Not doing their own business and, therefore, putting their noses into everybody else's business. If they had minded their own affairs, they would have left other people alone. There are such people alive now. We must not be surprised if we meet them

seeing that they were alive in the Apostle's days—if they troubled him it must be small marvel if they trouble us.

12. *Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.* The best bread and the sweetest is our own. We are to work for it. We are to work with quietness. I suppose to some that is very hard work, but they must labor after it, for quietness is a Christian Grace—it is, indeed, a high Christian attainment.

13-15. *But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* This kind of Christian discipline ought to still be carried out in reference not only to this one case of busybodies, but to all other cases. When a church grows large, there can be no efficient discipline from one man, or from all his officers with him. There must be the discipline of the whole church towards itself—each Christian, according to his measure of Grace, seeking the good of the whole—for while every man must bear his own burden, yet is it said, "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." "Look not every man upon his own things, but also upon the things of others." The careful desire to promote the Christian welfare of all our fellow members is a very different thing from being busybodies. We must have equal desire not in any way to interfere where we should not.

16. *Now the LORD of Peace, Himself, give you peace always by all means.* What a sweet benediction! And how he heaps the words together, as if peace was one of the greatest blessings a church could have. Indeed, dear Brothers and Sisters, it is the essential to all other blessings. I am quite certain that we never would have enjoyed the long years of perpetual prosperity here which we have had if it had not pleased the Lord to keep us always in peace. So may we be for many and many a year to come! May no root of bitterness ever spring up to trouble us, but may this text be fulfilled—"Now the Lord of Peace give you peace always by all means."

16, 17. *The LORD be with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.* I suppose he always wrote a part of each Epistle. Probably through the failure of his eyesight, he was unable to write the whole of it with his own hands, but employed some one of his brethren to be his secretary. But, in order that everyone might know the Epistle to be genuine, there was always a little of Paul's writing, sometimes in big text, as when he said to one church, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand."

18. *The Grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* So with great courtesy and a comprehensive prayer he finishes his letter.

—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.

"HIDING IN YOU!"
NO. 2930

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1905.

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"I flee unto You to hide me."
Psalm 143:9.

WHAT a great mercy it is for us that David had not a smooth path and an easy life! We would have lost much valuable instruction if he had been able to hold on continually the even tenor of his way. Whereas, now, we are great gainers by his trials and sufferings. In reading the Psalms of David, you will often find a verse which just suits your own case. It is hardly possible for you to be placed in any position without discovering that the son of Jesse has been there before you. I cannot, in all respects, liken him to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet, to a large extent, it was so with David as well as with "great David's greater Son." He seems to have been not merely one man, but "all mankind's epitome," and to have known almost all human temptations, human sins and human joys, having been led, sometimes by the Spirit, and sometimes, alas, by his own frailty and foolishness, into all sorts of strange places in order that he might become an instructor to us.

You have probably heard this remark a great many times, but, did it ever strike you that very much the same may be said concerning your own experience? When you are wondering why you are so strangely tried and why your experience is often so remarkable, may it not happen that the reason does not lie in yourself so much as in others to whom God means to make you useful? You are being led along a rough road and being tried and instructed in order that you may be the means of helping others whom you will find in some of the dark places of the earth. You are being trained as a hardy mountaineer in order that when the Lord's sheep are lost on wild craggy places, you may know how to climb up after them and bring them down to a place of safety. You are being taught how to find your way through the country of despondency and despair in order that when the pilgrims to the Celestial City lose their way and get into the marshy places of fear and doubt, you may know how to bring them out again and set their feet again upon the Rock and establish their goings once more.

The bearing of any one man's life upon the lives of other men can scarcely be fully known to us here. Even when we are able to look upon the completed life, we shall hardly know how much it has been intertwisted with other men's lives and, certainly, until the life is

completed, no man can know how much his present sufferings have to do with his usefulness to others. Nor can he fully understand how he is being prepared here, there, and in a thousand other places for usefulness in a position of which he little dreams that he will ever be the occupant. Yet he is one day to be placed where all this mysterious training will be of the utmost service to other people. The steel blade that was put into the fire again, and again, and yet again to be tempered, did not know that the Cid would use it in the day of battle to cut through the armor of his adversaries! If it had not been prepared for use in this fashion, it would not have been fit to be placed in such a hero's hands. Believers are being made into vessels meet for the Master's use and it is not every vessel that is fit for Him to employ in His Divine service. David was prepared, but he could only have become so by means of the remarkable life of trial through which he was called to pass.

Whenever we read the story of David's life, or note in the Psalms where he went and what he did, we should not merely notice how David acted and suffered and what he did while undergoing the suffering, but we should try to so study his experience as to be able to do as he did if we are placed in circumstances similar to his. Avoid his sin—let that be a beacon to warn you—but imitate his virtues. Pray the Lord to make you a partaker of the fullest measure of the Grace which the Psalmist possessed, but never look at his life as you gaze at a statue—merely to admire it and to say how beautifully it is worked—but look at it as a boy should look at his copy, that he may imitate it. Look at it as the soldier looks at his leader, that he may march step by step as he sets him the example and, above all things, always keep your eyes on David's Lord and Master, lest even David should be the means of misleading you! Let your admiration both of David and of the Lord Jesus Christ be practical—there is far too much of that kind of religion which consists in merely admiring other people, or in seeing what we, ourselves, ought to be, or in regretting that we are not what we should be—true godliness is manifested as we bring forth the fruit of the Spirit by being and doing that which we feel we ought to be and to do. To this end, gracious Spirit, be pleased to help us! Let us give to our text that sort of meditation which shall all the while be aiming at a practical result—and while we see how David fled to his God in the time of trial, let us each one, also, make this resolve, in the strength of the Holy Spirit—"I will do the same as David did. I will flee unto God to hide me."

In our text we have David's declaration to the Lord, "I flee unto You to hide me." We also ought to do as David did, but no man will do this unless he has the five things of which I am about to speak.

I. And, first, no man will ever flee to God to hide him unless he has A SENSE OF DANGER.

David was in danger from many cruel enemies and he fled to God to hide him from them. You and I may not be in any such danger as that, physically. We live in a country where, happily, we are protected from such a danger as that—at least, the most of us do—but there are other dangers to which we are exposed. David fled to God to hide him because

he realized the danger in which he was placed and we shall only flee to the Lord to hide us when we realize our own personal peril.

We are all well aware that *many persons have perished because they have not realized their danger*. You know how often this is the case. Men have gone, without any thought of peril, into places where there have been pestilential odors or the seeds of deadly diseases. If they had known what was there, they would not have gone in that direction, or they would have taken various precautions to guard themselves from infection. But, in ignorance of their peril, they have breathed the fatal air and have gone home to sicken and die. Many a gallant ship has struck upon a hidden reef, or upon a sandbank that was not marked on the chart. I have never heard of any vessel being wrecked through its officers keeping too good a look-out. Nor do we often read of ships being lost because the captain was too anxious to keep far away from the treacherous sands and the dangerous headlands. But we often hear of wrecks which have occurred through the captain's ignorance of the danger to which his vessel was exposed. Every now and then we learn that some obstruction has been encountered upon the railway as the express train has came rushing along. If the driver had but known that the permanent way, as it is called, was out of order and that there would be a collision if he did not stop the train, he would have done all that he could to avoid such a calamity—but because he did not know that he and his passengers were in danger, he went on as though all had been well—and the most terrible consequences ensued.

Many have perished—I am using the word, "perish," in the ordinary sense—because they have not known that they were in danger. And we know (oh, that it were not so!) that concerning *spiritual* things, there are millions of our fellow countrymen who are in danger of the eternal wrath of God, yet they are not conscious that it is so. They know that they are living in sin and they have some dim perception that sin is an evil thing in God's sight, yet they are not fully conscious of what sin is. Many of them do not know, in the full meaning of the word, that they are sinners. See how contented they are with their fancied righteousness, conceiving themselves to be in perfect safety—and all the while they are in the utmost peril! They eat and they drink. They are married and they are given in marriage as though such a state of things would last forever. Talk to them concerning the last dread conflagration which is to consume the world and they will laugh you to scorn, and cry, "Peace and safety," even though sudden destruction is coming upon them! If we could once make men realize that they are in danger, there would be some hope that they would seek to escape from the peril that threatens them! But we cannot make them believe in its reality and certainty. They are unbelieving with regard to such disturbing news. If we cried aloud to them, "Peace, peace," although we know there is no peace for them as long as they continue as they now are, they would probably believe us, for they lend their credulous ears to any superstition that seems to promise them a false peace. But if we try to warn them of their danger—

danger of the most terrible kind—they will not, as a rule, be persuaded to listen to such unwelcome tidings—or if they do listen, they do not believe our message and they will not admit they are in danger.

If any such persons are present with us here—and I fear that there are some—I mean those who have no sense of danger and yet have never trusted in Christ for salvation, let me remind you, dear Friends, that your sins must inevitably bring punishment upon you! There is a Judge of all the earth who must do right—and every transgression of His righteous Law must be followed by punishment, otherwise why should there be a Judge of the earth at all if He is indifferent to the iniquities of man? Let me also remind you that your sin is holding you in its power and though, at present, you may not indulge in the grosser forms of vice, you are in great danger of going much further into paths of sin than you like to think you will. You cannot stop in an evil course just when and where you please. You cannot say to sin, "Thus far shall you go and no further." The beginnings of evil are like the letting out of water—and when the dyke is once broken and the pent-up flood is set free—it soon deluges the fields and, perhaps, sweeps away multitudes of men and their habitations as well. Oh, that men could but realize that while they are living in sin, they are always in danger of committing more sin, and yet more sin—going on from bad to worse and from worse to the very worst of all!

Many a young man would shudder with horror if he could foresee what he will yet become unless the Grace of God shall prevent it. You have often seen that familiar picture of the child and the kind of man that he will yet become—either drunken or sober. If that child should be told that, one day, he would be like that red-faced old drunkard, he would not believe that he could ever grow to be as bad as that! Neither will most young men who are now living in sin, believe that they can ever grow to be what they will be if they continue in their present course. Yet that is the danger to which they are continually exposed—the danger of sin always producing yet more sin—and, to my mind, it seems to be punishment of a most grievous kind even if there were no other, that sin should be allowed to breed within itself something yet more black and foul and filthy than it is itself! So foul that on the cancer of sin there comes yet another and another, more foul and loathsome, and yet another, and another, and another until the man who was possessed with one devil becomes possessed with seven devils even more wicked than the first one was! There is this real danger, this grievous danger, in the case of every unconverted man or woman upon the face of the earth! Therefore each one of them should cry unto the Lord, "I flee unto You to hide me."

No man ever flees to God for shelter until he realizes that he is in danger, yet all men, whether they are the children of God or the children of this world, are in danger of one kind or another. As for the men of this world—the children of disobedience—they are in danger of the punishment which is due on account of their present sin and that awful growth of sin of which I have been speaking. But are the children of God

also in danger? Ask them and they will tell you that they are pilgrims to the Celestial City which they will, in due time, reach by God's Grace. But they will also tell you that all along the road to Heaven, there are dangerous places where the traveler might fall to his very grievous hurt—for instance, the descent in the Valley of Humiliation, with Apollyon waiting there, determined to slay, or at least to wound the pilgrim! Or the Valley of the Shadow of Death, a little further on, with its miry bog and its hobgoblins and all manner of terrifying sights and sounds. And then the Enchanted Ground with its temptation to the pilgrim to sleep. And Vanity Fair, where there are all sorts of ill wares to allure and deceive the pilgrim. Dangers of every sort beset the followers of the Lamb—and they are only safe as they are Divinely protected. The moment you become a Christian, you are—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,"

as far as your ultimate and final perseverance is concerned, but all the while you are on the road to Heaven you must wear the armor provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for you are always exposed to danger from the adversary's arrows and sword. All the while that you are in the earthly pastures, you need the protection of the good Shepherd. Why? Because you are in danger from the roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may destroy and unless the Great Shepherd's rod and staff protect you, you will certainly be destroyed!

Let me also remind you that some dangers are not readily perceived and those are generally the worst of all. We may be able to keep clear of "the arrow that flies by day," but who can guard himself against "the pestilence that walks in darkness"? Possibly we do not fall into open sin, but the dry rot of gradual declension—the silent sliding away of the heart from Christ—who but God can guard us against *that*? Many a man is caught in the invisible nets of Satan and well-near destroyed even while he dreams that he is safely pursuing the path that leads to Heaven! Therefore do I sound the alarm and ring the bell again and again to remind you that we are all in danger, though some think they are not! Those who think they are not are the very persons who are in the greatest danger of all because they think they are not in peril. I wish I had the power to awaken all of you to a true sense of your danger with regard to spiritual things, for then you would, like David, flee to God to hide you. You never will do that until you realize the peril in which you are placed and recognize that as long as you are not abiding in Christ, you are in continual peril and that your only safety lies in fleeing to God to hide you, even as the Psalmist did long ago.

II. The second great need of a man in order that he may flee to God to hide him is A SENSE OF WEAKNESS.

A man who thinks that he can fight his own battles in his own strength will not flee to God to hide him. *But we are, all of us, as weak as water if we are left to ourselves* and we soon show that we are quite unable to cope with our spiritual foes. The unforgiven sinner proves how weak he is by yielding at once to the tempter. He has a traitor within his own heart who opens the gates to Satan and so he is easily overcome.

The Believer, though he has within him the new life which hates sin, is as weak as other men if he is left without the Spirit of God for a single moment. There is enough of the fire of Hell in you, my Brother—you who are the most spiritual and most like Christ—to set all Hell aright again if the infernal fires were ever put out! You are inclined toward that which is good, but if the Grace of God ever left you, you would be quite as much inclined toward that which is evil! I will not quite say what Ralph Erskine said concerning himself—

"On good and evil equal bent
And both a devil and saint"—

but I will say that if a saint could ever be left of God, he would soon become a devil. And he who was so eager after that which was good, would be just as eager after that which is evil. So again I say that we are, all of us, as weak as water if left to ourselves.

But some people think that they are very strong. Hear how the boastful man says, "I can drink my glass of beer or wine, but I shall never become a drunkard. I can attend the theater and see what a low standard of morals prevails there, but I shall never fall into such an evil thing as fornication or adultery! I shall never became a blasphemer! I am not in the habit of even using coarse language and it is quite impossible that I should become profane." He thinks, when he stakes his small sums of money, that he will never become a gambler. "No," he says, "I am not such a fool as that." Yet, often, when a man says that, you may write his true name in large capital letters—"A FOOL"—for there is no other fool who is so foolish as the one who thinks he is not such a fool as other men are!

When Hazael was told by Elisha what he would afterwards do, he exclaimed, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we are all sadly weak and those are the weakest of all who think themselves to be strong! Past failures ought to have taught us all how great is our weakness. I wonder if any of you ever tried to soar away into the clouds with the perfectionists who delight to go up in a balloon and seek to live far above all ordinary mortals? If so and if you are at all like me—and I expect your flesh and blood are very similar to mine—I imagine that you soon discovered your mistake. The very day that you thought your temper was perfect, you found that it was very imperfect! And at the very time that you intended to have no thought or care, and when you had made up your mind that you were not coming down again to the level of this poor groveling world, you found that you could not rise an inch above the ground and that you were, as far as spiritual things were concerned, just like a lump of lead! You were made to feel that the best of men are but men at the best and, in that way, your failure taught you how weak you are. Even if you are the best man or woman in the world, in yourself you are utter weakness—only Christ Himself can make anything of you! Saint as you are, you are still a sinner saved by Grace and you are only holy as you are made so by the blessed Spirit who sanctifies you! If you were left by

Him for a single moment, your sinnership would come to the front all too prominently and your saintship would retire to the rear.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, *in our weakness lies our strength.* The Apostle Paul says, "When I am weak, then am I strong." And I wish it were possible for me to produce in all of you, whether you are sinners or saints, the sense of positive inability and utter weakness, for, until you feel that, you will never say to the Lord, "I flee unto You to hide me." On the contrary, you will stand out boldly in the place of danger and you will even defy your foes to do their worst against you! You will venture into worldliness. You will go up to the very mouth of the furnace of sin. You will become more daring and more presumptuous and you will be less on your watchtower—you will keep on going further and further in the wrong way as long as you imaging that you are strong. But if the Lord will aim His arrows right at the very heart of your strength and lay all your fancied glory in the mire and make you to know that you are less than the least of all saints, then it will be better for you. But before you will reach this point, you will have to confess your own nothingness and say—

"But, oh, for this no strength have I!
My strength is at Your feet to lie."

Then you will flee to the Lord to hide you, and then you will be hidden by Him in a safe place—but never till then.

III. A third thing which we must all have before we are likely to use the language of the text with truth is A PRUDENT FORESIGHT—"I flee unto You to hide me."

The ungodly man and, in a measure, also the unwise Believer, will perceive the peril in which he is placed and yet hesitate, linger, delay, deliberate, procrastinate. This is great folly, yet it is just what thousands are doing. I feel sure that some of you who are here are not prepared to live—much less are you prepared to die. I am glad to see you come to the House of God on a weeknight, for it looks as if you had some desire to find out the way of Everlasting Life. Yet how many there are among you who are living as if this life were all! You are quite unprepared for that great day to which you all know you are hastening and you do not like to even hear anything about death and the judgment to come because you are utterly unfit to face those stern realities. Are you always going to put off thoughts about these all-important matters and to go on living without the slightest preparation for eternity? You know that you are in danger and that you are too weak to face that danger all alone though you have not yet fully perceived how great your weakness is. Oh, that you would be wise enough to begin to look about you for a way of escape! When you are in this sense, wise, you will flee to God to hide you—but until you do get at least a little of this sacred prudence and some of the wisdom which the Holy Spirit teaches, you will delay, and delay, and delay, till, on some dread day, the long-gathering clouds will discharge the awful storm of Divine Judgment upon your devoted head! And then you will not be able to flee to Christ to hide you, for the harvest will be past and the summer will be ended—but you will be "not saved."

The Lord, by His Grace, has made Christian men and women more full of forethought than the ungodly are. And they have desired to escape from the wrath to come and they have done so. And let me tell you, Sinner, you who have not yet fled to Christ for salvation, that while it is a blessed thing to be delivered from the wrath to come, it is also a most delightful thing to be delivered from the fear of it even now! I do not think that I could live an hour without being in the bitterest agony if I had any sort of doubt about my safety in Christ Jesus, for I have a most vivid sense of my danger and my weakness apart from Him and these, like wings, bear me to the Rock of Ages where I can hide in absolute security. But I could never rest in peace if I thought that God was angry with me, or if I knew that if I were to drop down dead, my soul would be in Hell! How can any of you remain unconcerned in such a sad condition as that? Surely it must be because you do not realize what your true condition is!

If I could lock some of you up in a room and make you think about your position with regard to God, you would be very uncomfortable. You would almost as soon go to prison as sit down to think about the needs of your immortal spirit. Yet it is wrong for a man to be afraid to look into the books in which he keeps his soul's accounts! It is worse than foolish to be afraid to test the soundness of the foundation of the house in which he dwells! It is sheer madness to be afraid to look to the state of his soul to see whether it has the marks of death upon it or not! Do not any of you be so foolish, so insane! You insure your lives, you insure your houses, you put on warmer garments as winter approaches and if you have only some slight ailment, you run to a doctor! Have you no care about your immortal souls? Have you no anxiety concerning death and eternity? Or are you resolved to play the fool before high Heaven? I pray you, do not do it, but awake to something like prudence! And any one of you who does so will say to God, as David did, "I flee unto You to hide me." You never will do this until you exercise such wise forethought as I urge upon you.

IV. Now, fourthly, and briefly, before anyone of us will say to the Lord, "I flee unto You to hide me," there must be A SOLID CONFIDENCE.

What kind of confidence do I mean? *A solid confidence that God can hide us.* Did you notice the second hymn that we sang? It always seems to me that the writer had a wonderful conception of God in His awfulness and greatness to be feared and then he says—

"Yet I may love You, O my God!"

Think of the great God who made the Heavens and the earth, who is everywhere, filling all things and doing all things according to the good pleasure of His own will—and then say to yourself, "If I flee to Him—if He will permit me to flee to him to hide me—how safe I must be! It is He of whom I have been afraid, but if I can hide in Him, how secure I shall be! If I can find a shelter in Him, what a perfect shelter that must be!" When God lifts up His sword of Justice in His almighty hand to smite the sinner, if that sinner can lay hold upon His arm and cling firmly to it, how can God smite him? And He urges us to take hold of His strength! A

heavy blow falls with the greatest force upon those who are some little distance away from the striker. When a man intends to strike a tremendous blow, if his adversary runs up close to him and clings to his arm, what can he do with him? And fleeing to God to hide us does, as it were, disarm God—therefore I urge you to flee to God in Christ that He may hide you from His Justice and He can rightly do this because Christ has borne for all Believers the punishment that was due to their sin and, therefore, the God of Justice can, Himself, smile when He sees a sinner hidden in the Christ who made a full and complete Atonement for his sin!

Where can any of you flee *from* the Presence of God? If you ride upon the sunbeams, He will track you. If you plunge into the deeps of the sea, He will discover you. If you could climb up among the stars, He could pluck you from your hiding place, for He is everywhere. But if you flee to God in Christ to hide you, you must be safe forever! I have read an old story of a rebel who was hunted by a certain king, but who disguised himself and entered into the king's tent and partook of his hospitality before anyone discovered that he was the very man whose life the king had been seeking. And the king nobly and generously refused to kill the foe who had fled for shelter to his own tent. O poor guilty Soul, this is the message of the Gospel—Flee to God to hide you from God! Turn to Him as the prodigal returned to his father to obtain forgiveness of the wrong which he had done to his father!

And you Christian men and women, this is to be your constant joy, that *you always can hide in God*—that there is no trouble, difficulty, or danger from which God will not be a shelter to you, for, as He is a shelter from His own Justice, He must be a shelter from everyone else and everything else that would harm you! And *you may always hide in God.* You will never say to the Lord, "I flee unto You to hide me," until you know that you may hide in Him. Yes, Beloved, you may flee to God to hide you, for God is never more truly God than when He receives poor souls that make Him to be their hiding place. It is said that on one occasion when certain wise men were sitting together in council, a poor bird, which was pursued by a hawk, flew into the bosom of one of the counselors and he—the only man in the whole company who would have done such a thing—plucked the trembling bird out of his bosom, wrung its neck and threw it away from him! Whereupon the other counselors all rose up and voted for his immediate expulsion from their assembly, for they all felt that any man who could do such a deed as that was unworthy to have a place in their ranks—and we may be quite sure that the ever-merciful Jehovah will never take a soul that has flown in His bosom for shelter and destroy it!

You dread God, poor Soul, but you need never do so. If you are in Christ Jesus, God is so fully reconciled to you that when you are pursued by sin, or Satan, or trouble of any kind, the safest place for you to fly to is His bosom and there you are safe forever, for He will never

cast you out! If you have this confidence in God, you will say to Him, as David did, "I flee unto You to hide me."

V. One thing more is needed and that is ACTIVITY OF FAITH.

There are some of you who have heard what I have been saying about hiding in God. And as you go home you will say, "Yes, we know that we are in danger, we know that we are weak, we know that we need a secure hiding place and we know that God is willing to hide us." Well, then, if you know that, will you not at once flee to Him to hide you? Beloved, you who have often fled to Him to hide you, will not you again flee to Him? Some of you may have a new form of trouble which has just come upon you and it is of such a kind that you do not like to tell anybody about it. I pray you, do not keep it to yourself for even another minute, but flee to God and tell Him all about it! I must confess my own folly in this respect, for I have been foolish enough, partly through weariness of body and brain, to nurse a trouble which I ought to have cast upon the Lord long ago. One does not mind nursing his own children who may grow up to be a comfort to him, but it is always a pity to nurse trouble, for that often means taking a serpent's eggs and putting them into our bosom to hatch there into serpents that will sting us! This is a most foolish course of action—would it not be far wiser for us if as soon as any trouble comes upon us, to flee to the Lord to hide us from it? Let us be cowardly enough to run away from our trouble! No, it will not be cowardice, but true bravery to always run to God as soon as any trouble comes upon us, each one of us crying to Him with David, "I flee unto You to hide me."

Suppose that 20 troubles should come to us in a day and that we should flee to God 20 times with them? I think that we might almost pray to God to send 20 more troubles, so that we might flee to Him 40 times a day! Any reason for going to God must be a blessing to us, for going to God is going to bliss! So we may even turn our troubles into blessings by making them drive us to Him.

I want to steer you, dear Friends, to the practical point of my subject. Have you been worrying yourself, since you have been here, about a trial that you expect to fall upon you towards the close of this year? You fear that Christmas is not likely to be "a merry Christmas" to you—there are many bills coming in and not much hope of the money with which to meet them. Well, then, flee to God with that trouble and whatever is burdening your heart or your mind, flee to God about it and leave it all in His hands—and go on your way rejoicing!

Last of all, is there not some poor sinner here who has never yet believed in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior? How happy I should be if even before you leave this place, you would flee to the Lord to hide you! You do not need even to go into the vestry to talk to the elders. You may do that, if you like, and they will be glad to see you—but your best plan is to tell the Lord, while you are sitting in that seat, that you are a sinner far off from Him and that you wish that He would save you. Ask Him, for Christ's sake, to have mercy upon you. Trust His dear Son to save you. Tell Him that you do trust Him to save you and He will do it, for, according to your faith shall it be unto you. Flee to Him to hide you!

There are His dear wounds and you are a poor feeble dove—and the cruel hawk is after you. You cannot fight with him for he would tear you in pieces—you can only escape from him by flying to the wounds of Jesus! Do so, then, for your pursuer cannot reach you there—

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

God bless you all, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 143.

Psalm 143:1, 2. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. And enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.* That is, of course, apart from the wondrous system of Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ whereby Believers are made the righteousness of God in Him! Apart from that righteousness, no man living can be justified in the sight of God.

3, 4. *For the enemy has persecuted my soul, he has smitten my life down to the ground; he has made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.* Are any of you passing through this trying experience? If so, does it not encourage you to find that somebody else has been this way before you? The road is very rough, but there is a man's footprint there, the footprint of a man whom God greatly loved, even the man after God's own heart! Ah, dear Friends, in those deep sorrows of yours, you are not alone—David has passed this way before you and, what is still better, David's Lord has traversed this rough road! In all our afflictions He was afflicted. He was tempted in all points like as we are, so He can most perfectly sympathize with us in all the troubles through which we are called to pass.

5, 6. *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land. Selah.* One of the things which God's people are in the habit of doing, when they are in deep trouble, is to look back upon their past experiences. You may have seen the bargemen on the canal push backwards that they may propel the barge forwards and, sometimes we who believe in Jesus Christ have to push backwards—to look back on our past experiences in order to derive fresh courage for the present hour of trial. So the Psalmist says, "I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands." Yet in David's day of distress, when he had meditated upon his experiences in the past, that did not satisfy him. He wanted his God, therefore he cried unto the Lord, "I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You as a thirsty land." When the fields have long been dry because there has been no rain, you see how the earth opens its mouth in great cracks

as if it gaped for the rain it so sorely needs—and David's soul seemed thus gaping with a strong desire after the living God—"My soul thirsts after You as a thirsty land."

7, 8. *Hear me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails: hide not Your face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your loving-kindness in the morning, for in You do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto You.* This is a beautiful prayer which any of you might present to the Lord—"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." You are perplexed as to what you ought to do. You wish to do that which is right, but you are not sure what is right. Yet God can cause you to know the way wherein you should walk—He leads the blind by a way that they know not and in paths which they have not seen. So breathe this prayer to Him in the hour of your perplexity—

"Guide me, O You great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land!
I am weak, but You are mighty,
Hold me with Your powerful hand!"

Or say with David, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto You." He seems to say, "My soul is like a dead weight which cannot lift itself up; but in the strength which You do impart to me, I lift it up, I will not let it lie like a dead log before You—'I lift up my soul unto You.'"

9, 10. *Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies: I flee unto You to hide me. Teach me to do Your will.* This is another most blessed prayer—"Teach me to do Your will." Most of us want to have our own will and to go our own way—but each one who is truly wise prays to the Lord, "Teach me to do Your will."

10, 11. *For You are my God; Your spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O LORD, for Your name's sake: for Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.* What earnest pleading is this and how powerful it is! Every word is so fitting that if I had time to explain it, you would note the force and appropriateness of every syllable that the Psalmist here uses.

12. *And of Your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Your servant.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—57, 821, 195.

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

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

RETURN! RETURN!
NO. 2931

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1905,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 17, 1876.

"Return, you backsliding Israel. Turn, O backsliding children. Return, you backsliding children."
Jeremiah 3:12, 14, 22.

IT is, indeed, a horrible thing that a saved soul should ever wander from its Savior. After having had so much of past sin fully and freely forgiven and, after having then made to rejoice in perfect pardon, can it ever turn away from those dear pierced hands which lifted its heavy burden from its shoulders? Can it ever wander from the Fountain in which it was washed whiter than snow? If so, it will, indeed, have committed a shameful sin! After so many spiritual benefits have been enjoyed and the soul has not only been washed, but also robed, fed, adopted into the family of God and been taught many wonderful lessons—can such a child as that leave such a home and such a Father—and go back to "the beggarly elements" from which it has been delivered? Ah, if it even thinks of doing so, it has, by that very *thought*, committed treason against the Sovereign Love of God!

No, Beloved, with so much sin forgiven and so much favor bestowed, we ought to feel ourselves bound with cords to the horns of the altar! And with such bright prospects before us, such a Heaven prepared by such a Savior—with the assurance that we shall forever be with Him where He is, beholding His Glory—and with such exceedingly great and precious promises as He has made to him that overcomes, why, Brothers and Sisters, if we think of turning our backs in the day of battle, or of forsaking the King's Highway for a meadow path, the very *thought* must be most grievous to God as well as most shameful on our part! It ought to be intolerable to us to even *think* of such a thing! For any Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to actually go astray; to actually sin against the Light of God and knowledge; to sin against Infinite Love and mercy; to sin against Your wounds, Emmanuel, and against Your crown of thorns—to offend against Your matchless love—oh, this is dreadful, indeed!

Well did the Lord say, concerning Israel's backsliding, "Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let me remind you that there is nothing for us to gain and everything for us to lose by forsaking the ways of God, even for a moment! We are not like those who have never known His ways, for we know them to be to paths of pleasantness and peace. We are not like those who are still deceived by the world, for we have proven how false she is. Her painted charms once bewitched our hearts and we were

enamored of her, but we have been undeceived, and now we cry with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" This empty world does but mock and deceive all who seek for true treasure in it—are we going back to it after all that we have received from Christ, forsaking the real for the imaginary, the substantial for the shadowy?

Can it be that we are going to commit these two evils—to forsake the fountain of Living Waters and to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water? If any of us have done so in the past, let us be ashamed of ourselves! And if some of us have done so almost without knowing what we were doing, let us prostrate ourselves in the very dust before the Most High, for this is no common sin. It is a sin that has a high degree of heinousness and aggravation, when any of us who have known the way of righteousness—and who have enjoyed sweet and hallowed fellowship with God and the liberty with which Christ has made us free—go back to wear, again, the chains of sin's slavery and even, for a while, or in part, have a guilty complicity with that vain world which we professed to have forsaken once and for all.

Every man, however great his experience may be, is in danger! I have heard that more horses fall at the bottom of the hill than anywhere else because the drivers fancy they have no need to hold them back when they have reached the bottom of the hill. And I have noticed that some of the saddest falls I have ever witnessed among Christian men and women have been among elderly Christians—among they who said of the young people, "Ah, they ought to be very watchful, for they have strong passions, and they may very easily be led astray. But as for us, we have had such a long experience that we have passed out of the range of temptation." The most dangerous place in the world is that which is supposed to be beyond the reach of temptation! The power of the devil is most often to be feared when he has left you alone for a while, for he has then probably left you to something or someone who will be more dangerous to you than he, himself, would be. That is to, say, when a man says, "I shall never be tempted again," he has already fallen into one of the devil's most dangerous snares, for the *pride of his heart* has deceived him and made him an easy prey to the great adversary.

Satan delights to pluck gray beards and to prove their owners to be fools! He has great joy in tripping up young men, in the fullness of their strength, to show that he is more than a match for the very strongest of them! But he is even more glad to waylay a man in middle life and to teach him that, even when he thinks he has all his wits about him, he is not so shrewd as the old tempter is! But I think it is his chief delight to waylay those who imagine that their long experience will preserve them from the his snares. Therefore I say that we are all of us, from the little child to the man who is on the very brink of Heaven—from the most timid up to the bravest of us all—in danger from our great adversary. Remember the dreadful conflict with Satan which John Knox had just as he was about to enter Heaven—and remember Martin Luther's desperate fight with the arch-fiend even in the midst of the waters of Jordan—and learn from the experience of these mighty men of God that we are all,

always, from the first to the last, in danger! And, therefore, all of us have need to cry unto the Lord unceasingly—

"Keep us, Lord, oh keep us forever!
Vain our hope if left by Thee.
We are Yours! Oh leave us never,
Till Your face in Heaven we see,
There to praise Thee
Through a bright eternity!
All our strength at once would fail us,
If deserted, Lord, by Thee—
Nothing then could aught avail us,
Certain our defeat would be.
Those who hate us
Thenceforth their desire would see."

Now, supposing that I am addressing any persons who have unhappily fallen into this sin, what is the message that I am to give to them from my Lord? After this morning's service, I was talking with a Brother in Christ who was in this sad condition. If he is here now, I would very affectionately commend to him the message which the Holy Spirit sends to him and to all who are like he—the Word of God which comes over and over again in the three texts upon which I am about to speak to you—"Return! Return!"

I. In trying to press that one simple message home to the backsliding heart, I shall, first of all, speak of THE SURPRISE WHICH THIS MESSAGE OUGHT TO AWAKEN—"Return!" Does God really mean that? After I have wandered so far from Him, does He invite me to come back to Him? Yes, Beloved, He does, and He does so fully realizing all that the word, "Return," involves. There is a holy jealousy in the heart of God which causes Him to feel a righteous anger when any of His children wander away from Him. Yet this word, "Return," proves that He has put aside that jealousy in a marvelously gracious manner!

Let me read to you what the Lord says in the first verse of the chapter from which my texts are taken, for I want to keep you to God's own Word which will do you far more good, and give you far more solid comfort than any word of mine. "They say"—that is, everybody says it—"If a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to Me, says the Lord." I cannot say much about the illustration which the Lord here uses—it is a thing to be *thought* of rather than to be talked about—but do you not see that the delicacy which makes a man feel that he cannot take back his erring spouse is far more developed in the mind of God? Yet, over the head of that delicacy, there rides this Omnipotent Love which makes Him say, even to you who have wandered the furthest from Him, "Return unto Me, notwithstanding all that has happened."

Are you not surprised at the Lord's message when it is set before you in such a light as this? Yet, surprising as it is, I pray you to believe it and promptly to obey it! The wonder is increased when we remember that the sin of going away from God has, in some cases, been *so grossly*

committed as to involve a terrible mass of guilt. If you read the whole of this chapter—which is more suitable for your own private reading than for the general congregation—you will see that Israel had wandered from the Lord in the most shameless manner. And yet He said to her, "Return, you backsliding Israel." Now, if you are, indeed, a child of God, although you may have become neglectful of the Sabbath. Though it may have been a long time since you bowed your knee in prayer. Though your Bible has become covered with dust through your neglect and though you have so acted that even mere worldlings might have been ashamed to act as you have done—yet, still, Almighty Mercy, with the tears of pity standing in its eyes, says to you, "Return, return, return!" It condemns your sin and you, also, must condemn it, for it is an exceedingly loathsome and horrible thing—but you, yourself, that same Mercy would gladly save—and it still says to you, "Return, return, return!"

To add to the wonder that this message excites, remember *the obstinate adherence to evil which some of you have evinced even when you have been suffering for your wrongdoing*. Turn to the third verse—"Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; and you had a whore's forehead, you refused to be ashamed." God had kept back the rain and thus had prevented the ripening and ingathering of the harvest! Famine and need had stalked through the land and smitten multitudes of the guilty people with death. Those who were spared knew why this judgment had come, yet they did not return to the Lord. They had a forehead of brass and they would not acknowledge their guilt, but obstinately clung to their sin.

Brother, Sister, have you had this painful experience? Have you been Divinely afflicted again and again, and yet have you not repented and turned to the Lord? And notwithstanding that the blows of His rod appear to have been lost upon you, and though He has scourged you again and again, apparently to no purpose, still does His blessed Spirit yearn over you! And the message He sends to you is not one of condemnation or threat, but simply this, "Return, return, return!" Oh, this is indeed amazing love that puts up with your ill manners and will not take, "no," for an answer from you, but still sweetly invites you to return to the Lord from whom you have wandered so far—and against whom you have sinned so grossly!

Notice, also, that *these sinful people had refused repeated invitations to return to the Lord*. How tenderly He says, in the fourth verse, "Will you not, from this time, cry unto Me, My father, You are the guide of my youth?" As if the Lord meant to say to the sinning one, "Have you not had sufficient suffering as the result of your sin? The showers have been withheld, poverty has come upon you, your barns are empty and there is no corn in the fields to fill them. Will you not, at least from this time, begin to call Me, 'Father,' and ask Me to be your Friend?" Yet the guilty nation put all this pleading aside! But, even then, the Lord still cried, "Return, return, return!" And if, dear Friends, you have heard a great many earnest, faithful sermons and had many loving entreaties from Christian men and women—and yet have put them all aside—it is

unutterably grievous that it should have been so, yet still there is only this message for you, even now, "Return, return, return!"

Worse still, *these people had even turned the Grace of God into licentiousness, and had made mischief out of God's goodness*. Read in the fifth verse, what they said—"Will He reserve His anger forever? Will He keep it to the end? Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could." Because God is so merciful, they were the more sinful—and because He does not keep His anger forever, therefore they dared to provoke it again and again! This is one of the worst ways in which sinners prove how exceedingly sinful they are. A man is very far gone in guilt when he reads Divine Grace the wrong way upwards and infers, from the long-suffering of the Lord, that he may continue in sin! Still, if you have done this, my Brother or my Sister, the Lord's message to you is, "Return, return, return."

Give me your hand and come back with melting heart and streaming eyes—and seek your Heavenly Father's face, again, for the great bell still rings out from the hospice of mercy and its message to you is this, "Though you have lost your way in the blinding snows of despondency and doubt, mercy is still proclaimed to you; therefore, Return, return, return." Can you not hear that great bell swinging in the tower of God's love and compassion? Turn your head that way and ask the Lord to lead you where that bell's message summons you—"Return, return, return."

II. Now, in the second place, we will change the run of our thought a little by noting that THIS VOICE MUST AWAKEN MANY MEMORIES IN THE BACKSLIDER'S MIND. He has long been going away from God, but even while he has been sitting in this place, he has been obliged to think of former and happier times in his history. And now that word, "Return," causes him *to recollect the time when he first came to the Lord*. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, with what a broken heart, and with what terrors and alarms, and with what weeping eyes you loved up to Jesus on the accursed tree! And, as you looked to Him, you found, as you thought, and as I hope you really did, peace, pardon and everlasting life! Where have you been, my Brother, my Sister, since that memorable day? Where have you been?

Wandering from that dear Cross, always going further and further away from that Divine Love Incarnate which hung bleeding there for you! Peter, your Lord's loving, pitying eyes are still fixed upon you though you have denied Him and have falsely said, "I know not the Man." Still do the glances of His eyes say, "Peter, return to Me. Return, My poor, foolish, sinful disciple. You have sadly fallen by your iniquity, but, although you have so greatly changed, I have not. My heart still yearns for you. Return unto Me, for I have redeemed you."

That word, "Return," must also awaken in your memories *recollections of the happy days you used to have when you were living near to God*. Some of you have had times of great joy and gladness in this very Tabernacle. You used to sing as sweetly and as joyfully as any, especially when we sang the song of songs—

"Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain."

Ah, you loved Him then, did you not? You were not a hypocrite, were you? You meant what you sang and you felt it, did you not? You have often had, since then, to question yourselves to know whether you really were sincere at that time, or not. I hope you can truthfully say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I did love You then." Why, the time was when the very mention of that dear name used to fire your blood as the sound of martial music stirs the soldier's spirit in the day of battle! You know how you would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear the Gospel preached in those days—and you would cheerfully have put up with the discomfort of standing in the aisle of the overcrowded building—you were not so dainty and thin-skinned, then, as you are now!

How you relished the Gospel then! What sweetness, what marrow and fatness it was to your spirit at these communion times when you sat among the people of God and remembered the dying love of Christ! Many and many a time you have joined with your fellow members in singing—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

Yet now, alas, you have but to sing, or to sigh—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"

Well, let the recollection of them come up in your mind, for it will do you good. While you hear your Lord saying to you, "Return, return," it will help you to return if you recall what it is to which you have to return—those halcyon days, those happy Sabbaths when your heart seemed to have a whole peal of bells within it and every one of them gave forth the richest melody to the praise and glory of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior!

Do you not also recollect *how you used to talk to others about the Savior?* Ah, my Brothers, if I ever wander from my Lord, my sermons will be a sufficient rebuke to me even if no one says a word! Lord, reprove me for my backsliding! What are you doing, you who once preached so earnestly to others? What are you doing, you who used to conduct a Bible class where you warned young people against going into the world, yet you have gone there, yourself? You used to tell them that if all others in the world should be ashamed of Christ, you would never be ashamed of Him, yet you are! You used to pray very fervently at the Prayer Meetings. You visited the sick and cheered them. And God made you useful to souls that are now in Heaven—yet you have begun to doubt whether you will ever get there yourself! O Soul, remember from where you have fallen and repent and do your first works! If you are, indeed, a child of God, let the recollection of your own sermons, addresses, warnings and prayers rise up before your spirit, to stir your conscience and to make you feel ashamed of your backsliding!

The Lord's call to you to return to Him will probably also awaken other memories. It will help you to remember *how it was you first went astray.* You went on swimmingly at first, did you not? But where did you begin to go astray? Nine times out of 10, declension from God begins in the

neglect of private prayer. Possibly, it was so in your case. And it may be that everything seemed to go about as well with you when you did not pray as when you did. Indeed, everything went far too smoothly with you—it would have been much better for you if your way had been hedged up with thorns and briers. Then you know that you began to get lax in your mode of life. You would not admit that you were doing anything that was sinful—and you were very angry with those who told you that you were in danger. You said that you did not believe in such Puritanical prissiness as they advocated—you were a man who could think and decide for himself! And you did so, did you not, and have you not thought yourself and brought yourself into a sad plight? And you were going to sail a little closer to the wind than others could do because you felt that you had a stronger will than they had—and could turn your vessel whenever you pleased. There were certain amusements that might be harmful to young people, but not to *you*, for you felt that you had greater strength of mind than they had.

That is how you began to wander from God. The declension came on by degrees. You did not jump down all at once, but you went down just as surely, step by step. As to your first little slip, as you called it, you said there was nothing wrong in it. And nothing wrong in the second slip. And not *much* wrong in the third slip *by itself*—but putting them all together, with all the subsequent slips—where have they landed you? Yet, notwithstanding all this, I want you to hear the Master still saying to you, "Return, return, return." Remember how far you have to go back, for you have to traverse again all that road along which you came with your face turned the wrong way.

III. Now we will pass on to notice, in the third place, THE REASONS WHICH ARE URGED IN THE CONTEXT WHY WE SHOULD RETURN. Look at the 12th verse. I think I will not explain these reasons, but just read them to you. "Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not remain angry forever." Can you hear that verse without tears coming into your eyes? There is still in your Lord's heart, forgiveness, mercy, pardon—will not that biased fact lead you to come back to Him?

Now read the 14th verse, for it contains a second reason why you should return to the Lord. "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you." Can you believe that? If you can, you cannot continue to be a backslider! After all that you have done against Him, the Lord still acknowledges the marriage bond that exists between your poor polluted souls and His own holy and gracious Self, and He says to you, "Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married to you." Who can hold back when the Lord uses such an expression as that—"married to you"—you black, foul wanderer—"I am married to you"?

In the East, a man could very easily divorce his wife—he just gave her a letter and sent her away. But the Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away—that is to say, He hates divorce—and He will never

have a divorce from the soul that has once been married to Him! Come back to Him, then! If He is faithful despite your sin, let your heart yearn towards Him. Return to your first Husband, for it was better with you then than now! Now read the 22nd verse—"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Is not that another blessed reason why you should return to the Lord? He promises that He will remove all the evil that sin has done to you and that into whatever sin you may have fallen through your wanderings, He will rescue you from it! He will treat your backsliding as a *disease* and heal it! I need scarcely stay to tell you what is the remedy that He will apply to you, for you all know that it is by the stripes of Jesus that we are healed.

So, come again to that Cross to which you came at first and there you shall again find that His dear pierced hands shall be laid upon your wounds, taking the venom out of them, and so perfectly restoring you that your flesh shall be, again, unto you like the flesh of a little child! And then you will be able to gratefully sing, "He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

IV. I am speaking briefly upon each point, but I trust that each one of them will abide in your memories without a multitude of words to press the Truth of God home to your hearts. And I want you, in the fourth place, to notice SOME GRACIOUS DIRECTIONS WHICH ARE GIVEN TO ASSIST YOU TO RETURN TO THE LORD. Read the 13th verse if you wish to learn the way by which you are to return—and give heed to every syllable of it—"Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord."

That is the first thing you have to do—*make a full confession of your wrongdoing*. Go at once to God and make it! Do not delay another minute. You have sinned against the Lord—go to Him and acknowledge from your very heart that you have done so. Then turn to the 20th and 21st verses—"Surely as a wife treacherously departed from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the Lord. A voice was heard upon the high places—weeping and supplications of the children of Israel—for they have perverted their ways and they have forgotten the Lord their God." So, let *the acknowledgment of your wrongdoing be attended with deep contrition of heart*. Be grieved that you have grieved your God! Ask the Holy Spirit to melt your spirit so that you may mourn before the Most High and lament that you have wandered so far from Him.

Once again, the way to come back to God is plainly set before you at the end of the 22nd verse—"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." "Behold, we come unto You; for You are the Lord our God." *Take the Lord to be your God all over again,* Go back and begin again where you began before with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. May the Sacred Trinity graciously enable you to do so! And, further, come back to the Lord by confessing the result of your

sin, the mischief that it has brought upon you, even as these ancient backsliders did when they sorrowfully said, "For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God."

So, dear Friends, you see that the way to get back to God is to confess the wrong that you have done by wandering away from Him—to lament that wrong and again to take the Lord to be your God by an act of simple faith—and to begin once more even as you *began* your spiritual life. It is possible that you are anxious to know whether you ever were a child of God or not. Well, that is a knot which you cannot untie, so you had better cut it! Do you ask, "How can I cut it?" You can do it in this way. Say to yourself, "If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. And Christ Jesus come into the world to save sinners, so I will trust Him to save me." I have begun again, in this fashion, a great many times. Often, when doubts and fears have arisen within my spirit, and my evidences have grown dim, I have found that the best thing I could do was to pray the Publican's Prayer, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

I am only asking you, poor wandering Soul, to do that which it is the delight of God's people to be doing every day. Come, repenting and humbled, and take the Lord Jesus Christ again to be your All in All, your living, loving Savior!

V. Now, lastly, I want to encourage you to return to the Lord by very briefly mentioning SOME OF THE MERCIES WHICH GOD PROMISES IN ORDER TO KEEP YOU FROM ANY FUTURE WANDERING. Our blessed Master knows that *many of His children wander because they are not well fed*. There were many supposed converts during the recent revival, of whom we have not heard anything simply because there was nobody to look after them, in many cases, when the evangelists, whom God so greatly blessed, had gone to other places. Their converts were left to starve spiritually. Listen to the 15th verse of this chapter, those of you who have been thus starved, whose backsliding was, in the first instance, the result of your not hearing good Gospel teaching—"I will give you pastors according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Plead that promise with the God who gave it and you will find that He will fulfill it in your experience!

The next thing that you need, in order to keep you from further wandering from God, is that you should seek to become more spiritual in your worship. Some poor souls, who are, we trust, truly converted, never seem to get beyond mere external, formal worship. They do not get into the heart of it. Let all such persons note what the Lord says in the 16th verse—"And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done

any more." That is to say, mere formal worship shall come to an end—"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."

To be enabled to render true, spiritual worship unto the Lord, and to learn the inner meaning of His Word, will cause you to be established in the faith so that you will not likely be carried about with every wind of doctrine and be caused to backslide. Bear with me just a minute while I give you another sweet promise which will help to keep you from again wandering from the Lord. *You shall have the Spirit of adoption in your heart*, as the Lord says, in the 19th verse—"But I said, How shall I put you among the children, and give these a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me." O Beloved, get a firm grip of that precious promise, for it assures you that final perseverance which is the heritage of the saints! "You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me." As the Lord promises that great blessing, there need be no fear of your backsliding to destruction, whatever your temptations may be in the days and years that are yet to come.

Last of all, if you wish to be kept from wandering away from the Lord, come back to the simplicity of your first dependence upon him. Read the 23rd verse—"Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." So that, what you need is to get back, again, to the place where you first began to worship God in spirit and in truth, to know yourself to be His child and to be clean cut off from every trust except in the Lord Himself. You must see that salvation is all of Grace from first to last—that it is the work of the Holy Spirit and that it is freely given to you, an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner! When you get back to that blessed position, you will learn more of the love of God which will hold you with a grip that nothing can loosen, and from which you shall never escape from this time forth and forever!

Therefore, poor Backslider, come here and breathe the prayer to your Heavenly Father, not merely to receive you, but also to keep you, so that from now on you shall never again go astray from Him who keeps the feet of His saints. "And now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 2:20-37.

Verses 20-26. *For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bands, and you said, I will not transgress, when upon every high hill and under every green tree you lay down, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest nobility. How, then, have you turned*

before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord GOD. How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that sniffs the wind in her desire; in her time of mating who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her month they will find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers and after them will I go. As the thief is ashamed when he is found out. And there are many people whose repentance is of no more value than the shame of a thief when he is found out. Oh, for something better and deeper than this!

26, 27. *So is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a tree, You are my father; and to a stone, You have brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto Me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save us.* Some men never pray except in stormy weather. Their religion is wholly dependent upon their condition and circumstances. If all is going well with them, they bend not their knees before the Lord. But when they are in sore distress and especially if they think they are likely soon to die, then they cry unto God, "Arise and save us," with no more true faith than these idolaters had when they cried to their powerless idols.

28-30. *But where are your gods that you have made? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your troubles: for according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah. Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me, says the LORD. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword has devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.* So far from accepting God's rebukes in the right spirit and forsaking their idol gods, they even turned upon the Lord's messengers and put His Prophets to death.

31. *O generation, see you the Word of the LORD.* "If you will not hear it, see it."

31. *Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? Or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, We are lords. We will come no more to You?* "Do you not see," says the Lord to these rebellious people, "how much I have done for you? Have you forgotten the numberless mercies I have lavished upon you? I have kept from you nothing that was really good for you. When you worshipped Me in sincerity and in truth, you prospered exceedingly. But when you turned away from Me, you made a sad mistake. See, then, the sermons which Providence itself preached to you if you will not hear what My Prophets say to you in My name."

32. *Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me, days without number.* The very beauty of a Believer—his glorious dress—is his God. Then can we ever forget Him, or all the precious things of the Covenant of Grace which He so freely

bestows upon us? Can we—*can* we—have fallen so low as to forget the God to whom we owe so much? Alas, He can still say, "My people have forgotten Me, days without number."

33, 34. *Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught the wicked ones your ways. Also in your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, but plainly on all these things.* God's ancient people had so completely turned away from Him and wandered so far from Him, that they had practiced all manner of evil in order to prove their love for other gods. They even went among the heathen and taught them to sin yet worse than they had sinned before! This was most shameful backsliding, a horrible evil in the sight of God.

35. *Yet you say, Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me.* The most guilty people are often the most self-righteous. The sinful nation, which ought to have pleaded guilty, here, says, "Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me."

35. *Behold, I will plead My case against you, because you say, I have not sinned.* That is the great abuse of quarrel between God and men. Many a man still says, "I have not sinned," although God's Law condemns him, and the very office of the Savior proves that the guilty one needed to be saved by One who was almighty. Self-righteousness is a thing which God utterly abhors.

36. *Why do you gad about so much to change your way? You shall also be ashamed of Egypt, as you are ashamed of Assyria.* First they trusted to Assyria to save them. And when that broken reed failed them, then they trusted to Egypt. And in a similar fashion, we go from one false hope to another—from one carnal confidence to another, gadding about to change our way—yet, all the while, *refusing* to turn to the Lord.

37. *Indeed, you will go forth from him with your hands on your head*—You shall go forth as a captive, with your hands bound above your head, or, like one in great pain or sorrow, you shall hold your hands to your head.

37. *For the LORD has rejected your confidences, and you shall not prosper in them.* May God, in His mercy, save all of us from false confidences, both now and throughout our whole lives!

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

FALSE JUSTIFICATION AND TRUE
NO. 2932

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 15, 1876.

"If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me."
Job 9:20.

"It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?"
Romans 8:33, 34.

THE great question for the human race to answer has always been this, "How can man be just with God?" It is clear to every conscience that is at all awake that the thrice-holy God demands obedience to His Law and that disobedience to the Divine Law will certainly entail punishment. Hence the grand essential for each one of us is to be right towards God—to be accounted just even at His judgment bar. This is a most important matter at all times, but it appears to increase in importance as we advance in years and get nearer to that great testing time when the Lord shall put everyone into His unerring balances, to weigh him and so to prove what he really is. Woe unto the man who shall stand before the Bar of God unjustified! But happy shall he be who, in that last dread day, shall be approved and accepted by the Judge of all the earth!

I am going to speak about the way in which we are justified in the sight of God and I have taken two texts because so many people seem to have thought that there are two ways by which sinners can be justified before God. The first way that I shall describe is the false one. The second is the true way. The first is that which is mentioned by Job, the way of self-justification, of which it may be truly said that it is *self-condemning* instead of self-justifying. The second mode of justification is the one that is ordained by God and of that it may rightly be said that it never can be condemned. It challenges Heaven and earth and Hell in those grand words which I have just read to you, "It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?"

I. First, for a few minutes, let us consider THE SELF-JUSTIFICATION OF WHICH JOB SPEAKS—"If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me."

I call to your remembrance the fact the it is Job who speaks thus, because, if there ever was a man in this world who might have been justified before God by his own works, it was Job. Did not the Lord Himself say of him to Satan, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil"? Yet, so far was Job from imagining that he had attained a sinless condition that he here declares concerning himself, "If I say I am perfect, it shall

also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet I would not know my soul—I would despise my life." In addition to Job's excellence of character, he paid devout attention to religious observances. When his children met together for feasting, he ordered special sacrifices on their behalf, saying, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Job was evidently as devout towards God as he was upright towards man, yet, you see, he tells us that if he were to justify himself, his own mouth would condemn him! Further, as if to show us how notable Job was in all respects, he had, in addition to his excellent character and his devotional spirit, most remarkable afflictions. But, putting together all his good works, all his religious observances and all his afflictions, he says, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me." Job, at any rate, was not one of those who have imagined that they could work out a righteousness of their own which could be acceptable in the sight of God!

Let us try to find out what he meant when he said, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me." I think he meant, first, that *it would not be true*. He could not and dare not say that he was just before God—it would be a lie for him to stand up before the Lord and say, "Great God, I deserve commendation at Your hands, for in me is found true righteousness." Instead of talking like that, Job says, "If I were to say that, my own mouth would contradict me while I was trying to say it. I could not say it—I dare not say it." I hope there are many here who feel that to talk about any righteousness of their own would be utterly absurd. If I were to attempt to justify myself before God, I should have to lie to my conscience, my self-knowledge and my whole being! Whatever anyone else may think or say, I know that I must be saved by the Grace of God or else I shall never be saved at all! I have not done a single good work in which I cannot see any fault—not one solitary thing which I cannot perceive to be marred and stained and, like a vessel spoiled even while it is on the potter's wheel, not fit to be presented before God at all! That is what Job meant when he said, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me."

But he meant, next, that *his words, themselves, would be sufficient to condemn him*. I know that I am addressing a large number of persons whose lives are apparently blameless. The most observant critic here would be unable to bring any very grave or serious charge against you and yet, my dear Friends, if you were to try to justify yourself before God, your words, themselves, would be enough to condemn you, for what sort of words do you use? I do not suppose that you use profane words—I will not imagine that you take the name of God in vain! Though, alas, that is a sin that is not at all uncommon. But do you not often utter proud, boastful words? Do you not often speak in a very lofty way concerning yourselves and your own doing? Do we not all use far too many light and trifling words—not merely such as cheerfulness may warrant, but such as are a mere waste of time, diverting the mind from serious purposes? And did not our Lord Jesus Christ say that, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment"?

And, Friends, let me whisper other questions in your ear. Do you never use words of a very doubtful kind? Is it not far too common in society for people to go to the very verge of propriety in what they say? Have you never done so? And have you never used false words? Have you always spoken the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Has your heart always gone with your tongue? Have there been no false compliments—no lying expressions of an affection that you never felt? I wish that certain people would more often go to the mirror and examine their tongues. Doctors judge their patients' health by looking at their tongues—and we might judge of our moral and spiritual health in a similar way. Oh, what tongues some people would have if their words could blister their tongues as they ought to do! How common it is to hear scandalous words and slanderous words—and how many hearts are made to bleed, full often, by the cruel things that are said! "If I justify myself," says Job, "my own mouth shall condemn me," and I think he means, "because my very words have been sufficient to cause me to plead guilty before God." I trust we also feel like that and if we do, we shall never dare to be self-righteous.

I think, further, that Job meant that if he were to plead that he was righteous before God, he would be sure to make such a muddled statement that, somehow or other, *the statement, itself, would contain its own condemnation.* If a man says, "I have kept God's Law perfectly, so I can enter Heaven by the merit of my own good works," every intelligent person thinks, "What a proud man that is!" And can a proud man be accepted before God? Is it not written, "Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off"? So you see that a statement of justification by betraying the pride of our heart, straightway condemns us! Men who believe themselves to be saved by their own good works generally have something harsh and evil to say against God's Divine Grace, or against His Son, or against the Divine plan of salvation through the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. And the very fact that they say anything against those things shows that their heart is in rebellion against God and, therefore, their own mouth condemns them!

Years ago there was as old man in Wiltshire who, according to his own statement, was 103 years of age. He had never neglected his parish church, he had brought up 11 children and had no help from the parish. And he expected that, by-and-by, he would go Home to God, for, "he had never done anything wrong in his life that he knew of." "But," said someone to him, "you are a sinner, you know." "I know I ain't," he said. "Well, but God says that you are." And what, do you think, that old man replied? He said, "God may say what He likes, but I know I ain't." So, you see, he even contradicted God, Himself, and is not that a great sin for anybody to commit? What worse sin can there be and what clearer proof of the alienation of the human heart than that a man should flatly contradict God? Well, none of you ever did that, did you? No, you have not honesty enough to do that, but you mean it all the same! Many of you mean it in your very souls. When a man does not accept salvation by

Jesus Christ, if you probe his heart to its very depths, you will find that his rejection means that he does not really feel that he is guilty in the sight of God. He will not admit that he needs Divine Mercy, nor will he accept salvation by the blood and righteousness of Christ. Self-righteousness often lies concealed far down in the heart of man—but whenever he ventures to speak it out, the very way in which he talks of it condemns him!

I have heard men talk in this fashion—"Well, I am quite as good as others are. And if I am not all right at last, it will be a very bad look-out for a great many." Oh, yes, I see what you mean! Because others are not what they should be, you are content with your own condition because you are like they! There is no fear of God before your eyes and your only hope is that as you are like others, for it will be as well with you as it will be with them! But is not that a poor hope to lean upon? Do you not know that the broad road is thronged with travelers and yet that it leads to destruction? Even if you fare as others do, it will be no comfort to you to perish as they do! There is a very ancient declaration which ought to be a warning to you—"Though hand joins in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."

"Well," says another, "I have done my best and I cannot do more than that." When you speak like that, you mean to imply that God asks of you more than He ought to ask, that He is really unjust in His dealings with you and that the great evil is not that you are a bad servant, but that He is a tyrant Master! What is that but flinging down the gauntlet to the Almighty and charging Him with injustice? Such language as that betrays the enmity of your heart against the Most High.

"Well," says another, "I pay everybody all that is due." I am glad that you do so and wish everybody else did the same, but have you paid to God all that is due to *Him*? There is the great flaw in your life—you pay every creditor except your God to whom you owe all that you have! Many a man who would not treat his dog badly, does not mind ill treating his God! The last one of whom many of you think is your Creator, Provider and Preserver—the God who keeps the breath of life in your nostrils! You give some sort of consideration to the meanest servant in your kitchen, but to Him who made the Heavens and the earth, to Him who sustains all things by the word of His Power, you pay no regard whatever! As this is the real meaning of your attempt at self-justification, it carries its condemnation upon its very surface!

"Still," says one, "whatever I may seem to be, I am reasonably good at heart." Ah, that is another of the sayings that I have often heard, but I have never yet been able to believe that a man could be bad in life yet good at heart. It is sometimes said of a man who dies drunk and cursing his Maker, "Ah, he was a good fellow at bottom." That is not the way that men talk in the market. If you go to buy a barrel of apples and see a lot of rotten and spoiled ones at the top of the barrel, do you believe the salesman when he says, "Ah, but the apples underneath are very good ones"? Of course you do not believe anything of the kind! You always reckon that the fruit below is worse than that at the top, for the universal practice is to put the best at the top and the poorer quality underneath.

In like manner, we do not believe the man who says that he is good at bottom and good at heart, although his life is evil! No, Sir, you are even worse in heart than you ever were in life because there are many things that restrain you from revealing your naked self to these who only see your outward life! But your sin is there, down at the bottom of your heart—and if you attempt to justify yourself in the sight of God—the very statement that you make will condemn you!

Besides, so conscious are men that their own good works will not justify them before God, that *I do not remember ever meeting with a person who absolutely professed to be at peace with God as the result of his own endeavors.* If I were to ask any man who says that he is righteous simply because of what he has done or been, himself, "Are you prepared to die?" he would shake his head, and say, "Oh, no! I am not prepared to die." You say that you have done nothing wrong and that you are right. But suppose that tomorrow you were to be called to stand at God's Judgment Bar—would you feel comfortable at the prospect? "Oh, no!" you say. I felt sure that must be your answer. Indeed, all the religions in the world that teach the doctrine of salvation by works are at least honest enough not to pretend to ensure for any man present salvation!

Take, for instance, that gigantic form of error, the Roman Catholic system of religion. It never tells anybody that he is saved. There is not a cardinal, though he is called a prince of the church, and there is not a pope, though he is called Christ's vicar on earth, who dares to say that he is saved! They have some kind of faint hope that they may be saved at some future period, but there are none of them who dare to say that they are already saved. As to using the language of the Apostle Paul, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—language which even boys and girls in our Sunday school can use as soon as they have believed in Jesus Christ—well, even the greatest and the wisest of them cannot say that, either while they are in full health and strength, or when they are about to die. What becomes even of their great cardinals when they die? I have seen a notice of this sort put up in their churches and probably many of you have also seen it—"Of your charity, pray for the repose of the soul of Cardinal So-and-So." So that it is evident that he has gone somewhere or other where he is not at rest! It is quite clear that he has not gone to Heaven, so all that he has done, all the "masses" that he has said, all the confessions he has made and all the penances he has undergone have done nothing for him but land him somewhere where he has not repose for his soul! But it is the glory of the Gospel of Christ that it says to the sinner, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be justified immediately. Trust in what He has done and you shall be saved, and you shall know that you are saved, and that you shall be saved forever!" This is a Gospel that is worth preaching! And I pray you, therefore, to regard it as worth hearing while I try to expound it during the few remaining minutes available for my discourse. And in order that you may do so, I urge you to put away all

self-righteousness in which you have up to now trusted! Bury it! Bury it forever! It will only ruin you if you rely upon it!

II. Our second text reveals THE DIVINE JUSTIFICATION OF WHICH THE APOSTLE PAUL SPEAKS—"It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?"

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you know that God *can justify the ungodly*. We may put this Truth of God very broadly and say that God can take an unjust, unrighteous sinner and, by a wondrous process which made even the angels in Heaven to be astonished when it was revealed to them, He can take the guilt from the guilty one and cast it into the depths of the sea! And He can cover the unrighteous man with a spotless robe of righteousness so that he shall be accounted fair and lovely and whiter than the newly-fallen snow. God can do this, at once, for every soul that is willing to accept the Divine plan of salvation! Well might the Apostle say, "It is God that justifies." Oh, what a blessing it is that God is able to pardon the guilty and both to impute and impart righteousness to those who have none of their own!

Notice how this great work is done. *The whole wondrous plan of salvation can be summed up in a single word—Substitution.* As the first Adam stood before God as the representative and federal head of the whole human race, and as it was by his sin that our whole race fell, it became possible for God to regard our race as a whole and to find for us another Adam who would come and stand in our place and represent us as the first Adam did. So that, as in the first Adam we fell, we might be raised up by a second Adam! That second Adam is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, the Lord from Heaven! He has been here upon this earth and He has kept the Law of God in every jot and tittle and has woven a righteousness which covers the sinner from head to foot when he is enabled to put it on. And then, when the Law of God examines him, it cannot find a flaw, or a tear—or even a faulty thread in that matchless robe which is woven from the top throughout!

In addition to this, inasmuch as we had actually sinned against the Lord, this glorious God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, suffered the terrible consequences of our sin. Oh, wondrous Truth of God! He went up to the accursed tree and freely gave Himself up to die a felon's death so that, in that death the Justice of God might be vindicated and that God might be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! It is thus that God can reckon the sinner to be just because Jesus has taken his place and borne the penalty that was due for his sin!

"But," asks someone, "how is that great work accomplished? I see that Christ suffered instead of sinners and worked out a righteousness which sinners could never have worked for themselves, but how can that righteousness become theirs?" God's plan, my Friend, is that you should hide yourself in Christ. You must come to Christ and take what He has done to be yours by an act of simple faith. I cannot use a better illustration than that of the sin-offering brought to the priest under the Mosaic dispensation. When the sacrificial animal was about to be slain, the sinner came and laid his hands upon the head of the beast and confessed his sin over the appointed sin-offering. Thus his sin was put

on the animal—which was then killed and consumed—and so, in type, the man's sin was put away. In a similar fashion, come, Beloved, to my Lord Jesus Christ at this very moment and, by an act of faith, put your sin where God long ago laid it and, in token of that act, say to your Lord and Savior, Himself—

"My faith does lay her hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And thus confess my sin."

If you do thus trust Christ, even though you have never done so in all your life before, it does not matter, for, if you have done so now, then your sin is laid upon Christ and He has so completely borne the penalty for it that it has ceased to be—and His righteousness is accounted yours seeing that you are a Believer in Him. When God looks at you, He see no sin in you, nor does He mark any lack of righteousness in you—for the sake of Jesus Christ, His Son, He does accept and look upon you as though you had always kept His righteous Law!

"But for whom is this great work accomplished?" someone asks—"you surely do not mean that it is for *me*?" I do mean that it is for you if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you will not trust Him, on your own head be the guilt of your soul's eternal ruin! If you will have Christ's righteousness, it is for you. "What," you say, "for such a guilty sinner as I am?" Listen, man—if you had not been guilty, God need not have provided a righteousness for you! Of course Christ's righteousness is for the guilty—for whom should it be if not for them? "Do you mean," asks one, "that in a moment I may be cleansed from all sin simply by believing in Jesus?" Yes, I do mean that! You, even *you* may be cleansed this very instant! "But I have not lived a good life." If you had lived a good life, you would not have needed a Savior. Christ Jesus came into the world to save, not the good, but the bad! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Publish that blessed Truth of God around the whole earth and let the ungodly especially hear it! Jesus Himself said, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Therefore, you sin-sick souls, trust yourselves to the Christ who came on purpose to heal just such souls as you are! Only trust Him and there is immediate pardon and immediate salvation for you! "This is too good to be true," says one. Not so, for high as the Heavens are above the earth, so are God's thoughts above your thoughts and His ways above your ways. You feel that you could not forgive like this, any who had wronged you, but God's ways are not to be measured by yours! You have often heard us praise and extol Him by singing—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"

My first text said, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me." But my second text as good as says, *"If God justifies me, nobody can condemn me."* Paul, who wrote these words and who had been a blasphemer, a persecutor and a murderer, boldly declares, "It is God that justifies," and then utters the confident challenge, "Who is he that condemns?" Are you not astonished to hear that little man from Tarsus

talk in such a fashion as that? Why, there is the blood of the martyr Stephen crying out of the ground and saying, "Why, Paul, I condemn you!" Then there is the blood of all the poor men and women whom he dragged off to prison, or compelled to blaspheme the name of Christ. And those whom he put to death in every city—does not the blood of the martyrs cry out against Paul the Apostle, who was once Saul the persecutor? How does he dare to cry, "Who is he that condemns?" Yet there is no voice of blood raised against him! All is still and silent, for God has blotted out forever even that great sin which he had committed! But do not the fiends of Hell bring accusations against him? Does not the arch-fiend lift up his head and say, "Saul of Tarsus, you are a liar, for I can condemn you. You know what a self-righteous man you used to be and how you sinned against God in that way"? No, even Satan, himself, dares not accuse the Apostle, for, "it is God that justifies!" He has so effectually silenced the powers of darkness with the blood and righteousness of Christ that, like dogs which dread their master's whip, they lie down in their kennel not daring even to howl against a blood-washed child of God!

But do you not expect the angels in Heaven, who saw Stephen die and watched Saul of Tarsus in all his cruel persecutions, to bend down from their shining thrones and say, "O Paul, it ill becomes you to ask, 'Who is he that condemns?' when all of us can condemn you"? Oh, no! They all see the splendor of the righteousness of Christ and they are all glad to take their harps and sing a new song to the praise and glory of Jesus! Paul's triumphant declaration, "It is God that justifies," seems to start them singing again, as John heard them in his island prison, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!" You may thus challenge Hell, earth and Heaven if you believe in Jesus—for if God has justified you, who is he that can condemn you?

"But," says someone, "we must feel *something*." Just so, but if you ever do feel aright, *Christ* must make you feel aright! You must not bring your feelings to Christ any more than your works—salvation by feelings is no more possible than salvation by good works! Salvation is all of Grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

"Well," says one "I am spiritually brought to a bankrupt condition, for if I turned my pockets inside out, metaphorically, I could not find a solitary farthing in them." Well, then, you are the very man to receive the Free Grace of Christ! When you have no merits, no good feelings, nothing whatever to recommend you—when at Hell's dark door you lie, then it is that salvation's joyful sound is pleasant to your ears and blessed are the ears that hear it and blessed is the heart that accepts it! Ask Christ for it and you shall have it! The Holy Spirit, Himself, will help you to ask for it aright. Ask Him to teach you how to ask for it. Ask Christ for everything—for all your salvation, from foundation to topstone—is in Him and He will freely bestow it upon you for His own Glory!

Now I must close my discourse by reminding you that *this way of finding justification by faith in Jesus Christ has commended itself to the best of men*—and I hope it will commend itself to you. Cowper, in one of

his later letters, says—(I will give you his words as nearly as I can remember them)—"I cannot survey the future with any joy when I look upon it from the top of my own good works. Though I have labored ever since my conversion to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men, yet my only hope in death is in the blood and righteousness of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in whom death once sheathed his sting." And when Dr. Watts, that sweet singer of Israel, was dying, he said to one who stood by his bedside, "I heard an old Divine once say that when the most learned Christian minister comes to die, he draws his greatest comfort from the most plain promises of God's Word. And so," said Dr. Watts, "do I and I bless God that they are so simple that they do not need any great understanding in order to grasp them! My hope is simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior." And so the good man fell asleep. If we had time and opportunity, we might multiply such testimonies almost indefinitely, for all the children of God who have lived the best conceivable lives uniformly declare that they do not trust for salvation in anything they have done, or felt, or been, or suffered—but that they live by faith upon the Son of God who loved them and gave Himself for them!

I should like to finish by telling you the way in which one of the old Puritans, Mr. Thomas Doolittle, once finished a sermon. And I pray that God will set His blessing on it. The preacher turned to one of the members of the church, sitting in the left-hand gallery and, addressing him by name, he said, "Brother So-and-So, do you repent having trusted your soul to Christ?" And the Brother answered, "No, Sir, I do not repent it, for I never knew what true joy and peace meant until I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ." Mr. Doolittle then turned to the other side of the gallery and said to Brother So-and-So, "Do you repent having trusted your soul with Christ?" And he answered, "No, Sir, I do not. I have known the Lord since I was a child and my soul's rest and confidence have been found in Him. And the more I know Him, the more I rejoice in Him." Then, looking straight before him, to a young man who had been somewhat uneasy during the sermon, the preacher said, "Young man, I do not know your name, but will you have the blood and righteousness of Christ to save you?" The young man was so abashed by this public appeal that he hid his face and said nothing. The person sitting next to him nudged him and the minister, looking straight at him, said to him, "Young man, will you answer this question? There is salvation for you in Jesus Christ if you believe in Him. Are you ready to believe in Him?"

The young man looked up and said, "Yes, Sir." "When?" asked the preacher. The young man replied, "Now, Sir." "Then," he said, "listen to the voice of God! 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'" That young man and his father became two earnest Christian men renowned in the church in years afterwards. It might not be wise for me to exactly imitate that good man's actions. And if I especially addressed a young man, the old men might think that I did not mean them to trust in Christ—and the young women might imagine that I had passed them over. So, instead of speaking only to one person, I will

put the question to everybody here. I have told you about God's way of making you just in His sight—now, are you willing to be made just in God's way? If you die unjust, you will be lost forever. If you live unjust, you will miss all true peace and rest of heart. Are you willing to have God's righteousness? You say, "Yes." Well, faith is the accepting of what God gives. Faith is the believing what God says. Faith is the trusting to what Jesus has done. Only do this and you are saved, as surely as you are alive!

You may have come into this place unsaved and have been sitting here a lost soul—yet you may go home saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation and you may know it, too! So I say to each individual here—If *you* believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved, saved now and saved forever! Therefore be of good courage, you who have trusted in the Lord, and go your way rejoicing in Him and may God bless you both now and forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 10.

In commenting once more upon this familiar Chapter, I cannot help repeating a remark which I have made to you before—that it is very significant that this 10th Chapter should immediately follow the subject dealt with in the 9th Chapter. In the 9th Chapter we have the Doctrine of Absolute Predestination proclaimed in the sternest and boldest manner—the Doctrine that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. Now, it is commonly thought by those who do not rightly understand Calvinism that that Doctrine has a tendency to burden the heart and dry up the springs of compassion. That it was not so in Paul's case is very clear, for this Chapter is a most affectionate one and in it the Apostle manifests a most loving spirit towards his fellow countrymen, the Jews, and the chapter also contains the widest conceivable declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the fact being that the grand Doctrine of Divine Predestination is by no means inconsistent with the fullest and freest preaching of the Gospel of Christ!

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* Paul is writing concerning the Jews—the very people who had driven him from city to city and who had again and again sought to take his life! Yet he could not forget that these men were his own countrymen and, consequently, with a consecrated patriotism, he desired beyond everything else that they might be saved.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* The Jews of Paul's day were zealous, but they were zealous in ignorance. And that is just what we may say at the present time concerning a large number of our fellow countrymen—those who are ordinarily called Ritualists. "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." None can be more zealous than they are, but a grave error is at the root of their whole system—a fatal ignorance concerning the truth of the Gospel.

3. *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* Man must have a righteousness of one kind or another—and if he has not a God-given righteousness, he seeks to have one of his own making. As the spider spins her web out of her own bowels, so do sinful men try to manufacture a righteousness out of that which is within them—but this they can never do. The only righteousness which will stand the test of the Day of Judgment is that which God bestows upon Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ. Oh, that all men were willing to submit themselves to the righteousness of God!

4. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* "The end of the Law" is to make a man righteous and Christ makes righteous everyone who believes in Him. The act of faith in Christ accomplishes what all the good works in the world can never accomplish!

5. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, That the man which does these things shall live by them.* That is the message of the Law of God—"Do, and live." But the message of the Gospel is, "Live, and do"—a very different thing! The Law says, "Work to obtain life." The Gospel says, "You have life freely given to you in Christ Jesus—now work for Him because you live by Him."

6-9. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above),or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* How simple is the Divine Plan of salvation—confess Jesus Christ believing in Him—or, in the other order, believe in Jesus Christ and then acknowledge your faith for so it is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—Baptism being the way of confessing the faith which you already possess!

10-13. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* What precious promises these are, and how wide they are! "Whoever—whoever." That must include you, dear Friend, if you believe in Jesus, and call upon the name of the Lord.

14, 15. *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And 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? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Here you have the whole plan of salvation! Christ is preached, sinners hear the message of the Gospel, they believe it and so they are saved. What a mass of rubbish men have interjected into this blessed

simple Plan! What counterfeits of so-called sacraments and what a mass of human doings and external paraphernalia of all sorts have they interjected! God requires none of their fripperies, fineries and ornate performances, but simply says, "Believe, and live." How different is this from the cumbrous, complicated plan by which men would destroy our souls! Cling to the old-fashioned Gospel, Beloved, and never turn away from it! There is nothing that can take the place of the simplicity of Divine Truth. God grant that throughout England and from one end of the world to the other, salvation by believing—the result of hearing the Gospel—may be proclaimed!

16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel.* That is the pity of it—that so many have heard the Gospel but have not obeyed it. This shows that the Gospel comes to us as a *command* because we cannot *disobey* where there is no order or rule. O Sinner, listen to this! When you hear the Gospel, it is not left to your own choice to have it or leave it, so that you are as free to do the one as the other! If you reject it, you are disobedient to it.

16-18. *For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard?* Ah, that is the important question! If they had not heard it, they could not be condemned for disobeying it, for the sin lies in hearing and yet not believing. "Have they not heard?"

18, 19. *Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and the words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?* Did not the Jews hear the Gospel? Certainly they did, and they rejected it. Moses foretold it would be so—

19. *First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a nation and by a foolish nation I will anger you.* So the poor outcast Gentiles have received Christ although Israel rejected Him!

20, 21. *But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* God grant that we may not be disobedienta and gainsaying as Israel was but that we may all accept Christ at once as our only and all-sufficient Savior!

—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.

DEAD, YET ALIVE
NO. 2933

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 6, 1876.

"Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof."
Romans 6:11, 12.

How remarkably interwoven and intertwisted are the duties of Believers and their privileges! Indeed, it is often very difficult to say which is a privilege and which is a duty, for that which is a duty under one aspect is a privilege under another aspect—and that which is evidently a privilege may involve sin if it is not enjoyed and, therefore, it has something of duty about it. I think there should be no dividing asunder the duties and privileges which God has manifestly joined together—and that we should count it our highest privilege to do His will in every duty which He has enjoined upon us.

Equally remarkable is it how closely the privileges and duties of the Christian life are connected with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we are one with Him, therefore are we beloved of the Father, therefore are we redeemed from death and Hell, therefore are we separated from the world, therefore are we dead to sin, therefore do we live unto the Lord and therefore do we confidently expect a final triumph over all our adversaries until the last enemy of all shall be put under our feet! You get nothing, dear Brother or Sister in Christ, except as you get it through Christ! Apart from Him you would be miserable, poor, blind and naked—as you were until you came to Him. But in union with Him you are rich to all the intents of bliss. All things are yours because you are Christ's and while the Father views you as one with Christ, He will bless you—and while you view yourself as one with Christ, you will be conscious of the blessing and, at the same time, will be led to devote yourself more completely to the pursuit of holiness and the fear of God.

I have been specially praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in handling a subject which belongs not so much to the worshippers in the outer court, where we preach the Gospel to all, as to those in the inner court where we speak only to those who are, we trust, already saved. If I have the gracious guidance of the Spirit of God, my words will drop as dew upon the hearts of those who are living unto God—and they will be refreshed and encouraged. But I could not bear the thought that my sermon should have no bearing whatever upon those who are, at present, outside the visible fold of Christ. Therefore, at the very outset of

my discourse, I let you all know that I am preaching now especially to the Lord's own people. Judge you yourselves, therefore, as to whether you belong to that privileged company or not! And if you have not believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, know that you have no share in the privileges of the Covenant of Grace. And while I am preaching to Believers, sit down and sigh from your inmost heart over the sad fact that you are an alien from the commonwealth of Israel! If the Lord, by His gracious Spirit, will lead you to do so, He will hear that sorrowful sigh of yours and I trust that you will be led, sighing and crying, to the Savior's feet to believe in Him to the salvation of your never-dying soul! Then will you enter at once into all the privileges which belong to the children of God—those privileges about which I am now to speak.

The two verses which form my text seem to me to set before us, first, *a great Truth of God*—a great fact which is to be the subject of our reckoning—"Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And, secondly, *a great lesson to be put into practice.* "Let not sin *therefore*"—for the argument is carried on from the former verse—"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof."

I. What is the meaning of the first verse? What is THE GREAT TRUTH which is taught to us by the Holy Spirit? It is this—"Reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is quite certain that God never asks Believers to reckon anything to be true which is not true, for to reckon a thing to be what it is not would be to build upon a false basis and, in fact, to argue upon that which is false. This would not be consistent with the Character of God, Himself, nor with the nature of the Gospel, which is, essentially, a proclamation of the Truths of God. There are no suppositions and imaginations in the Gospel—it tells of positive sin, positive punishment, positive substitution and positive forgiveness—for God would not have His people reckon upon anything which is not absolutely true. Therefore the text does not mean that you are to reckon that there is no sin in you, but that you are "dead indeed unto sin." You are not to reckon that which is lie—that which God the Holy Spirit intends you to reckon is a matter of positive, undoubted fact. If you read the context, you will see what that matter of fact is.

It is, first, *that every Believer is truly dead to sin because Christ has died to sin.* The Lord Jesus Christ is our Covenant Head. And what He did, He did in the place of His people—He did it all *representatively* on their behalf so that what He did, they virtually did through Him as their Representative. Always remember that the federal principle has been adopted by God in His dealings with the human race from the very beginning. We were all, representatively, in Adam and, therefore, Adam's sin brought us all into transgression and condemnation so that we have all become partakers in the result of Adam's one sin. It was not actually ours, but it became ours by imputation and it brought upon us all its terrible consequences because Adam was our federal head. In the same way, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Federal Head and Representative of His

people—and what He has done, He has done on their behalf and it is reckoned as though they had done it themselves. Beloved, it was due from us that, having broken God's Law, we should endure the punishment resulting from our disobedience. That punishment was death, for, "the soul that sins, it shall die." There must, therefore, be passed upon us, if we are ever to be clear at God's Judgment Bar, a sentence that shall be an adequate punishment for sin. That sentence is so overwhelming and so dreadful that nothing can describe it but the term, *death*. Can that ever happen to us? It *has* happened to us! We who believe in Jesus Christ have been confronted with our sins, accused of them, condemned for them and punished for them! The full penalty, or that which was tantamount thereunto, has them exacted from us. We have died the death that was sin's due reward!

"But," someone asks, "how is that?" I answer that the Apostle tells us in this Chapter that we have done it, representatively, in the Person of Jesus Christ, our great Federal Head, Surety and Substitute. Can you grasp the great Truth of God that whatever was due from us to God's Justice has been fully paid by Christ? Whatever of suffering was necessary as the result of sin from the penal side of the question has been already endured by Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! Therefore Christ took our sin upon Him, though in Him was no sin of His own, and He died unto sin, bearing the penalty of it. As the inevitable consequence of His Sacrifice upon the Cross, He is clear from the sin that was laid upon Him and so are all His people in whose place He suffered! Toplady truly sang—

"Complete Atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whatever Your people owed—
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness
And sprinkled with Your blood!
If You have my discharge procured
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath Divine—
Payment God cannot twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety's hand
And then again at mine."

I may make this Truth of God plainer by a comparison which is impossible in the case of men, but which may illustrate the point we are now considering. Suppose that a man has been found guilty of a crime which is a capital offense according to the law of his country? The only way of dealing with him, in justice, is that he should endure the penalty for his offense. Suppose the sentence to have been carried out, the man has been put to death and has been buried? But after that, he has risen again—can the law touch him now? Can any charge be laid against him? Can he be brought, a second time, before the tribunal? Assuredly not! The same justice which brought him to the bar, before, and punished him, now stands up and declares that he cannot be touched again, for how shall he be twice charged, twice tried and twice put to death for the

same offense? This cannot happen, as I have said, among *men*—but it has happened in the case of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! For all His people, He has borne the death penalty and He has risen from the dead—*and they have borne the death penalty in Him and risen from the dead in Him*. Therefore let them rejoice who, in the Person of their Redeemer, they are dead *by* sin and dead *for* sin—for such is the meaning of this passage. I wish that all of you who believe in Jesus could get a firm hold of this blessed Truth of God, for, if you do, it will makes your heart dance for joy! We are emancipated because our ransom price has been fully paid! We are set free from the Law, not by the Law waiving the penalty due to our sin, for the penalty has been endured in the Person of One who had the right to endure it, for He was His people's Representative! And what He endured on their behalf is reckoned as though they had personally endured it, so that each one of them can say, with Toplady—

"Turn then, my soul, unto your rest!
The merits of your great High Priest
Have bought your liberty!
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear your banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."

Further, the Apostle says that we are to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the other side of the great Truth which is implied in our union to Christ—that every Believer is truly alive unto God because Christ is alive unto God! We know that Christ is alive unto God—"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more"—and we also know that the new life of which the Apostle is here writing is a life that we share with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because of our union to Him. Christ died and was laid in the grave because He was our Surety and Substitute. Our great debt of sin was laid to His account, but His death discharged all our liabilities. What then? The receipt for our debt—the token that our sin had been forever put away—was that Christ should come out of the prison of the grave. As one of our rhymesters says—

"If Jesus had not paid the debt,
He never had been at freedom set."

He "died for our sins," but He also "rose again for our justification." When the bright angel flew from Heaven and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher and Jesus unwrapped the cerements of His tomb and came forth in the glory of His Resurrection-Life, all for whom He died and rose again were acknowledged as justified before God through His righteousness and cleansed from all sin by His blood! And now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is our joy—that we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

A little while ago we were dead unto God, for the sentence which He had pronounced upon us made us virtually dead unto Him. We were under condemnation, "the children of wrath, even as others," but now that Jesus Christ has risen from the grave we are no longer dead unto God, but we are alive unto Him—and He looks upon us as those who

have been delivered from the sentence of spiritual death and who cannot again come under that penalty, since Christ, who stood and suffered in our place, has forever put away from us, not only our guilt, but also all its dread consequences—

"We were lost, but we are found,
Dead, but now alive are we!
We were sore in bondage bound,
But our Jesus sets us free!
Therefore will we sing His praise
Who His lost ones has restored,
Hearts and voices both shall raise
Hallelujahs to the Lord!"

Further than that, as the text says, "Likewise," the very word here used bids us run the parallel as the Apostle has done. He says, "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." See, then, what this means in reference to us who have believed in Him. Jesus Christ will not die twice. The sin of His people that was laid upon Him, brought Him down to the grave. But there He buried it and He rose again, no longer bearing the sin for which He had paid the penalty. And that sin cannot be laid upon Him a second time and, therefore, He shall never again need to be crucified. Beloved, do you not see that if your sin was really laid upon Christ and you died unto sin in Christ, you can never have that sin laid to your charge again under any circumstances whatever, unless Christ can die again? By one sufficient punishment our offense has been put away even from the sight of God—can that offense, then, be brought against us and laid to our charge a second time? No, verily, for if it could, it would be necessary that our Great Substitute should bleed and die a second time! But, as that cannot be, the sin of the Believer can never again be imputed to him and can never again rise in judgment against him! While Christ, the ever-blessed Savior, continues to live, His people must also continue to live! What a glorious Truth this is! I, then, if I am a Believer in Christ, have, through my union to Him, borne the penalty of sin! I have died in Christ and the life that I now live before the living God is a life that is uncondemned and uncondemnable and which can never expire because sin can never be laid to its charge again!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, how I wish that you could get a firm grip of this blessed Truth of God, so that you could enjoy it to the fullest in your own soul! It is not always easy to realize your union with Christ—to see how He takes your place and you take His—to mark how He is bruised for your iniquities and how the chastisement of your peace is laid upon Him—and that, in consequence—you take His place as accepted and beloved by the Father, that you are raised from the dead and honored even to share His Glory in the highest Heavens, for He has gone up there as the Representative of all His people and you are also raised up together with Him and made to sit with Him in the Heavenly places! And as He is to come again, in all the Glory of the Father, to subdue all things unto Himself, so are you to reign with Him, for He has said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." And, "to him that

overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His Throne." What a glorious Truth this is, that all Believers are dead, raised, living, exalted and glorified in Christ Jesus!

Now, Beloved, having given you that meaning of the passage—and I am persuaded that it is its true meaning and that no other will bear examination—I want to warn you against the interpretation that some have tried to put upon the Apostle's words. They say that they are dead to sin and alive unto God. And they tell us, perhaps, not in so many words—that now *they do not sin*—they live in a state of perpetual sanctity and are no more affected by sin than a dead man would be affected by that which goes on in the house wherein his corpse is lying. These people say that their life now is one, if not of absolute holiness, yet, in a certain sense, of perfect holiness! I conceive this to be one of the most dangerous delusions of the present age—apparently specious and supportable by Scripture, but, in reality, without any solid foundation and full of a thousand dangers! There are two ways by which a man can persuade himself that he does not sin. The first is the Antinomian method by which he says that he is *not under the Law* and that, therefore, whatever he does is not sinful. If another man were to do a certain thing, he would be very wrong—but if he does it, he, being a specially chosen one, is in a condition in which it is not reckoned to be sin or is not laid to his charge. Well, Beloved, I can only say that when I have read certain caricatures of this doctrine—and it is most natural that ungodly men should make fun of it—I have thought that the caricature was richly deserved and that any contempt that could be poured upon such atrocious lies was well merited! Sin in a Christian is quite as much sin as it is in anybody else! Indeed, it is a great deal more sinful, for never does a black stain seem so black as when it falls on spotlessly white linen—and never is sin as sinful as when it is committed by one who is greatly loved by the Lord and is the subject of peculiar favor. May Antinomianism never mislead either you or me, Beloved!

The other way of perverting this Truth of God is to say that you do not sin at all—to stand up straight, like the Pharisee in the temple, and say that you have attained such a condition that you do not now sin. If any of you, my dear Friends, are in that condition, the sooner you get out of it and humble yourselves before God for ever having dared to get into it, the better will it be for you! Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostle never meant that we were to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin in such a sense that we never sinned at all, or that sin did not affect us as it affected other people, because that is not the truth! I appeal to every man who has a conscience and I trust that even the Believers in this super-fine holiness have some trace of conscience left, so I appeal to them whether they are or not conscious of sin! My dear Brother or Sister, if you are not guilty of a single sin of commission—if you never utter an unkind or angry word—if you never speak unadvisedly with your lips—if you never break one of the Ten Commandments in the letter by an overt act of sin—if there is never about you any trace of pride, or covetousness, or

wrath, or anything else that is wrong—can you say that you are free from *sins of omission*? Have you done all you should have done in as high and noble a spirit as you ought to have displayed in it?

O my Brother, if this is your belief, you must be strangely different from what I have ever been able to be, for when I have done my very best before God, I have always felt that my best was imperfect and marred by sin! I have had to mourn over many omissions even when I have diligently labored to obey my Lord and Master perfectly. And in reviewing any one day of my life, I have never dared to congratulate myself upon it, but, with tears of repentance, I have had to confess that if I have not erred by overt sin, yet I have somewhere or other come short of the Glory of God. My dear Brother, do you really believe that your motives and the spirit in which you have acted have been perfect in God's sight? It is quite unaccountable to me. If you look into your own heart and try to trace all your sacred motives, desires, imagination and all the tendencies of your nature—can you say that you do not sin against the Lord? Have you the same standard of holiness that we have? Surely you cannot have if you think you have attained it! If you have the same standard that we have, I am certain that you have not attained it. The holiness that a Christian ought to aim at is to be absolutely as just, righteous and pure as God Himself is. This is the mark that He sets before us—"Be you holy, for I am holy." "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." If you say that you have reached that perfection, I believe that if you let your conscience speak the truth, it will tell you that you are under a great delusion and that you are utterly self-deceived upon that matter!

As to the notion that reckoning yourself to be perfect will help you to be so, I tell you flatly that it will most effectually *prevent you from becoming perfect*. Reckon that you are sinful! Admit that sin far too often prevails over you and then go humbly to God and confess that it is so—and seek from Him Grace to keep you, day by day, from the power of reigning sin and you will, in that way, make a real advance in sanctification and true holiness! But if you reckon that you have reached this blessed condition, you will never reach it. If you sit down in carnal security, you will rest in contentment with yourself, but you will never be what I trust you really desire to be. Your experience will be like that of the artist who at last painted a picture with which he was perfectly satisfied and he then said to his wife, "I may as well break my pallet and throw away my brushes. I shall never be a great painter, now, for I have realized my ideal—I am perfectly satisfied with this picture that I have produced." Far better is it for you to have a sacred dissatisfaction and hallowed discontent with all that you are! That forgetting of the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those that are before. That pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus to which the Apostle urges you—that seeking to fight from day to day with the temptations that surround you, not reckoning that you have won the victory yet, but believing that you will win it though the

blood of the Lamb—this is what we long to see in you—not to behold you sitting down in calm content and saying, "It is all done. I am perfect." For, believe me, my Brothers and Sisters—or, if you do not believe me, you will find it to be true sooner or later—you are *not* perfect by a very long way, as the devil knows and as God knows, and as many people beside yourself know who see what your daily life is and mark your conversation!

II. Now, having thus spoken concerning this great Truth of God and having shown you in what way we are dead unto sin and alive unto God through our union to Christ, I want to point out to you THE GREAT PRACTICAL LESSON WHICH THE TEXT SETS BEFORE US. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof."

This is the great fact that you are always to remember—you are now an altogether new man. In Christ Jesus you have died, been buried and have risen again. Surely you will not now have anything to do with sin, will you? You must hate it, for it has done you such serious mischief. It was sin that slew you in the Person of your Substitute and Savior, but now you have been born-again and you are a new man in Christ Jesus. You are not going back to sin, are you? Oh, no, your whole soul abhors it and you now endeavor, from this time forward, to be entirely free from its dominion. You mourn that sin is still within you and that it still has great power over you. That power it will try to use and it aims at getting complete dominion over you. It seeks to make you again what you formerly were—its subject and its slaves.

You are told, in the text, not to let sin reign in your mortal body and *this injunction implies that sin is already there and that sin will seek to get dominion over you.* Be not surprised, young converts, if you find sin to be terribly fierce within you and if, sometimes, it seems even to be stronger than Divine Grace! It is not really so, but it may sometimes *appear* to you to be so. And rest assured of this—that sin in you is so strong that unless God the Holy Spirit shall help you, it will get the victory over you. It will fail to get the victory over you because God will help you, but if He did not, the smallest soldier in the army of sin would be too strong for you, however powerful you may think yourself to be! Sin in a Believer can never reign over him because he is dead to the reigning power of sin. O King Sin, I am no subject of yours! I was once, but I died and now I have risen again in Christ and I am no subject of yours. What, then, does sin do, if it cannot reign over the Believer? It lurks inside the soul like an outlaw whose banishment has not yet taken place. John Bunyan's description of the Holy War is a matter of true experience. After the Diabolonians were overthrown in Mansoul, many of them remained hidden away in dens and corners of the city. And although diligent search was made to find them, there were always some of them hiding away in the back lanes and side streets where they could not easily be discovered. It is just so with sin. As a reigning king, sin is dead to you, and you to it, but, as a sneaking outlaw, sin is still lurking within your soul! It is plotting and planning to get back its former dominion over you

and not merely plotting and planning, but it is also warring and fighting to that end.

Oh, with what terrible force does sin sometimes assail a Believer! Just when he least expected it to come, some old lust reappears. "Oh!" he cries, "I thought that evil passion would never again assail me." Perhaps when he is on his knees in prayer, a blasphemous thought is suddenly injected into his mind—and when he is engaged in his business, endeavoring to provide things honest in the sight of all men—he finds a temptation to do something which is unjust, put in his way, and though, at first, it seems as if he would consent to it, yet, by the Grace of God, he is enabled to get the victory over it. The very best man in the world, if he were left by Divine Grace only for five minutes, might become and probably would become the worst man in the world! Left to himself, impetuous Peter begins cursing and swearing and thrice denies his Master. This vile outlaw, sin, that is always fighting within us, will be king if it can. It will rally all the forces of the world against us! It will call the devil himself to its assistance and so seek to get the reigning power again—but it never can, for we are not its subjects, we are not under its dominion and we never will be! The almighty God who has redeemed us from going down into the Pit will never suffer us to again be the slave of sin, yet we are to constantly be on the watch against its attacks.

The text also implies that *the point of assault of sin upon you will be your body*—"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." It is generally through our body that sin tries to bring our soul into captivity. There are natural needs of the body which must be attended to, but every one of these needs may become a sinful craving and we may so excessively minister to the need that, by-and-by, it becomes sinful lusting! That a man should eat to appease his hunger is right, but, alas, gluttony often follows. That a man should drink to quench his thirst is right, but there are divers drinks which lead to drunkenness and so, even through two such perfectly justifiable natural needs as eating and drinking, sin may come in. There are a great many other needs, emotions and passions of the body which are, in themselves, properly considered not sinful—but every one of them may readily be made into a door through which sin can enter! No, it is not only the needs of the body, but also the pleasures of the body which may lead to sin. There are bodily enjoyments which are perfectly innocent—but it is very easy to pass beyond that line and to indulge the flesh with that which is evil. Even the pains of the body may become the means of attack upon the soul, for great pain will often bring depression of spirit and despondency—and through despondency comes doubt. Yes, and pain sometimes causes murmuring, and murmuring is really rebellion against God! This poor flesh seems to be the battlefield in which the fight with sin is continually to be carried on. Sin makes frequent incursions into the region of mind and spirit, but it generally begins with the body. How strenuously, therefore, must we see to it that we obey the Apostolic injunction, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the

lusts thereof," but rather let us yield these, our members, to be the instruments of righteousness and purity! Watch and pray, Beloved. Do not imagine that the stern battle is over, it is only just begun. As long as you are in this mortal state, you are to put on the whole armor of God and to strive, agonize and wrestle against sin in the power of the blood of Jesus Christ who will help you by His ever-blessed Spirit. But to suppose that the battle for purity is over is to suppose a lie which will seriously endanger the sanctity of your lives.

The Apostle uses one word which is very comforting to my mind—"Let not sin therefore reign in your *mortal* body." I am very glad to read that word, "mortal." If this body were immortal with its present tendencies, then might it continue to be a field of battle for the Believer forever! But it is mortal and when it dies, then shall its tendencies, which now incline us to sin, also die. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," for flesh and blood always will have a tendency towards that which is evil. But, Brothers and Sisters, we are going to have this flesh and blood behind us when we die. We shall be re-united to our body after it has been refined, for the grave is the refining pot for it, but, until we die, this body will be the nest of sin—and within our flesh, as Paul truly says—"there dwells no good thing." Through being cumbered with this flesh, many a true child of God will, perhaps, have to cry even upon his dying bed, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thank God, then, that it is a mortal body in which this warfare is waged, so that when it dies, the fight is over and the emancipated spirit shall then rejoice in the fullness of the Glory of God, but not till then. Neither need you expect it for if you do you will be grievously disappointed when you find that you have been buoyed up with a false hope based upon self-conceit—and not upon the work of the Spirit of God at all.

The pith of the matter lies here, Brethren. Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin because, in Christ Jesus, you died unto sin and *let that Truth of God strengthen you to fight sin.* As long as you have any question about whether God counts you among the guilty, you will never have courage to contend with sin. Evangelical Doctrine is the battle-axe and the other weapons of war with which the Believer is to fight against sin. That I am saved—that I am fully absolved from guilt—that I am accounted just in the sight of God—that I am saved to all eternity—this is a firm foundation for me to stand upon! And now, relying upon the power of God's Grace, I may confidently say, "Sin shall not have dominion over me because of this amazing mercy which I have received. Because of this high calling to which God's Infinite Love has called me, I will cast down every sin that dares to lift itself up. I will take by the throat everything that is hostile to God and I will labor to perfect holiness in the fear of God." Tell the sinner that he must do this and that and he is conscious of his lack of power and, therefore, he does nothing. But go to him, God-sent in the power of the Holy Spirit and say to him, "Your sin was laid on Jesus, so you are free from it, for Jesus bore its penalty. You are saved, for in Him you have virtually died and the Law cannot

now touch you—you are a dead man as far as it is concerned. Sin cannot accuse you, for you are dead to it"—and what does the man say? Why, with great surprise in his soul, he is yet enabled to believe it and he sees, as it were, the mountains cast down, the valleys filled up, a pathway made in the desert for God to come to his soul and for him to come to his God! And in the joy of pardon freely given through his Savior's precious blood, in the bliss of salvation graciously bestowed without money and without price, he shakes himself from the dust, arises from his former love of sin and says, "Now, Sin, I am dead to you and I will never permit you to be king over me! I am no longer under your dominion and I will drive you out of my being altogether. You will not reign over me. I will, by the power and Grace of Him who has bought me with His blood, live to the praise and glory of God alone."

Now, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, most earnestly do I desire that you may so live that you will never doubt your eternal union with Christ and your consequent perfect acceptance with God. I pray that you may exercise an unstaggering faith in the finished work of Christ culminated on Calvary's Cross and then I say to you, "Think what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Never tolerate any sin in yourselves! Never wink at it, or imagine that it is less in you than it would be in others. Grieve over every shortcoming, every failure, everything that is not according to the perfect rule of righteousness and watch every day, and every hour of the day, calling on the aid of Divine strength that you may be enabled to watch and believe, at the same time, that that strength will be given to you, for the promise to you is, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." This will make sure work for holiness! You will not be puffed up, but you will be built up. You will not go bragging about how holy you are, your own mouth condemning you all the while, but, in silence before the Lord, you will sit down to admire the Grace which has looked in love upon such a poor unworthy worm as you are.

While you will seek to do that which is right and will hate every false way, you will, at the same time, take your place with the publican in the Temple and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Seek to be as holy as the angels, yet be, all the while, as humble as the publican! Remember that it is Divine Grace which has made you what you are and that it is Grace which must keep you faithful to the end. If Grace did not keep you, you would be a castaway! But you shall not be a castaway, for, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." I pray that every member of this Church and of Christ's Church at large, may be very careful in his living, very watchful, very devout, very earnest. O professing Christians, you are not what you should be! A great many of you seem to forget altogether the sacred obligations of the love which has been from eternity fixed upon you. Confess this sin, mourn over it and seek the power of Christ to help you against it—and henceforth may your course be as "the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day."

I fancy that I hear somebody in the congregation say, "These godly people seem to have a hard fight of it." They do. It is not easy work to get to Heaven, even by Grace, for, though we are saved, yet it is a pilgrimage to Heaven and a stern fight all the way.

What we have to say to unconverted people is this, "If the righteous scarcely"—or, with difficulty—"are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If he who zealously desires to follow after holiness has such a stern fight for it, what must be the end of the man or woman who never denies himself but indulges his sinful passions and casts the reins upon the neck of his lusts? O Christian, yours is the lot of a soldier and you have to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"—but you are comforted because, by faith, you can see the crown of life which fades not away, and which is reserved in Heaven for you and, therefore, you keep on contending! But as for you who never fight against sin and who feel no agony within, it is very evident why you have no inward struggle—it is because your whole nature goes one way! Dead fish float with the stream—it is the live fish that swim against it—and if you never feel any inward contention and striving—if you never have to cry, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not"—if you never groan under a sense of sin, I close my sermon by saying that I pray God that you may do so, soon, and that your groans may be uttered at the foot of His Cross, who will look down upon you as you lie there in utter weakness and misery, and who will 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 them."

May we all learn that Christ is everything and that we are nothing! That He is holiness and that we are unholiness! And may the Lord give us the Grace to be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith! Amen.

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

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

GREAT CHANGES
NO. 2934

A SERMON
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"And, behold, there are last which shall be first,
and there are first which shall be last."
Luke 13:30.

IN some of the books printed in the olden times, the authors were known to put a hand in the margin, as if to point out some passage to which they would have particular attention directed. Now, wherever we see in Holy Scripture the word, "behold," it answers the same end. It is intended to show us that there is either something new, something impressive, or something which is speedily to transpire and, therefore, needs immediate attention. Or else there is usually something contrary to what men expect and, therefore, their consideration is the more earnestly directed to it. Seeing this, "behold," in the margin, a signpost as it were—a directory for us to stop and pause and learn—let us do so tonight and may the Spirit of God be our Instructor, that we may listen to profit.

"There are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Similar passages occur in Matthew and Mark as well as in Luke. In Matthew, the connection in which it stands shows that there Christ intended it to relate to temporal circumstances. Peter had told him that he, together with his fellow Apostles, had left all that he had to follow Christ. And his Master informed him that he should be no loser by it, but rather, he should greatly profit through having left house and lands, and children and wife for Christ's name's sake and the Gospel's. "For," said Christ, "there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Brothers and Sisters, let us then hear and understand this, *that circumstances shall very soon be altered.* The high and mighty shall not always be so elevated! The base and mean shall not always occupy such a humiliating position! Throughout the whole history of the world, sin has been striding in high places with shoes of iron and brass, while godliness has walked barefoot through the valley.

Multitudes of most ungodly men have worn the tiara and have thrown the purple about their shoulders while a far more than equal number of the virtuous have been slaves to tug the galley oar, or have been condemned to long imprisonments, or have "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Still, Dives wears the scarlet and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day, while Lazarus lies at his gate full of sores and the dogs give him the charity of their tongues. Still Nero is on the throne and Paul rots in the Mamertine dungeon. Still a Charles II shall have the crown while the

Puritan shall be found "despised and rejected of men." You can scarcely turn to any page of history in which you do not see the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree, while the righteous is plagued all daylong and chastened every morning!

Well, the time is coming when all this shall be changed! One wave of your hand, O Death, and where is the dignity of sin? One blast of Your breath, O God, and where are the glories of the mighty? Where are the pomp and the power of the ungodly man who vexed Your saints? See there, Dives has gone down to the nethermost pit and Lazarus is lifted to the Throne of God! See there, Nero rots and is corrupt, while Paul, on angels wings, is borne to the right hand of the Majesty on high! Poverty-stricken, having hardly a place where he can lay his head, the humble tentmaker took rank with the very lowest, but, though last, he now stands first, nearest the eternal Throne of God—

"Midst the bright ones, doubly bright."

Proud, having all the earth at his beck, Rome's legions at his call, Nero reigned and thought himself a god, but now the meanest slave is greater than he and they mock and jeer him, even they, the princes who lost their thrones by him and the men whom he trampled in the dust! In Hell they greet him with the cry, "Are you become like one of us?" and marvel greatly because the mighty are fallen and the proud are stained in the mire! Patience, then, patience, you who are the sons of poverty and yet the sons of God! Hush your boasting, you that are the heirs of wrath and yet the heirs of fortune—the tables shall soon turn—eternity shall undo the incongruities of life! Time, your inequalities shall all be forgotten, Justice shall right every wrong, "the first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

So, Brothers and Sisters, to pass on, there is no doubt that *this is equally true with regard to the world's esteem*. For many a long year the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, have been esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. For the first three centuries there was no villainy too vile to be laid at the door of the Christians. They were baser than the greatest miscreants. The world hooted them from the streets! No terms were thought bad enough for them. "It is not fit that they should live," was the world's verdict upon the followers of the Crucified. And even today a godly man is held in no reputation. There are no racks, 'tis true—no prisons, no fines—but there are the jeers and the mockery, the shrugging of the shoulder, the reviling, the shame and the spitting! These have not ceased even now. Genius, intellect, science, taste, poetry and literature have their golden shrines. Godliness it just tolerated in its own conventicle.

I may be addressing some Christians, especially some young converts who feel it very hard to have the cold shoulder in society, to be neglected by their friends, to be threatened by their parents, to be forsaken by all who once counted them to be good. Yes, patience, patience, patience! You that are the last for Christ shall be the first with Christ by-and-by! Those that are first today in honor and think themselves great and famous because *they* will never yield to fanaticism, because *they* will never be enthusiastic after Christ—they shall be among the last! The day comes when they shall "awake to shame and everlasting contempt." The

organs of public sentiment will change their tone. The world that honored the ungodly shall see their shame. The eyes that once looked slightingly on saints shall be made to honor them as the noblest of the noble and they that hated Christ shall be lightly esteemed. Let those two thoughts be riveted upon our memories!

But I choose to dwell rather upon two other thoughts. The first part of my text seems to me to teach *wonders of Grace.* And the next part of it seems to me to teach *wonders of sin.*

I. Here, surely, is A WONDER OF GRACE—"There are last that shall be first."

Here is Divine Sovereignty—choosing the last to make them first. Here is Sovereign Grace—forgiving the greatest sin to make the brightest saint. Here is Almighty Power changing the most degraded, turning the current of the most strong-minded sinner and making his soul "willing in the day of God's power."

What does it mean, those that are last? I take it, if I understand the sense aright, it means this—there are some that are *last in pedigree*, born of impious parents in some low hovel, in some dingy room, an attic or a cellar, in some court where the first sound that reached their ear was blasphemy, and the first sight that greeted their eye was drunkenness. How many we have of such in London who are, indeed, last if we consider their birth! Poor things, they are born not simply to poverty, but they seem to be the nurslings of vice! One's eyes might weep tears of blood when we think how unhappily some children are placed in the very first moment of their advent into society. Glory be to God, however, there are some of these that shall be first! God will find His jewels in the dens, alleys and slums of London—and take up to His Eternal Throne those that were the sons of harlots and the children of the thief—that they may sing forever of His amazing Grace!

Last, too, they are in education. Turned out into the street to pick up from every boy the vice he has acquired, to learn from evil men, villainy of which their young hearts would not have dreamed. If you should go into our Ragged Schools, especially some in the very lowest neighborhoods, or if you would hear Mr. Gregory, the missionary in St. Giles's, tell his tale of all the sin he sees and the education that our young men of St. Giles's get, O gentlemen of St. James's, it might well make you blush—blush with shame that you are not doing something for them—shame for yourselves that you let your neighbors live like this! They are still your neighbors, though they are hidden behind the tall houses of your gorgeous streets and crescents, your squares and terraces! Well, these are last in education, but glory be to God, some who were trained for the gallows and tutored for the convict settlement, shall, nevertheless, be taught of the Lord and inducted into the fellowship of the saints! Irresistible Grace shall come and pluck them out of the furnace, hating the garment spotted with the flesh, yet esteeming them that they, also, may be jewels in the Redeemer's crown!

Then, again, they are *last in morals.* At eventide, see her as she goes out to hunt for souls. See him, too, as at eventide he reels from gin palace to gin palace to drink, to swear, to curse. Ah, we are not without

those who are last in morals in this huge den of vice, this city of iniquity! Could Sodom find sinners that would match with the sinners of London? What do you think? Could Tyre and Sidon outdo the iniquities that are near our doors and may be seen in our own streets? I think not! You need not, tonight, go many steps when once the sun is down before you will see under every gaslight some that are last. Blessed be God—some of them shall be first! Praise the Lord, you angels, there are some of them here tonight, some of them saved! Some of them snatched from the fire and they will sing in Heaven—and they do sing on earth right sweetly to the praise of the love that has made the last to be the first!

Some of these appear, beside their moral debasement, to have the last disposition that could ever be susceptible of Grace. You know the men I mean. Men that when you look into their faces, you feel you would not like to meet them on a dark night. There are such men whose very countenances betray a stolidity and hardness that is not altogether common to men. Do you remember what the Scotsman said to Rowland Hill when he looked long into his face? Rowland asked him, "What are you looking there for?" "I was looking at the lines on your face," he said. "And what do you think of me?" said Rowland. "Why," said the man, "I was thinking that if it hadn't been for the Grace of God, you would have been one of the biggest scoundrels living." And Rowland said 'twas even so. He felt that himself. And I think we have all felt so. We have all felt, as one good man said, "There goes John Bradford if it were not for the Grace of God." To the ale-house, to the prison, to the gallows—each of us might have come if Sovereign Grace had not prevented!

There are men who seem naturally more coarse, more rough, more wild, more outrageous than others. They have furious passions, they have a fiendish temper. What other word could I use? They have a temper that seems to make them like very maniacs over a little provocation. They know not what to do but stamp and rave, and say they know not what! These are the last men you would think could be saved. Yes, but there are many of them that *have* been made first. Strange is it that God picks out the very men whom we would throw away—the most worthless, the most hopeless, hapless and helpless. Sovereign Grace had fixed its eye upon them and said of each one of them, "I will have that man." That man's will stood out stoutly and resisted to the uttermost the pleading voice of salvation, but Grace would have him! O that strong will of his, how useful it is now in the cause of Christ! That hard heart of his, now softened, seems to give a holy courage and a dauntless and a fearless manner which would be unknown to men of a different mold! "There are last that shall be first."

What inferences do we draw from all this? We draw these lessons. There is an encouragement for some of you who think you are last. I bless God there are always some of the last ones coming into the Tabernacle. God deliver us from having an exclusively respectable congregation! I like to see men of all classes. I like to see the poor come in and I like to see the base and vile come in—and I know they do. I feel like Rowland Hill, when it was said to him, "It is only the tag, rag, and bobtail that go to Surrey Chapel." "Ah, then!" he said, "Welcome tag, and welcome rag, and welcome bobtail—these are just the sort we want to see

come into the Chapel." "Ah," I hear someone say with a sigh, "that means me, that means me! I am one of those men. I am one of the last." Then there is encouragement for you! Mercy's gates stand wide open and Christ invites you in! Trust Him at this very hour, for, "there are last that shall be first."

And, Brothers and Sisters, what cause for humiliation to us who are saved! Were not we the last? I am sure, when I look at that headstrong boy, when I think of that hard, stubborn boy that never did and would not yield—when I think of that child who could bear any measure of chastisement but never would make an apology for anything—and then think of myself saved by Grace, I marvel! How is it that God should choose such an one as I am? And I think you can all say, "Why me, Lord? Why me?" And you can put it down to this, "There are last that shall be first."

And what a reason this is why you and I should serve Christ, too! What? Did He look on me when I was last, and will I not work for Him? Stand out of the way, you groups of cold-hearted men! Stand out of the way, you careless professors that cannot serve your Master! I must and will do God service, for I owe Him more than you do. Mary, I implore you, by the gentleness of your spirit, stand back, stand back! I *must* break *my* alabaster box over that blessed head, for I have much forgiven and, therefore, I love much. I *must* do much for Him. Give me great sinners to make great saints! They are glorious raw material for Grace to work upon and when you do get them saved, they will shake the very gates of Hell! The ringleaders in Satan's camp make noble sergeants in the camp of Christ! The bravest of the brave are they. God send us many such and we will sweep before us yet the hosts of evil and drive iniquity into the depths of the sea. "There are last that shall be first." O dear Friends, I wish the net would catch some of the last right now. I know that young man over there thinks that Christ will never save him. "There are last that shall be first." I know that young woman has written it down in her conscience that she is an odd person—she is sure to be passed over—one of the last, I see. Ah, and you shall be among the first! Only believe Christ, only trust Him! He is God! He can save you! He is Man! He is *willing* to save you! Trust Him, His promise is given! He will save you, He will wash you from every sin and bring you with joy before His face at the last!

II. But now I must take the second part of the text, as briefly as possible, and speak of WONDERS OF SIN. "There are first that shall be last."

First in ancestry, hushed to your slumber with a holy lullaby, candled on the knee of piety, hanging at the breast of tenderness and love—from your mother's arms you shall go to the frightful grasp of the Destroyer! And from a father's rejected counsel to the sinner's direst doom!

"There are first that shall be last." *First in training*, taught in the Sunday school, prayed over, wept over.

"There are first that shall be last." *First in privileges*, sitting under a faithful ministry, warned, exhorted, entreated, pleaded with. "There are first that shall be last." Having much light and knowledge, having an

awakened conscience, but quenching it, having the warnings of the Spirit, but stifling them. "There are first that shall be last." Regularly in the house of God, well-read in Scripture, well-trained in Doctrine, understanding the way of God, but not running in it, knowing your duty but doing it not. "There are first that shall be last." O my Hearers, I speak to thousands of you that are among the first tonight! When I said there were last ones here, I glanced for the few, but oh, how many of you belong to the tribes and families of men who are of the first! You are not Sabbath-breakers, the most of you—you go to a place of worship. You are not heathens—you have a Bible, sometimes you read it—and you know what faith in Christ means, if you have it not in your hearts. O London! London! London! You fair metropolis of merchandize and wealth! How are you exalted to Heaven by your privileges! Christ is now preached in the corner of every street, in your parks, in your fields! Christ is preached in your theatres. He is preached where every man can hear of Him if he will. First and foremost as you stand, O inhabitants of London, the envy of many nations and their refuge of the oppressed of all nations—how many of you shall be worse off than the savages of Africa or the cannibals of New Zealand? "There are first that shall be last."

I cannot preach on this text. I have not the strength. I have not the power of thought to point out this solemn Truth of God as I gladly would and to thrust it on your consciences. I can only thus make it ring and sound in your ears by saying again, "There are first that shall be last."

Remember, if it is so with you—and this is the conclusion of the whole matter—your being last will involve awful responsibilities because you *were* first! You cannot perish as others do. If you do reject Christ, how shall you escape who neglect so great a salvation? Sirs, I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you in the Day of Judgment! Besides this, how shall you escape from the remorse of your conscience, when conscience, wide awake, shall cry, "You knew your duty, but you did it not"? The caverns of Hades shall say, with dull and dreary echoes, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." Every revolution of eternity, as it brings some fresh crisis of your pain, shall say to you, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." Banished from Heaven to Tophet, from the Temple of the Lord to Gehenna, from the voice of the minister to weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, from the song of the sanctuary to the howling of the Pit—this, this shall be the edge of the sword, this the tooth of the devouring worm—"You knew your duty, but you did it not!"

O you first ones, God help you! If you ever should be last, how terrible will be your doom! Let us then engage in great searching of our hearts tonight. I search my own soul now—what if I, standing first in Gospel privileges, the teacher of this people—what if I be among the last? My Brothers, you the elders and deacons of this Church, the first in our Israel—what if you are among the last? You young men and women of our Catechumen classes, of our Bible classes—you young men of our College, first, most hopeful of all—what if you are found among the last? You Sunday school teachers and superintendents, you who teach young children the way to Heaven—what if you learn not the way to Heaven yourselves? What if you, the first, should be the last? You, the Beloved of

my soul, whom these hands have baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ! You with whom we have had sweet communion at the blessed feast of the Lord's Table—what if you, the first, should be among the last? I can but reiterate the cry. I can but stand here, like Jonah, and cry aloud with one unvarying note of warning, "Take heed, you first, that you are not among the last!" And what shall we all say, rolling the two sentences into one? O Grace, make me among the first! Let me not be among the last at the last! O God, help me now to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven! I do accept Christ as my Savior—

"'Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to His Cross I cling.'"

Say that in your souls after me, you who feel it—

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot
O Lamb of God, I come."

Trust the Master now, my Hearers. Say in your spirits, "Yes, we're guilty and vile! Save us, Lord, or we perish." Let the cry of your repentance and the utterance of your faith go up to Heaven in one sound! And then God commissions us to say to you, from His Word, that He absolves you from the guilt of all your sin when you have believed in Jesus Christ His Son. He that *believes* on the Son has everlasting life and shall never perish! He shall never come into condemnation, but the love of God shall rest on him in time and eternity. God grant it to us all, for His name's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51; 142.

Psalm 51:—This Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician—it was intended to be sung. Yet it is not by any means a joyous piece of music. It seems more fit to be sung—or sighed—as a solo for the solitary penitence of a broken heart than for the united songs of Believers. Yet, in God's ears it is clear that the voice of penitence is full of music, for this penitential Psalm is dedicated to the chief musician.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness.* No eye can spy out the tender attributes of God like an eye that is sore with weeping on account of acknowledged sin, so David prays, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness." This word, "loving-kindness," is a rich double word and it was specially suitable just then, for he who has a broken heart—bruised and broken on account of sin, needs double mercy from God.

1. *According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* "They are on record and I cannot erase the terrible lines, nor can You erase them, O Lord, without displaying a multitude of Your tender mercies. It will need Omnipotence, itself, to get rid of this sin engraved in brass. Therefore, according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.* "Wash me through and through, O Lord. Wash me thoroughly!" A hypocrite is satisfied with the

washing of his garments, but the true penitent cries, "Wash me! Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. It is almost the only thing that I can really call my own and it is most sadly mine. O Lord, wash my iniquity right away!"

2. *And cleanse me from my sin.* "If washing will not suffice, put me in the fire, but somehow, somehow, O Lord, cleanse me from my sin!" You notice that David's prayer is not concerning the punishment of his sin, but concerning the sin itself. That is the one thing which is eating into his heart—look how many words he uses to describe it—"My sin, my iniquity, my transgressions." He cries to God to help him to get rid of that which is the source of all his sorrow. The thief dreads the gallows, but the penitent fears not the punishment of his sin—it is the sin, itself, that terrifies him!

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* "I cannot get away from it and I cannot get rid of it. It stares me in the face. It haunts me in my lying down and my rising up. I am obliged to acknowledge my sin, for it is always before me."

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.* "It is true that I have grieved others and that I have done much injury to others by my sin, but in all this, I have sinned most against You. The virus—the essence of my sin is that it has been committed against You, O my God!"

4. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* "My sin was committed within Your jurisdiction and against Your Law, O Lord and, therefore, as I am summoned to appear at Your court, I cannot disobey the summons. I am compelled to give an answer to the charge brought against me—and my answer is that I am guilty, without any extenuating circumstances that I can plead before You, O Lord! I am guilty through and through."

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* David does not say that by way of making an excuse for himself, but rather to aggravate his own guilt. He admits that his guiltiness is really a part of himself. He does not say, "Lord, I was acting contrary to my nature when I committed this sin. You know that it was not like me to do that." Oh, no! He says, "Lord, You know that I was acting quite in accordance with my nature. It was just like me to fall into this terrible sin." We have sometimes heard people say that they were surprised to find that they had been guilty of certain sins—let it not be so with you, but rather be surprised to find yourself kept from guilt, amazed when you are preserved from sin—for the whole tendency of unrenewed human nature is towards iniquity. "In sin did my mother conceive me."

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* As much as to say, "Lord, that which You desire" to see in me is not there, and though You have made me also to desire it, yet I fear that I have not at present gone beyond the desire, for still within me, in my secret soul, there lies a tendency to evil, and unless I keep a strict watch over myself, I soon go astray. Lord, make me inwardly clean! I cannot bear that it should be otherwise with me."

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* As the priest purges the unclean man by dipping the bunch of hyssop into the blood of the

sacrifice, and then sprinkling him with it, so, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* "That is to say, I shall be clean if You do wash me, O Lord! My own washing makes me no cleaner. My own cleaning make me fouler than I was before, but if You will purge me and if You will do it with the sacrificial blood, then I shall be whiter than snow." This is grand faith on David's part! I cannot help calling your attention to it—that he, with a sense of his sin heavy upon him and bowed down to the very earth with the consciousness of his great guilt, yet dares to say, "Wash me"—adulterous, murderous David—"wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." No faith brings greater Glory to God than the faith of the audaciously guilty when they dare to believe that God can forgive them! Not even the unfallen seraphim can render to God purer homage than when you, a defiled and condemned sinner, dare to believe in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus and so believe as to say, with David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* If a good man ever goes astray, he may depend upon it that his sin will be very costly to him. And the better a man is, the more expensive will his sin be to him in the long run. God breaks the very bones of His children when He chastens them for their sin. I do not doubt that many a time their pilgrim way has been all the more weary in their later days by reason of their sins in their earlier days. There is many a pain that shoots through old bones, that is meant to remind the old bones what they were when they were young. God will certainly chasten us for our iniquities if we are His own people.

9. *Hide Your face from my sins,* "Lord, do not look at them. Refuse to see them! Hide Your face, not from me, but from my sins."

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* See how he comes back to that note again and again? He is never far away from it. There are certain tunes in which one note is constantly repeated, so is it here. David prays, "O God, put away my sin, blot out my sin, forgive my sin." He cries for nothing else but that—"Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities." He longs for the time when not one of them shall be in existence!

10, 11. *Create in me a clean 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.* These are the groans of a true child of God. Never has a man, without the Spirit of God within him, prayed to God in this fashion. David, therefore, notwithstanding all his sin, still had the life of God within his soul and when Nathan came to reprove him, the sacred fire began to burn again. Here are some of the sparks of it—and some of the smoke of it, too "'Cast me not away from Your Presence'—

"'Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord.'

"Say not, I can no longer use you. You shall no longer stand in My courts, for you have disgraced Me. Get away from My Presence.' 'Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.'"

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit.* David longs for his Lord to come back to him. When God flogs

His children, they still cling to Him and they cry to Him. They do not wish to run away and hide themselves from Him. No, their only comfort is to weep upon their Father's bosom and to wait for the kiss of forgiveness from His lips. So David prays, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted to You.* Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that we must be in a right state of heart if we are to serve God well? We cannot teach transgressors His way with a confident hope that they will be converted to Him unless we, ourselves, possess the joy of God's salvation and are upheld by His Holy Spirit! If we go to God's work out of order, we shall make a mess of it and accomplish nothing that is really worth doing. But when God gives us His comforting Grace within and His upholding on every hand, then shall we teach with power and sinners shall learn to profit—"Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You."

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* None sing so loudly the praises of Redeeming Grace as those who have been forgiven great sins. There is no music, outside Heaven, that has such a volume of God-glorifying praise in it as the song of the man who loves much because he has had much forgiven—"My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness."

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* He felt as if he could not be trusted to open his own lips and, certainly, he was not to be trusted to open his own eyes, for when he had opened them before, he had looked on that which led him into sin. So now he would have God to keep his very lips, that he shall never speak again except as he shall be guided from on high—"O Lord, open You my lips."

15, 16. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it.* Very naturally David's mind began to think of the multitudes of bulls, lambs and rams that were burnt upon Jehovah's altar. There is nothing that makes a man so spiritual and so Evangelical as a deep sense of sin. You cannot be a Sacramentarian and a ceremonialist very long if you have a broken heart. Those pretty toys do very well for the kind of "miserable sinners" who do not know what either misery or sin means! But he who really has had his heart broken on account of the guilt of his sin cannot be content with the mere outward sacrifice—he must have that which is *spiritual*—"You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it:"

16, 17. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* David has to feel that it is better to have one genuine sigh for sin than to make ten thousand bulls shed their blood upon the sacrificial altar! And if you are truly broken from your sin—if you do really hate it, and cry to God for the pardon of it—if the Spirit of God has really given you complete cleansing from your guilt by the precious blood of Jesus—this is better than all the material sacrifices offered in all the temples that were ever built and overlaid with gold! "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

18. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.* As much as though David said, "I have done great hurt to Zion, I have pulled down the walls of Jerusalem by my sin. Now, Lord, build them up again. Undo the mischief which Your poor foolish servant has worked by his backslidings." So may any backsliders among us pray to the Lord, "Visit Your Church so graciously, Lord, that my sin may not injure her!"

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bulls upon Your altar.* Oh, yes, we are sure to bring to God the best that we have when we once get our sins forgiven! After we have looked to Christ, who is the one great Sacrifice for sin, then we bring to God all that we can, to show how grateful we are for His pardoning mercy!

Psalm 142. Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave. This "Maschil of David" is instructive to us, for the experience of one Believer is very edifying to another. We are so much alike that as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of men answers to man—and what one Believer has felt awakens sympathy in the rest of God's people.

Psalm 142:1, 2. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble.* David mentions that he prayed with his voice. This is an unimportant matter compared with praying with the heart, but when the heart is full of prayer, it is often very helpful to be able to use the voice to give expression to the emotions of the soul. To have a room in which, without disturbing others and without ostentatiously revealing your private experiences to others, you can speak aloud unto the Lord, will be found to be a great advantage in prayer. Some men's thoughts become more concentrated and flow more freely—and their hearts are better able to pour out their deepest and fullest expressions when they can pray aloud. So David says that in the cave, where he would not be likely to disturb anybody, he cried with his voice unto the Lord—"With my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication."

You can see from verse 2 what was the style of his prayer. "I poured out my complaint." The figure is a very simple one. Just as you pour out water from a bottle, so David let his heart's complaint flow out before the Lord. In pouring out water, it sometimes comes slowly and sometimes fast—at times with a rush, followed by a pause. There is no prayer better than that which naturally flows from the renewed heart without any strain or effort, it was so with David—"I poured out my complaint before Him, I showed before Him my trouble." Just as a patient shows his wounds to the surgeon, so take away the covering from your broken heart and wounded spirit and set your trouble before the Lord, who already sees it! It will be no novelty or cause of surprise to Him and He desires you to manifest such trustfulness in Him as will lead you to lay before Him your complaint and your trouble.

3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.* "My spirit was so overwhelmed within me, that I did not know where I was, or what I was. I could not make heads or tails of myself. I

seemed to be like a skein of silk or wool in a tangle. My thoughts, as George Herbert would have said, were all a case of knives, sharp to cut and wound. I could not make myself out! I was a puzzle even to myself, but You knew my path even then."

3, 4. *In the way wherein I walked have they privately laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.* This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in—to have every friend forsake you—to find that those who used to know you best, do not want to know you any longer, but turn their heads away as if it would be a disgrace to them to be known to have been your friends. This is a grand opportunity for testing the reality of your faith! Can you believe God now? Can you take Him to be your Friend now that you have not another friend in the world? Fine-weather faith is very cheap and easily obtained—but the faith that can stand fast in the time of the storm and tempest—that hardy mountaineering faith which hides in God in the coldest winter and finds its summertime in Him alone—that is the faith that is worth having and worth keeping!

6. *I cried unto You, O LORD: I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.* "I left the broken reeds alone and leaned upon my God. I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living."

6, 7. *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me.* This is a beautiful metaphor, suggesting that when the saints heard that God brought him out of prison, they would gather round him, gaze upon him as a miracle of mercy and ask him to tell them his wonderful tale. He would be the center of their delighted observation and their own faith and hope in the Lord would be greatly increased. As a little imprisoned bird might long for emancipation, David says, "O Lord, open my cage door and let me fly and I will sing, as I mount, to the praise of Him who gave me my liberty! 'Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about, for You shall deal bountifully with me.'"

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

CHRIST'S JOY AND OURS
NO. 2935

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 3, 1875.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."
John 15:11.

THERE is a sentence which has crept among our common proverbs so that it is repeated as if it were altogether true—"Man was made to mourn." There is a truth in that sentence, but there is also a falsehood in it. Man was not originally made to mourn—he was made to rejoice. The Garden of Eden was his place of happy abode and, as long as he continued obedient to God, nothing grew in that garden which could cause him sorrow. For his delight the flowers breathed out their perfume. For his delight the landscapes were full of beauty and the rivers rippled over golden sands. God made human beings as He made His other creatures, to be happy. They are capable of happiness. They are in their right element when they are happy and now that Jesus Christ has come to restore the ruins of the Fall, He has to bring back to us the old joy—only it shall be even sweeter and deeper than it could have been if we had never lost it! A Christian has never fully realized what Christ came to make him until he has grasped the joy of the Lord. Christ wishes His people to be happy. When they are perfect, as He will make them in due time, they shall also be perfectly happy. As Heaven is the place of pure holiness, so is it the place of unalloyed happiness and, in proportion as we get ready for Heaven, we shall have some of the joy which belongs to Heaven. And it is our Savior's will that oven now His joy should remain in us and that our joy should be full.

I. My first remark upon the text will be this—all THAT JESUS SPEAKS IS MEANT TO PRODUCE JOY IN HIS PEOPLE. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you."

If you will read through the Chapter from which our text is taken and also the Chapter which precedes it, you will see the nature of the words which Jesus Christ speaks to His people. Sometimes *they are words of instruction*. He talks to us that we may know the Truth of God and the meaning of the Truth. But His objective is that, knowing the Truth, we may have joy in it. I will not say that the more a Christian knows, the more joy he has, but I can truly say that ignorance often hides from us many wells of delight of which we might otherwise drink, and that all other things being equal, the best-instructed Christian will be the happiest man. He will know the Truth and the Truth will make him free.

The Truth of God will kill a thousand fears which ignorance would have fostered within him. The knowledge of the love of God, the knowledge of the full Atonement made on Calvary, the knowledge of the Eternal Covenant, the knowledge of the immutable faithfulness of Jehovah—indeed, all knowledge which reveals God in His relationship to His people—will tend to create comfort in the hearts of the saints. Be not, therefore, careless about Scriptural Doctrine—study the Word of God and seek to understand the mind of the Spirit as revealed in it, for this blessed Book was written for your learning, that "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures you might have hope." If you are diligent students of the Word, you will find that you have good reason to rejoice in the Lord under all circumstances.

But sometimes our Lord also spoke *words of warning*. In this Chapter, we find Him telling His disciples that they were branches of a vine and that branches which bore no fruit had to be cut off and cast into the fire. At first sight, it seems to us that there is nothing consoling in such words as those—they sound sharply in our ears and make us start and be afraid—and we ask ourselves, "Are we bearing fruit?" Well, Brothers and Sisters, but such heart-searching as that is eminently beneficial and tends to deepen true joy in us! Christ would not have us rejoice with the false joy of presumption, so He bares the sharp knife and cuts *that* joy away. Joy on a false basis would prevent us from having true joy and, therefore, the Master gives us the sharp and cutting word that we may be sound in the faith, that we may be sound in the life of God and that so the joy we may get may be worth having—not the mere surf and foam of a wave that is driven with the wind and tossed, but the solid foundation of the Rock of Ages!

Our Lord also tells us that even the branches that bear fruit will have to be pruned that they may bring forth more fruit. "Unpleasant Truth that!" Somebody might say—"It will give me no joy to know that I shall have to endure the knife of correction and affliction." Yes, dear Brother, but, "tribulation works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope, and hope makes one not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." So, beginning rather high up in this pedigree, you finally get to joy and get to it by the only right method! To try to sail up to joy by the balloon of fancy is dangerous work, but to mount up to it by Jacob's ladder, every round of which God has placed at the proper distance, is to climb to Heaven by the safe road which He has appointed! There is nothing which the Lord Jesus says to us, by way of warning, which does not guard us against sorrow, conduct us away from danger and point us to the path of safety. If we will but listen to these words of warning, they will thus guide us to the truest happiness that mortals can ever find either here or hereafter!

You will notice, as you read the Chapter, that our Lord, in addition to words of instruction and words of warning, utters *some very humbling words*. I think that is a very humbling verse in which He says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can

you, except you abide in Me." But it is good for us to be humbled and brought low. The Valley of Humiliation has always struck me as being the most beautiful place in the whole of the pilgrimage which John Bunyan describes. To see that shepherd boy sitting down among the sheep and to hear him playing upon his pipe, and singing—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his Guide"

teaches us that to be brought down to our true condition of nothingness before God and made to feel our entire dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit is the true way to promote in us a joy which angels themselves might envy! Be thankful, therefore, Beloved, whenever you read the Scripture, whether it instructs you, or warns you, or humbles you. Say to yourself, "Somehow or other, this tends to my present and eternal joy and, therefore, I will give the more earnest heed to it lest by any means I should lose the blessing it is intended to convey to me."

The Chapter also abounds in gracious *words of promise* such as this—"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." There are other promises here, every one of which is full of consolation to the children of God. Are any of you lacking in joy at this time? Do you feel dull and heavy of heart? Are you dead and tried? Then listen to what Jesus Christ says here—"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." What are the things that He says to you in other parts of His Word? He says, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." In this strain does our Lord graciously talk to us—do not let Him talk to us in vain! My Brothers and Sisters, do not allow His precious promises to fall upon your ears as the good Seed fell upon the rocky or stony soil! The promise of harvest gives joy to the earth. Rob not your Lord of the sheaves which He deserves to gather from your heart and life, but believe His Word, rest upon it and rejoice in it, realizing that His Words of promise are meant to bring you great joy!

So are His Word*s of precept*. This chapter contains many of them, for He tells us that it is His command that we should love our brethren and also that we should continue in His love. He gives us many precepts of that kind, and every precept in God's Word is a signpost pointing out the road to joy. The Commandments upon the tablets of stone seem very hard, even though cut by the finger of God, Himself, and the granite on which they are engraved is hard and cold. But the precepts of the Lord Jesus are tender and gracious and bring us joy and life. As you read them, you may be quite sure off two things—that is, if Christ denies you anything, it is not good for you and if Christ commands you to do anything, obedience will promote your highest welfare! O child of God,

never quibble at any precept of your Lord! If your proud flesh should rebel, pray it down, for rest assured that if you were so selfish as only to wish to do that which would promote your own happiness, it would be the path of wisdom to be obedient to your Lord and Master. I repeat what I said just now. The precepts of Christ are signposts indicating the way to joy. If you keep His Commandments, you shall abide in His love. And if you carefully watch His eyes, as the handmaidens watch the eyes of their mistress, so as to do at once all that He bids you do, you shall have the peace of God flowing into your soul like a river and that peace shall never fail to bring you solid and lasting joy!

II. Now secondly, I gather from the text that WHEN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST JOYS IN US, THEN WE ALSO HAVE JOY.

This meaning of the text is the interpretation given to it by several of the early fathers. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you." "That is to say," they say, "that I may rejoice over you, and rejoice in you, and be pleased with you, and that so your joy may be full." I am not certain that this is the meaning of the text, nor am I sure that it is *not*, but, anyway, it is a very blessed Truth of God. It means this. A child knows that its father loves it, and while it is quite sure that its father will never cease to love it, it also knows that if it is disobedient, the father will be displeased and grieved. But the obedient child gives pleasure to its father by its obedience and when it has done so, it receives pleasure, itself, from that very fact. There used to be servants in the olden time—and I suppose there are some now—who were so attached to their masters that if they gave satisfaction to them, they were perfectly satisfied. But the least word of displeasure from their master wounded them to the very heart. Perhaps a better illustration may be found in the nearer and dearer relationship of the wife and the husband. The wife, if she has pleased her husband, is delighted in the joy which she has given to him. But if by any means she has displeased him, she is unhappy until she has removed the cause of his displeasure and has again given him joy. Now I know that my Lord Jesus loves me and that He will never do anything else but love me. Yet He may not always be pleased with me and when He has no joy in me, my joy also goes if I have a heart that is true towards Him. But when He has joy in me—when He can rejoice in me, then is my joy also full. And everyone of you whom the Lord has loved will find this to be true—that in proportion as Jesus Christ can look upon you with joy as obedient and faithful to Him, in that proportion will your conscience be at ease and your mind will find joy in the thought that you are acceptable to Him.

What are the ways in which we can really please Christ Jesus and so have joy in Christ's pleasure? According to the Chapter before us, *we please Him when we abide in Him.* "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." If you sometimes abide in Christ and sometimes turn away from Him, you will give Him no pleasure, but if He is the indispensable Companion of your daily life—if you are unhappy should even a cloud come between you and your Lord—if you feel that you must be as closely connected

with Him as the limb is with the head, or as the branch is with the stem, then you will please Him and He will take delight in your fellowship. Fervent love to Christ is very pleasing to Him, but the chilly, lukewarm love of Laodicea is nauseous to Him, so that He says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth." If you continue, day by day, to walk with God carefully and prayerfully, and to abide continually in Christ, He will look upon you with eyes of satisfaction and delight and will see in you the reward of His soul-travail—and you, being conscious that you are giving joy to Him, will find that your own cup of joy is also full to overflowing! What greater joy can a man have than to feel that he is pleasing Christ? My fellow creatures may condemn what I do, but if Christ accepts it, it matters not to me how many may condemn it. They may misrepresent and misjudge me and impute wrong motives to me, and sneer and snarl at me, but if I can keep up constant and unbroken communion with the Christ of God, what cause have I for sorrow? No, if He is joyful in us, then our joy shall remain in us and shall be full.

Our Lord Jesus has also told us that *He has joy in us when we bring forth much fruit.* "Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples." That is to say, "I will recognize in you the evidence of true discipleship with satisfaction and delight." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are we bringing forth much fruit unto God? Are you called to suffer? Then do you, in your suffering, bring forth the fruit of patience? Or, are you strong and in robust health? Then are you, with that health and strength, rendering to the Lord the fruit of holy activity? Are you doing all you can for the Lord Jesus who has done so much for you? You have received much from Him—are you yielding an adequate return to Him? It is little enough when it is what we call, much, but, oh, how little it is when it is little in our own estimation! But when our Lord Jesus Christ sees us doing much for God, He is pleased with us, as the gardener is when, having planted a tree, and dug about it, and fertilized it, and pruned it, he sees it at last covered with golden fruit. He is pleased with his fruitful tree and Christ is pleased with His fruit-bearing disciples! Are we making Christ glad in this fashion? If so, our own joy shall be full. I am not surprised that some Christians have so little joy when I remember how little joy they are giving to Jesus because they are bringing forth such a little fruit to His praise and Glory. Brothers and Sisters, see to this matter, I pray you! If I cannot enforce this Truth of God with the power that it deserves, may the Holy Spirit cause the Truth to come home with power to your hearts!

Our Lord also tells us that *He has joy in us when we keep His Commandments.* "If you keep My Commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My Commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you." He that walks carefully in the matter of obedience to Christ's Commands, wishing never to do anything

offensive to Him, asking for a tender conscience that he may be at once aware when he is doing wrong, and earnestly desiring to leave no duty undone—such a man as that must be happy! He may not laugh much. He may have very little to say when in frivolous company. But there is a joy that laughter would but mock. There is a sacred mirth within to which the merriment of fools is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot. And the man with a tender conscience has that joy! The careful walker has that joy! The man who, when he puts his head upon his pillow at night, can feel, "I have not been all that I want to be but still I have aimed at holiness. I have tried to curb my passions, I have sought to find out my Master's will and in every point to do it." Such a man sleeps sweetly and if he wakes, there is music in his heart! And such a man, whatever the trials of life may be, has abundant sources of joy within himself. He is pleasing to Christ, Christ joys in him and his joy is full!

And *this is peculiarly the case with those who love the brethren.* Those are some who do not love their brethren at all. Or if they do, they love themselves a great deal more. They are very apt to judge and to condemn their brethren. If they can find a little fault, they magnify it and if they can find none, they invent some. I know persons who seem to be, by nature, qualified to be monks or hermits, living quite alone. According to their notion of things, they are much too good for society. No church is pure enough for them. No ministry can profit them. No one else can reach as high as the wonderful position to which, in their self-conceit, they fancy that they have attained! Let none of us be of that sort. Many of the children of God are far better than we are and the worst one in his family has some points in which he is better than we are. I feel, sometimes, as though I would give my eyes to be as sure of Heaven as the most obscure and the least in all the family of God! And I think that such times may come to some of you if you imagine yourselves to be so great and good. You strong cattle that push with horn and with shoulder—and drive back the weak ones—the Lord may say to you, "Get you gone! You belong not to Me, for My people are not thus rough and boastful—not thus proud and haughty. I look to the man who is humble, to him who has a contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word."

Did you ever try to pray to God under the influence of a consciousness of possessing the higher life? Did you ever try to pray to God that way? If you ever did, I do not think you will do it a second time! I tried it once, but I am not likely to repeat the experiment. I thought I would try to pray to God in that fashion, but it did not seem to came naturally from me. And when I had done so, I thought I heard somebody at a distance saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and he went home to his house justified! And then I had to tear off my Pharisaic robes and get back to where the poor publican had been standing, for his place and his prayer suited me admirably! I cannot make out what has happened to some of my brethren who fancy themselves so wonderfully good. I wish the Lord would strip them of their self-righteousness and let them see themselves as they really are in His sight! Their fine notions concerning the higher

life would soon vanish them. Brothers and Sisters, the highest life I ever hope to reach this side of Heaven is to say from my very soul—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

I have not the slightest desire to suppose that I have advanced in the spiritual life many stages beyond my brethren. As long as I trust simply to the blood and righteousness of Christ and think nothing of myself, I believe that I shall continue to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ that His joy will be in me and that my joy will be full.

III. Now, thirdly, I think we may gather from the text that THE JOY WHICH JESUS GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE IS HIS OWN JOY. "That *My* joy might remain in you."

I daresay you have noticed that a man cannot communicate to another any joy except that of which he is himself conscious. Here is a man who is rich. He can tell you the joy or riches, but he cannot give that joy to a poor man. Here is another man who takes delight in all sorts of foolery. He can tell you the joy of nonsense, but he cannot go beyond that. So, when Jesus gives us joy, He gives us His own joy and what do you think it is? I must put it very briefly.

The joy of Jesus is, first, *the joy of abiding in His Father's love*. He knows that His Father loves Him—that He never did anything else but love Him—that He loved Him before the earth was—that He loved Him when He was in the manger and that He loved Him when He was on the Cross. Now that is the joy which Christ gives to you—the joy of knowing that your Father loves you! Let me stop a little while so that you who are really Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ may just roll that sweet morsel under your tongue—the everlasting God loves you! I have known the time when I have felt as if I could leap up at the very thought of God's love to me. That He pities you and cares for you, you can understand. But that He *loves* you—well, if that does not make your joy full, there is nothing that can! It ought to fill us with delight to know that we are loved of the Lord with an everlasting and infinite love, even as Jesus Christ is loved. "The Father Himself loves you," declares Christ, so surely you share Christ's joy—and that fact should make your own joy full!

Christ's joy is also *the joy of hallowed friendship*. He said to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." The friends of Jesus are those who are taken by Him into most intimate fellowship—to lean upon His breast and to become His constant companions. Our Lord Jesus Christ has great joy in being on the most friendly terms with His people and have not you also great joy in being on such friendly terms with Him? What higher joy do you want or can you have? I have heard a man say, very boastfully, that he once dined with Lord So-and-So. And another, just for the sake of showing off, spoke of his friend, Sir John somebody or other! But you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Friend, your Divine Companion! You are going to sit and feast with Him presently at His own table. He calls you no more His servant, but His

friend! Does not that fact make you rejoice with exceeding joy? What is your heart made of if it does not leap with joy at such an assurance as that? You are Beloved of the Lord and a friend of the Son of God! Kings might well be willing to give up their crowns if they could have such bliss as this!

Moreover, *our Lord Jesus felt an intense delight in glorifying His Father.* It was His constant joy to bring Glory to His Father. Have you ever felt the joy of glorifying God, or do you now feed joy in Christ because He has glorified His Father? I solemnly declare that if Christ would not save me, I would love Him for what He has done to exhibit the Character of God! I have sometimes thought that if He were to drive me out of doors, I would stand there in the cold and say, "Do what You will with me. Crush me if You will. But I will always love You, for there never was another such as You are, never one who so well deserved my love and so fully won my affection and admiration as You have done." How gloriously has Christ rolled away the great load of human sin, adequately recompensed the claims of Divine Justice and magnified the Law and made it honorable! He took the greatest possible delight in doing this. It was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Let that joy be yours, also! Rejoice that the Law of God is honored, that Justice is satisfied and that Free Grace is gloriously displayed in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the joy of Christ that He should finish the work which His Father gave Him to do. And He has finished it and, therefore, He is glad!

Will you not also rejoice in His finished work? You have not to put a single stitch to the robe of righteousness which He has worked—it is woven from the top throughout and absolutely perfect in every respect. You have not to contribute even a quarter of a penny to the ransom price for your redemption, for it is paid to the uttermost farthing. The great redemptive work is finished forever and Christ has done it all! He is Alpha and He is Omega. He is the Author and He is also the Finisher of our faith! Sit down, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and just feed on this precious Truth of God! Surely this is the "feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," of which the Prophet Isaiah long ago wrote. I see You, Lord Jesus, with Your foot upon the dragon's neck! I see You with death and Hell beneath Your feet! I see the Glory that adorns Your triumphant brow as You wait till the whole earth shall acknowledge You as King, for You have once and for all said, "It is finished," and finished it certainly is! And shall not my poor heart rejoice because You have finished it, and finished it for me?

IV. My last observation is that WHEN CHRIST COMMUNICATES HIS JOY TO HIS PEOPLE, IT IS A JOY WHICH REMAINS AND A JOY WHICH IS FULL.

No other joy remains. There is a great deal of very proper joy in many families when children are born, yet how many little coffins are followed by weeping mothers? There is joy when God fills the barn, and very properly so, for a bountiful harvest should make men glad. But the

winter soon comes, with its cold and dark and dreary weather. But, *Brothers and Sisters, when we get the joy of the Lord, it remains!* Why? Because the cause of it remains. The well will continue as long as the spring runs and the joy of a Christian is one that can never alter because the cause of it never alters! God's love never changes towards His people. The Atonement never loses its efficacy. Our Lord Jesus Christ never ceases His intercession. His acceptableness with God on our behalf never varies. The promises do not change. The Covenant is not like the moon—sometimes waxing and sometimes waning. Oh, no, if you rejoice with Christ's joy today, you will have the same cause for rejoicing tomorrow, and forever, and forevermore, for He says that His joy shall remain in you!

Then, next, *this joy is full joy*. Then, dear Brothers and Sisters, if our joy is full, two things are very clear. First, there is no room for any more joy and, secondly, there is no room for any sorrow! When a man gets to know the love of God to him, he is so full of delight that he does not need any more joy. The pleasures of this world lose all their former charm. When a man has eaten all he can eat, you may set whatever you like before him, but he has no appetite for it. "Enough is as good as a feast," we say. When a man is forgiven by God and knows that he is saved, the joy of the Lord enters his soul and he says, "You may take all other joys and do what you like with them. I have my God, my Savior, and I need no more." Then, ambition ceases, lust is quiet, covetousness is dead and desires that once roamed abroad, now stay at home. The saved one says, "My God, You are enough for me. What more can I require? Since You have said to me, 'I love you,' and my heart has responded, 'My God, I love You, too,' I have more true wealth at my disposal than if I had all the mines of the Indies under my control!"

There is, also, no longer any room for sorrow, for if Christ's joy has filled us, where can sorrow go? "But the man has lost his gold." "Yes," he says, "but if the Lord likes to take it from me, let Him have it." "But the man is bereaved of those that are very dear to him, as Job was." Yet he says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When a man consciously realizes the love of God in his soul, he cannot want more than that. I wish that all of us had that realization, for then our joy would be so great that we would have no room left for sorrow!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, as you come to the Table of your Lord in this spirit, you will feel so full of joy that you will be too full for words. People really full of joy do not usually talk much. A person who is carrying a glass that is full to the brim does not go dancing along like one who has nothing to carry! He is very quiet and steady, for he does not want to spill the contents of the glass. So, the man who has the joy of the Lord filling his soul is often quiet—he cannot say much about it. I have even known that joy to get so full that we have scarcely known whether we have been in the body or out of the body. Pain, sickness, depression of spirit—all seem to have been taken right away and the man has had so

clear a view of Christ and his mind has been so abstracted from everything else, that afterwards it has almost seemed like a dream to him to have felt the love of God in its almighty power lifting him above all surrounding circumstances!

Then, dear Brothers and Sisters, if it is so with us, the joy of the Lord will be much too full for us ever to forget it. If, at this moment, our soul is filled with Christ's joy, it is possible that 20 or 30 years hence, any one of us may be able to say, "I remember that first Sabbath night in the year 1875 at the Tabernacle! My Lord then met with me, looked into my soul and saw there was a void there—and He poured His own heart's joy into me until my soul could not hold any more!" And perhaps, in some dark time in the future, your present experience will be a great stay to your soul and you will recall David's words in a similar case, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." And you will say, "Though, now deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts, the remembrance of that bright season causes me to know that You do not forsake those on whom Your love has once been set." Come close to your Lord, Beloved! I delight to come very near to Him. To touch the hem of His garment is enough for sinners, but it is not enough for saints. We need to sit at His feet with Mary and to lay our heads upon His bosom as John did.

O you unconverted ones, look to Jesus, for if you look to Him, you shall live! But as for you who are converted, a look will not be enough for you. You need to keep on gazing at Him and for Him to keep on gazing at you till He shall say to you, "You have ravished My heart, My Sister, My Spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." And you also shall say, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." Oh, that there might now be such sweet fellowship between Christ and all His blood-sprinkled ones that if we cannot pass the portals of Heaven, we shall be very near them! And if we cannot hear the songs of the angels, at any rate they will hear ours! And if we cannot look within and behold their joys, let us at least tempt them to look without and see ours, and half wish that they might be allowed to sit with us at this Communion Table, though that is an honor reserved for sinners saved by Sovereign Grace, for—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love."

Thus may the Master smile on you, my Dearly-Beloved, and make you to be such eminent saints that He can have great joy in you—for then His joy shall remain in you and your joy shall be full!

How I wish that everybody here knew my dear Lord and Master! I tell you who do not know Christ and do not experimentally know what true religion is that five minutes realization of the love of Christ would be better for you than a million years of your present choicest delights! There is more brightness in the dark side of Christ than in the brightest

side of this poor world! I would sooner lie on a bed and ache in every limb with the death-sweat standing on my brow, by the month and year together, persecuted, despised, forsaken, poor and naked, with the dogs to lick my sores and the devils to tempt my soul and have Christ for my Friend—than sit in the palaces of wicked kings with all their wealth, luxury, pampering and sin! Even at our worst estate, it is better to be God's dog than the devil's darling! It is better to have the crumbs and the moldy crusts that fall from Christ's table for the dogs than to sit at the head of princely banquets with the ungodly! "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

God bless you and save you! And He will do so if you trust in Jesus, His dear Son. As soon as you trust in Jesus, you are saved! God grant that you may do so this very hour for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-11.

John 15:1. *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.* All other vines were but types and shadows. Christ is the substance—God's ideal vine—"the true vine." Israel was a vine—the figure is a common one throughout the Old Testament—but it was a false vine and it bore bitter grapes!

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* The true description of a real saint is that he is in Christ, that he abides in Christ and that he bears fruit unto Christ. Where there are not these three things, there is no real saintship and so the man is taken away. Whatever he seems to be and seems to have, he is taken away. Oh, the sad loss of many professors in being taken away! What a terrible doom—to have had a name to live and then to be taken away!

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* The vine is very apt to become unclean and unhealthy. There are all sorts of creatures that love to suck its juices, so that even the most fruitful bough needs to be cleansed. Besides, the vine has a great tendency to run to wood, so the pruning knife must be used very sharply. It will be used upon all who are really in Christ and who are abiding in Christ.

3. *Now you are clean.* Those to whom the Savior spoke. "Now you are clean."

3. *Through the word which I have spoken unto you.* That is the great purger! Affliction is used, but it is rather the handle of the knife than the knife itself.

4. *Abide in Me.* "Now that you are clean, do not imagine that you can do without Me—"Abide in Me"

4. *And I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* It is not a transient faith. It is not saying, "I was converted so many years ago." But it is a

living faith, an abiding faith, a constant vital union with Christ that marks the true heir of Heaven.

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.* "Severed from Me, you can bear no fruit whatever. Not only can you not do much, but you can do nothing apart from Me."

6. *If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.* As I have already reminded you, it is only an abiding faith that is a real faith—the faith that remains fixed in Christ—the vital union with Christ maintains day by day.

6-11. *And men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciple. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* If you are Christ's disciples now, you are to keep on being His disciples and to grow more and more so as the years advance.

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

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1875.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another: as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
John 13:34, 35.

I CAN never doubt, or for a moment distrust the affection of my dear people to myself. I certainly do not ask for any more of your love, for I have as much as one man ought to have—perhaps a little more—certainly a great deal more than I deserve. I can now fairly turn round and say to you, putting myself altogether on one side, "Let brotherly love continue and let the warmth of your affection towards one another increase." And I can say this, too, without anybody daring to insinuate that there is something wrong in the Church—some division or schism here. Blessed be God, I do not think that a microscopic eye could discover anything of the kind! There may be some of you who do not like certain persons quite as much as you like other people. I do not wonder at that, for there will always be some partialities even among the best of friends. Our Lord Jesus, Himself, had 12 Apostles and out of the twelve, three especially favored ones. and out of the three, one who leaned upon His bosom. There are some people who are more lovable than other people and we can hardly help loving them more than others. Still, I know of no special reason of that kind why I should preach this sermon. I bless the Lord that you are as loving as you are and pray that you may increase more and more in your love to one another.

I am going to speak upon our text thus. First, *the title which our Lord gave to this commandment*. He called it "a new commandment." Secondly, the example by which He expounded it—"That you love one another as I have loved you." And thirdly, the result by which He enforced it—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

I. First, then, THE TITLE WHICH CHRIST GAVE TO THIS COMMANDMENT—"a new commandment."

Many of you, I do not doubt, have heard the story of Archbishop Usher and Mr. Rutherford. But it is so appropriate to this subject that I cannot help telling it again. The archbishop had heard of the wondrous power of Rutherford's devotion and of the singular beauty of the arrangement of his household, and he wished to witness it himself. But he could not tell how to do so until it occurred to him that he might disguise himself as a poor traveler. Accordingly, at nightfall, he knocked at the door of Mr. Rutherford's house and was received by Mrs. Rutherford. He asked if he

could find lodgings there for the night, to which she answered, "Yes," for they entertained strangers. She placed him in the kitchen and gave him something to eat. It was a part of her regular family discipline, on Saturday evening, to catechize the children and the servants and, of course, the poor man in the kitchen came in among them.

Mrs. Rutherford put to all of them some questions concerning the commandments and to this poor man she put the question, "How many commandments are there?" And he answered, "Eleven." "Ah," she said, "what a sad thing that a man of your age, whose hair is sprinkled with gray, should not even know how many commandments there are, for there is not a child above six years old in our parish who does not know that." The poor man said nothing in reply, but he had his oatmeal porridge and went to bed. Later, he rose and listened to Rutherford's midnight prayer. He was charmed with it, made himself known to him, borrowed a better coat from him, preached for him on the Sunday morning and surprised Mrs. Rutherford by taking as his text, "A new commandment I give unto you," and by commencing with the observation that this might very properly be called the eleventh commandment. By-and-by the archbishop went on his way and he and Rutherford had been refreshed together. It is the eleventh commandment and if, the next time we are asked how many commandments there are, we answer, "Eleven," we shall reply rightly enough.

But why is it a new commandment? Is it not included in the ten? You know how our Lord approved the lawyer's summary of the Ten Commandments—"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." How is this a new commandment then—"That you love one another"?

It is new, first, *as to the extent of the love*. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we are to love our fellow Christians as Christ loved us—and that is far more than we love ourselves. Christ loved us better than He loved Himself, for He loved us so much that He gave Himself for us, so that now no one of us is to say, "I am to love my friend, my brother, my fellow creatures as I love myself," but to interpret Christ's command thus, "I am to love my fellow Christians even as Jesus Christ who died for me, has loved me." This is a nobler kind of love altogether to the love which we are to manifest to our neighbors. That is the love of benevolence, but this is a love of affinity and close relationship and involves a higher degree of self-sacrifice than was enjoined by the Law of Moses, or than would have been understood by the bulk of mankind to have been intended by the precept which bids us love one another even as we love ourselves.

Next, it is a new commandment *because it is backed by a new reason*. The old commandment was backed by this declaration, "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The Israelite was to obey that Law because of the redemption which God had worked for his nation in Egypt. But we are commanded to love one another because Christ has redeemed us from a far worse bondage than that of Egypt and with a far costlier Sacrifice

than the offering up of myriads of paschal lambs. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." He has brought us out from under the iron yoke of sin and Satan and has broken our bonds asunder. Our enemies have pursued us, but He has destroyed them at the sea, even at the Red Sea. He has redeemed us with His own heart's blood and, therefore, His new commandment comes to us with the greatest possible force, "That you love one another as I have loved you."

It is a new commandment because of the extent of it and also because of the reason by which it is supported.

It is a new commandment, also, *because it is a new love, springing from a new nature and embracing a new nation.* I am bound, as a man, to love my fellow man because he is a man. But I am bound, as a *regenerate man*, to love my fellow Christian still more because he, also, is regenerate. The ties of blood ought to be recognized by us far more than they are. We are too apt to forget that God "has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." So that by the common tie of blood we are all brethren. But, Beloved, the ties of Grace are far stronger than the ties of blood. If you are really born of God, you are Brothers by a brotherhood that is stronger, even, than the natural brotherhood which enabled you to lie in the same cradle and to hang at the same breast, for brothers according to the flesh may be eternally separated. The right hand of the King may be the position accorded to the one and his left hand may be the position assigned to the other. But Brothers who are truly born of God, share a brotherhood which must last forever! They who are now Brothers and Sisters in Christ shall always be Brothers and Sisters!

It is a very blessed thing when we are able to love one another because the Grace that is in any one of us sees the Grace that is in another and discerns in that other, not the flesh and blood of the Savior, but such a resemblance to Christ that it must love that other one for His sake! As it is true that if we are of the world, the world will love its own, so is it true that if we are of the Spirit, the Spirit will love His own! The whole redeemed family of Christ is firmly bound together. Born of God ourselves, we keep looking out to see others who have been "born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." And when we do see them, we cannot help loving them. There is a bond of union between us at once. There are certain Brethren who hold that communion among Christians ought to be restricted—they say that if Believers are disobedient, especially with regard to Baptism, they ought not to be communed with. I do not judge my Brothers and Sisters who hold those views, but I do not hesitate to tell them that they hold views which it is quite impossible for them to carry out. If they are, themselves, in the body of Christ they must of necessity commune with all the other members of the mystical body of Christ—they cannot help themselves! Suppose that my little finger has been properly washed and cleansed, but that the rest of my hand it not so clean and that, therefore, my finger holds it to be its duty to shut off the rest of my hand from communion with itself? It cannot do it—it is impossible unless it is severed from the

hand! It must commune with the rest of the body, whether it is washed or unwashed. You may deny your friend the outward form of fellowship because he is not baptized, but you cannot deny him the inner fellowship which is much more important. You are allied to God and therefore you must have fellowship with all others who are allied to God, whether you like it or not! It is not a thing which your church discipline can touch—it can no more be bound than can the waves of air which are constantly in motion. "The wind blows where it wishes," and the Divine breath of fellowship comes where it pleases and the life of God will manifest itself in all the members of the body of Christ! And neither can you by any possibility restrain it.

The love which Christ commands His followers to have towards one another is not the ordinary love of man to man as such, but the love of the new-born man to the new-born man. Let us who love the Lord, love each other fervently in that sense. This is a love which arises out of a totally new union. A man who is a Christian belongs to a very special family. That family circle does not comprehend the whole human race—it is a family inside the larger human family, yet separated from it by an inner spiritual life. What if I say that the distance between the saved and the unsaved is like a great gulf? It is true that by the almighty Grace of God, there is a way across that gulf and many pass over it—still, the gulf is very deep and broad. But the moment a man is born unto God he enters that inner circle and becomes a member of a new family. Within that sacred circle of electing love, all bonds of nationality are broken forever. There we are no longer Frenchmen or Englishmen, Americans or Russians, black or white, bond or free, but we are "all one in Christ Jesus." There neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails! There the barbarian is no less and the Greek is no more than any other member of the redeemed family. We are Brothers and Sisters because, in Christ we are all in one family and, therefore it is that we are called to a new kind of love, a love which is like the love of the brothers of the same house, only more sublime, and with better reasons lying at the bottom than even the love of consanguinity can boast.

And, beloved Friends, this is a new commandment *because it is enforced by new necessities.* Christians ought to love one another because they are the subjects of one King who is also their Savior. We are a little band of Brothers and Sisters in the midst of a vast multitude of enemies. "Behold," said Christ to His disciples, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." If you are true Christians, you will not have the love of worldlings—you cannot have it! They will be sure to ridicule you, call you fools, or hypocrites, or something equally uncomplimentary. Well, then, cling the more closely to one another! Whatever opposition you meet with outside, let it only weld you into a firmer unit, the one with the other. We are like a small company of soldiers in an enemy's country, strongly garrisoned by the vast battalions of the foe, so we must hold together—we must be as one man, banded together in closest fellowship—as our Great Captain bids us. God grant that the very fact that we are found in an enemy's country may result in making us more completely one than we have ever been before!

When I hear a Christian man finding fault with his minister, I always wish that the devil had found somebody else to do his dirty work. I hope that none of you will ever be found complaining of God's servants who are doing their best to help their Lord's cause. There are plenty who are ready to find fault with them and it is much better that their faults—if they have faults—should be pointed out by an enemy rather than by you who belong to the same family as they do! Even if you should know that a professor is a hypocrite, it may be the duty of a Christian to say, "Let him fall by the hand of another. I would rather not give evidence against him." When I hear my Master say, "One of you shall betray Me," I may have a shrewd suspicion that He refers to Judas, but it will be wiser for me to say, "Lord, is it I?" rather than to ask, "Lord, is it Judas?"

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, this is a new commandment *because it is suggested by new characteristics*. In our fellow men there *may* be something lovable, but in our fellow Christians, there *must* be something lovable. Suppose they are only newly born to God—for my part, I hardly know of a more beautiful sight than a newborn Christian! I like to hear the prayer of the one who is just converted—there may be much of mistake and imperfection in it, but that does not spoil it! A lamb does not bleat in quite the same tones that a sheep uses, yet a lamb is a very beautiful object and one likes to hear its feeble notes. And there is a beauty about the lambs in Christ's flock as well as about the full-grown sheep. There is nothing more lovely to be seen in the whole world than an aged Believer who has lived very near to God. How calm the old gentleman's spirit—and when he begins to talk about the things of God and to testify concerning the love of his Lord—how charmingly he talks! There is much that is beautiful about all true Christians, so try and search out their excellences rather than their defects. If we are, ourselves, in a right state of heart, we are all the more likely to admire that which is good in others, just as Mercy and Christiana, when they came up from their bath, admired one another. I would advise you, Beloved, to imitate those gracious women. There is a beauty about your friend that there is not about yourself. Do not be always gazing in the mirror—there are fairer sights to be seen than any you will find there! Look into your fellow Christian's face and as you see anything there that is the work of the Spirit, love him because of that.

And, once more, *this is a new commandment because it is a preparation for better prospects than we have ever enjoyed before*. We who believe in Jesus are going to live together in Heaven forever and ever, so we may as well be good friends while we are here! We shall see each other there in one common glory and be occupied forever in one common employment—the adoration of our Lord and Master. The remembrance of this Truth of God ought to break down many of the barriers which at present exist in society. There was a wealthy Christian, a man who stood very high in social position, who was in the habit of picking out godly people of a far lower class than that to which he, himself, belonged. He would bring home to his table the farmer from the plow, or the smith from the smithy, and one of his rich friends ridiculed him for seeking

such associates. But he replied, "I do not think you ought to ridicule me for picking out those who are, socially, lower than myself, for those whom I have brought to my table are men and women who, I believe, will be nearer to the Throne of God in Heaven than I shall be. They are very poor, but they are better, more pious and more gracious than I am—so I thought that I might as well pick the best company I could while I was here—and associate with them." I like that gentleman's idea, and I can also bear witness that I have often learned more in an hour's conversation with a godly poor man than I have learned from an educated man who has known but little of the things of God! Never judge men by the clothes they wear, but by what they are in themselves! It is a man's heart and, above all, it is the Grace of God that dwells within the man's heart that you and I are to prize and love—may God help us to do so!

Thus, I think I have said enough concerning the new commandment which Christ gave to His disciples.

II. Now I must pass on to the second point—THE EXAMPLE BY WHICH CHRIST EXPOUNDED THIS NEW COMMANDMENT. "As I have loved you, that you also love one another."

First, *Christ loved them unselfishly*. He certainly had nothing to gain from associating with them and nothing to learn from them. It is true that He used them to help in the extension of His cause, but He first made them fit to be used. He owed nothing to them and they owed everything to Him. There was nothing in them when He first called them—and to the very last there was nothing good in them except what His Grace had put there—and there was not nearly as much of that as there ought to have been, for He had to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" Christians, you also are to love one another, not because of the gain which you get *from* one another, but rather because of the good you can do *to* one another.

I once heard a minister speak very grumblingly of the Baptist denomination. He said, "I do not know what the denomination ever did for me." I could not help thinking to myself, "Well now, that is a question which has never occurred to me and probably never will. The question that has occurred to me is, What can I do for the denomination?'" And I think that is the kind of question which every Christian minister ought to ask, not only concerning the denomination, but concerning Christians in general. We ought not to ask, "What can these people do for me?" No, put the shoe on the other foot and say, "What can I do for these people?" If you want to love a man, you must not get him to do you a kindness, but you must do a kindness to him and then you will love him. You cannot do good to another person without finding growing up in your heart some degree of interest in the person to whom you have done that good. It is possible that a child may forget its mother, forget that it drew its life, its nourishment and all the comforts of its infancy from its mother, but the mother does not forget that she reared it in its weakness and brought it up to strength. If you want to love a person, do some loving thing for that person and love will spring up in your soul to that person. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved His disciples unselfishly—let us do the same.

He also loved them very trustingly for, though He was not unwise and put no confidence in man, yet I might slightly alter one of our hymns and say concerning our Lord, "Oh, see how Jesus did trust unto Himself unto the childish love of His disciples!" He never wore any armor when He was alone with them. In the midst of skeptical scribes and Pharisees, we can see Him standing like a man on His guard, with His sword drawn in His hand, but as soon as He gets among His own followers, He opens His heart to them and tells them many things that He does not tell others—so many, indeed, that He once said to them, "If it were not so, I would have told you," as if He had no secrets from them, but unveiled His very heart to them! Of course, you cannot do this to the full with all professing Christian but still, when you are among your fellow Christians, do not always go about suspecting everybody. I would sooner be taken in a thousand times than I would unjustly suspect one true-hearted man. It is a shameful thing for any one of you to move among your fellow Christians and to be saying in your hearts, "I am afraid that many of them are hypocrites." Sir, I am greatly afraid that you are yourself a hypocrite, for most men measure other people's corn with the bushel that they keep at home! So, if you think ill of other people, the sin is probably in yourself. I have often said that if there is any place where I am quite at home, it is among my own congregation—

"There my best friends, my kindred, dwell!
There God my Savior reigns!"

There must be a hearty spirit of trustfulness between those who love the same Christ or else a lasting union between them is impossible.

Next, *Christ loved His disciples sympathetically*. He grieved with them in their griefs and rejoiced with them in their joys. He entered into most intimate fellowship with them in their varied experiences. Let us try to do the same with our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Let us weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. Nothing tends so greatly to oil the wheels of life as a little loving sympathy—let us always be ready with a good supply of it wherever it is needed.

Our Lord also loved His disciples patiently. They must often have grieved Him by their ignorance and unbelief. If any of us had been in His place, we would have said, "You set of dummies, we cannot bear with you any longer." But our loving Lord did not talk like that. After He had told them the Truth of God 20 times and yet they did not know it, He went on in the same fashion and told it to them again and again until they *did* know it. As He was so patient with His disciples, it ill becomes us, who are ourselves so imperfect, to say concerning any of our fellow Christians, "I cannot feel any affection for So-and-So," or, "I cannot have any communion with So-and-So." Do you talk like that because you perceive some imperfection in them? But, my dear Brother, have not you many imperfections? It may be that some other person is looking upon you in the same cold light in which you are looking upon him and that he is finding as much fault with you as you are finding with him! If so, it is a great pity that any of us should be impatient with one another when our Lord Jesus Christ is so patient with us.

Once more, *our Lord loved His disciples practically*. His love did not consist in the mere effervescence of transient emotion or in only kind words, but He loved them deeply and shared all that He had with them. He even condescended to wash their feet as though He had been their servant! What more could He do for them? Yet He did far more than that, for He laid down His life for them. He gave up all He had for them. He gave up all the members of His body and all the faculties of His soul—His entire Nature—that He might save His people. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." "As I have loved you," He said, "even so love you one another." What a marvelous exposition of the precept the whole life and death of Jesus Christ make up for us! May we have the Grace to follow where the path is so plainly marked out for us!

III. And now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE RESULT BY WHICH THE PRECEPT IS ENFORCED. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Among all of them who know that we are Christ's disciples, there is one very important person—and that is yourself. If you have love towards Christ's disciples, you will know that you are one of His disciples, for how does the Beloved Apostle John put it? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It will be one of the clearest evidences to your own heart that you are really a disciple of Jesus when you realize that for Christ's sake, you love the whole redeemed family of God! By this test shall all men know that you are His disciples and you shall begin by knowing it yourself.

By this test shall your fellow Christians also know that you are Christ's disciples. I do not know of anything which more commends a Christian to his fellow Christians than a true spirit of love. I have read many controversial works and I have admired the force of the arguments in many of them. But when I have read them, I have not gathered from the perusal that the writers on either side were very eminently followers of Christ. They may have been—it was no business of mine to judge as to that matter. They may have been showing other precious qualities while they were contending for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, but the Grace of Christian charity has not always been very manifest. For instance, if you read the controversy between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady—well, I do not know which was the worse of the two—they could both say a thing very sharply when they tried and the devil helped them to make it even sharper. Yet they were, both of them, good men and it was not according to the nature of either of them to say anything bad of the other. It is quite a relief to notice how Mr. Whitefield conducted his controversy with Mr. Wesley. As I have read it, I have said to myself, "This man is a Christian and no mistake." It is reported that Mr. Whitefield was one day asked by a partisan, "Do you think that we, when we get to Heaven, shall see John Wesley there?" "No," said George Whitefield, "I do not think we shall." The questioner was very delighted with that answer, but Mr. Whitefield added, "I believe that Mr. John Wesley will have a place so near the Throne of God and that such poor creature as you and I will be so far off as to be hardly able to see him."

As I read such remarks made by Mr. Whitefield, I have said to myself, "By this I know, as a Christian, that he must be a Christian," for I saw that he loved his brother, Wesley, even while he so earnestly differed from him on certain points of Doctrine. Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot differ, and yet love one another—if we cannot allow each Brother to go his own way in the service of God and to have the liberty of working after his own fashion—if we cannot do that, we shall fail to convince our fellow Christians that we, ourselves, are Christians!

But the point of our Savior's remark is here—"By this all will know that you are My disciples." That is to say, *the outside world will know it.* Let me tell you a remarkable instance of this. In the early days of Christianity, a terrible plague broke out in Alexandria. It was very dangerous to be near a person smitten with the disease and to touch such a person meant almost certain death. When the plague broke out, the heathen in Alexandria thrust out of their houses every person who had the slightest sign of the disease and left them to starve—and would not even bury their bodies for fear of contagion. But the Christians visited one another when they were sick with the plague and no Christian was left to die unattended. They were zealous to go and visit each other, although they knew that they would, in all probability, catch the disease. And among the carcasses outside the walls of Alexandria there was not found one single corpse of a Christian, for, with sedulous care, they committed the bodies of their beloved to the earth in the sure and certain hope of Resurrection unto eternal life. And the heathen said to one another, "What is the meaning of this?" And the answer went throughout all Egypt, "This is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, for these Christians love one another." No sermon can be so eloquent to the world as a true manifestation of the love of Christ! And when God restores to His Church genuine, hearty, and sincere Christian love—I trust we have not wholly lost it—but when He gives us much more of it, then shall the world be more impressed by the Gospel than it is at present!

I will tell you an anecdote. It is one which, I fear, might be multiplied a thousand times and yet be true. During a revival, a young woman came into a certain congregation and was impressed by the services. She heard that the Christian Church was the home of union and love—in fact, a little Heaven. And perhaps more charmed by the beauty of the Church than by the beauty of Christ, she joined the fellowship of Believers there. After a little while she heard some Christians speaking very bitterly of others. Indeed, speaking of the faults of others, not at all as if they grieved over them, but as though they rather rejoiced to have something to say against their fellow Christians! Immediately the thought crossed the mind of the young woman, "I have been deceived. The Christian Church is not the holy and happy family that I believed it to be." That conviction led to doubts upon many of the doctrines that she had been taught there. She soon neglected the means of Grace and then became skeptical concerning the Savior Himself. All this followed from finding disagreement where she had hoped to find Christian love and union. It pleased the Lord to bring her, at last, back to the Savior's feet, but, for

many years she was the subject of great doubt and inward struggle—and the occasion of it was the lack of love among Christians! O Beloved, do not let it be so among you! If ours is not a loving Church, I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing! If you love not one another, surely you do not love the Savior! But if you are knit together in love, then is our joy fulfilled in you and Christ also rejoices over you!

I have finished my discourse when I have said a word or two to those who are out of the family of Christ. It must be a very sad thing not to be a member of the family of which the Head is the loving Lord, Himself—where the law that governs the family is the rule of love and where the distinguishing mark of every member of the family is love, one to another. And if it is true that we must either belong to that family, or else belong to another family of which Cain, who slew his brother, was the firstborn son, it makes it a very solemn matter! There are two seeds in the world and if you do not belong to Christ the Living Seed, you belong to the serpent's seed. Woe to the man who is not of the family of God! Egypt had to weep and wail on that very night when Israel, beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel, could afford to sing and shout. And when the day comes for God to let loose the angel of vengeance, woe unto you unless you belong to the family of love—to the host of the living God!

"How can I get love?" asks one. Love comes by the way of faith. First trust the Master and then you will soon learn to love His servants. Rely upon the Savior and you will then feel an affection for all the saved ones. Commit yourself now into the hands that were pierced for sinners and you will soon joyfully give a loving embrace to those for whom Christ's precious blood was shed! May we all meet in Heaven, where love reigns supreme, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 13:1-17.

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the Passover.* Or, just as it was about to begin—

1. *When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* That is a very beautiful description of Christ's death—"His hour was that He should depart out of this world unto the Father"—just as though He was merely going on a journey, leaving one land for another! And if this is a fair description of such a stormy passage as that of our Lord Jesus, who died for our sins upon Calvary's Cross, it must with equal truth describe the death of any of the children of God. There is also an appointed time for us to depart and to be with Christ which is far better than remaining here. The loosing of the cable, the spreading of the sail, the crossing over the narrow sea, the coming to the eternal haven and the abiding there—what Christian heart needs to dread this? How much better is it even to look forward to it with ardent anticipation! Think much of the abiding love of Christ—"Having loved His own"—His by Election, His by Redemption, for He regarded that as already done which was about to be accomplished—"Having loved His

own which were in the world"—not yet in Heaven, but still in the midst of trial, still imperfect, even as you and I are—"He loved them unto the end," or, "unto the perfection," as it might be rendered. The Alpha of His love which we find in eternity bids us believe that we shall find the Omega of it nowhere but there.

2-4. *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and went to God; He arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.* Notice the wonderful contrast revealed to us in these verses! Our Lord Jesus Christ had a very vivid realization that He had come from God and was going back to God, and that all things had been given into His hand. Yet, while He knew that and had a more than ordinary consciousness of His own dignified Nature and position, He condescended to wash His disciples feet! Though many years elapsed between the event and the time when John recorded it, all the details seem to have been still present in his memory so that he distinctly mentions each separate act—"He rose from supper, and laid aside His upper garment and took a towel, and girded Himself."

5. *After that He poured water into a basin.* The one that ordinarily stood in the guest chamber for the washing of the hands and feet of the guests.

5, 6. *And began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then came He to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, do You wash my feet?* You must lay the stress on the pronouns in order to get the full forge of the original. "Lord, do YOU wash MY feet?" The contrast is between Peter's Master and himself.

7, 8. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter. Peter said unto Him, You shall never wash my feet.* That is, "NEVER, as long as I live You shall do such a thing as that!"

8-10. *Jesus answered him, If I wash you not, you have no part with Me. Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, he that is washed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.* We have often, in commenting, noticed Peter's fault. Perhaps we have noticed that too much. Let us now notice Peter's excellence. I admire his humility in thinking it too mean an office for Christ to wash his feet. It seems to me to be a most proper feeling which prompted him to ask, "Do You wash my feet?" It seemed an overwhelming condescension of love which he could scarcely permit. No doubt he spoke too positively when he said to Christ "You shall never wash my feet," but still, his motive in speaking thus was a good one. It was because he could not allow his Lord to stoop so low—he thought it ill manners to permit such an One as Christ to wash the feet of such an one as the poor fisherman, Peter. I have already said that there was something that was not right and yet that was perfectly natural to this "rock" disciple, and this "dove" disciple, who was such a strange mixture of boastfulness and fickleness. Yet do not forget

how much of good there was in him. I wish all of us were half as good as Peter. That was a grand utterance, "Wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He meant, "Lord, let me have all the cleansing I can, not only such as the washing of my feet would bring, but such as the washing of my head and my hands also would bring. Let me be clear of everything which would prevent full fellowship with You, for I long to be altogether one with You."

Then our Savior meekly, gently, quietly, explained that there was no need for the washing of his head and his hands, for his whole being had already been renewed by the one great act of Regeneration. And as he had been cleansed from sin by the free gift of pardon at the time when he first believed, there was no need of any repetition of the spiritual bathing. All that was required was the washing of his feet—a beautiful distinction always to be observed. He that believes in Christ is fully forgiven. He is like a man who has gone into the bath and washed, but, when he steps out of the bath and puts his foot on the ground, he often soils it, so that before he robes himself, he needs to wash his feet again. That is our condition as Believers in Jesus—we are washed in His precious blood and are whiter than snow—but these feet of ours constantly touch this defiling earth so they need, every day, to be washed. Christ our Lord Jesus said to Peter, "He that is bathed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all."

11. *For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, You are not all clean.* They were all washed so far as their feet were concerned, but not all of them had been cleansed in the sacred bath which removes the stains of sin!

12-17. *So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verity, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.* Blessed are they who, when they understand the meaning of Christ's example, imitate it in their own lives!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 891, 87.

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

TOO LITTLE FOR THE LAMB
NO. 2937

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 25, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1875.

"They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their father, a lamb for an house: and if the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb."
Exodus 12:3, 4.

THE paschal lamb was not killed in order to be looked at only, but to be eaten. And our Lord Jesus Christ has not been slain merely that we may hear about Him and talk about Him, and think about Him, but that we may feed upon Him. Everything that has to do with Christ's work is of real, practical, vital consequence to Believers. He is to be the food for our souls. Faith is to receive Him. Love is to embrace Him. Hope is to rejoice in Him!

The lamb of the Passover was not to be eaten in part, some of it to be left and some of it to be divided at the feast—the whole lamb was to be eaten. And, in like manner, the whole of Christ is to be spiritually received by us, whether He is made of God unto us wisdom, or righteous, or sanctification, or redemption. All that He is and all that He does should be received by us with an open and grateful heart. There must not be any picking and choosing among the good things of Christ but all must be accepted alike. We are all sinners and we all need a Savior—and we need the whole of that Savior.

So, too, as the whole of the paschal lamb was to be eaten, I think I may say that all the power to save which is in Christ is meant be exercised. He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him—and that uttermost power of His was not intended to lie idle. He is able to save those who are at the very ends of the earth—and that power to save the outcasts and the offscourings was not intended to be left unused. It is our business to stir up the Divine strength and to pray the Lord to come and save even the vilest of the vile—and great multitudes of them!

Further, the whole of the lamb was meant to be eaten at once. None of it was to be kept till morning. As with the manna, there was to be no laying of it up in store for future use. They were to eat it then and there and it will be well if the members of Christ's Church will always look to the present using of Christ and of all that is in Him. I think we may

lawfully delight ourselves in the anticipation of those happier days of His Millennial Glory which are yet to dawn upon this sin-cursed earth, but, as a matter of fact, we had better concern ourselves principally with the needs of the present age—with the soul-hunger of those among whom we live—the dire necessities of those who are perishing for lack of the knowledge of Christ. Christ is meant for present use. Whatever He may do a thousand years hence, it is of more concern to us to see what He can do today. The principal business of the Christian is to proclaim Christ today—with this as part of the proclamation—"Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Even now He is mighty to save, mighty by His blood to deliver His people *now* from the avenging angel and, by His flesh, to be the continual food of their souls. And we are to see to it that we do not so project ourselves into a future age as to be negligent of the present use of the ever-present Savior who is with us always, even to the end of the age!

The paschal lamb was meant to be eaten, to be all eaten and to be all eaten then and there—and Christ is meant to be used, meant to be altogether used and to be used now. May each Believer here be impressed with these thoughts!

I. Now, coming to our text, it appears to me that IT REMINDS US OF A PRIMARY PRIVILEGE. The third verse speaks of that privilege in so many words—"They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house."

The place for all true religion to begin is at home. Wherever charity ought or ought not to begin, certainly true religion must begin at home. *It should be a cause of great joy to us if we have Jesus Christ as our own,* according to the paschal ordinance. "They shall take to them every man a lamb." Are you, dear Friend, searching your heart to know whether you have to do with Christ, personally, in your own individuality? It will be a fatal delusion if you fancy that you will get into Heaven as people sometimes get into this Tabernacle—by being carried along by the force of the numbers who are pressing to get in! You must come to Christ *personally*, by personal repentance and personal faith, and there must be a personal feeding upon Him if He is to be of any service to you. It is idle to talk about the neighbor who is next to you until, first of all, you have seen to it that you, yourself, are a partaker of the Lord Jesus Christ. I put the question now from the depths of my soul to my own heart, "Preacher, have you the blood sprinkled on the lintel and on the side posts of your house? Have you fed upon Christ?" And when I have answered that question for myself, I would beseech each one of you to answer it, too. I am not asking about your parentage, or about your church membership, or about the pious relations whom you have in your house, but about yourself! How is it with you, Brothers and Sisters? Even old professors have need to ask the question, for an old imposture may long be kept up—I fear it may be preserved throughout life—and perhaps nothing will pull the mask off some men's eyes until the skeleton hand of death reveals the terrible truth to them! It is an

unspeakable mercy that the Lamb of God is provided for our Passover and that for the very worst of us—for those of us who are most conscious that we deserve to perish—there is still the precious Gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." May it be a fact, known to us beyond all question by the witness of the Holy Spirit within us that Jesus Christ has been slain for us and fed upon by us!

Then, the next part of this primary privilege is that *we should have Christ for our whole family*. There was to be a paschal lamb for all the members of the Israelite family—"a lamb for an house." They were all to share in the blessings which that lamb brought. Oh, privileged beyond compare is that man who has a partner in life who, with himself, rejoices in Christ and who sees all his children following in his steps, equally rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ! And happier still is he if all his servants are in the same blessed condition. How is it with you, Brothers and Sisters? Have you this blessing? I know that some of you have. Your house ought to be a little Heaven, for you have a church in your house! Keep the bells always ringing, "Holiness unto the Lord," and let your hearts be so many harps from which there shall constantly pour forth floods of music to the praise of Him who has so highly favored you!

Perhaps your children are as yet only little ones and you are looking forward with the hope that the Lamb of God may yet be available for your whole household. In what way can you promote this? There are rules given you in Scripture. *You* cannot convert your children—to regenerate them is altogether beyond your power. It is a Divine work and must be done by the Holy Spirit. But you have that ancient exhortation, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." For the most part, the training of children does affect their manhood and womanhood. There are some who seem as if we could not train them—they are like wild vines that will not be trained and their later life reveals the force of the willfulness which resisted the training which parents would gladly have given them. Unhappy are we if we have such children and how sincerely we ought to sympathize with any who are in such a sad case. But how happy ought we to be if our children take kindly to the training which, by the Grace of God, we seek to give them, so that they are like vines fastened up upon the walls of our houses and do not to tear themselves away from the fastenings which are for their support and safety. May they bring forth fruit to God's Glory and to our own comfort in years to come!

We must, however, add something to our training to make it effectual. There must be constant prayer where training appears to fail, for we can pray even for those of our children who are past the age in which we can exercise the influence of training upon them. I do not think that we shall long plead for our sons and daughters without seeing a prayer-hearing God stretching out His hand to save them. Or if we do, we must look upon the delay as a further trial of our faith and we must intensify our prayer until it becomes an agony—and in that agony we lay hold upon

the Covenant Angel and cry, "I will not let You go unless You bless me and my seed also." So choice a gift as this may be reserved for something more earnest than the prayer to which we have yet attained. And when the Lord shall have flung us upon our faces—shall have brought us to despair—shall have made us see, in the rebellious character of our children, a picture of our own rebelliousness—and made us see, in our own agony, a reflection of the agony of the heart of Jesus over our wanderings, then, perhaps He will speedily listen to us, and our children shall, with us, be sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb!

With both the training and the prayer we should take care that we mingle much gracious teaching. Our children should not be left ignorant concerning the things that make for their peace. I have been surprised to find how many young people appear to know little or nothing about Holy Scripture—yet most, if not all of them, had been to a Sunday school. It is singular how quickly children will forget what they learn! And that which is merely learned by rote and has not been taught affectionately is very readily brushed off from the memory. I think that a boy very seldom forgets the teaching which has been moistened with a mother's tears. There is, somehow, a wonderful power about a mother's voice when she talks to her children about Jesus and His love which stamps itself upon the heart—and the heart it a far better place for the custody of the Truth of God than ever the brain can become! We may forget what we only learn with the head, but we shall not forget what we learn with the heart. Therefore, Christian parents, teach your children thus—let them, from their youth, know the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation—let them be early acquainted with the precious things of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

But, above all things, my Brothers and Sisters, if we would have our household feeding upon Christ we must set them a godly example. I have known families—I think I know some now—where the training is certainly severe enough, perhaps too much so, and where the teaching is as clear as it is cold—but where the example set before the children is not good. Now, if you pray in one way with your lips and in another way with your lives, your lives will win the day and your children will rather be like what you are than what you ask them to be. It is a great pity when men who seem good at the Prayer Meeting are really bad at home—when those who show much kindness to their Christian friends seem to have given away all their honey to comparative strangers outside the walls of their own house—and have no sweetness left for their own children! Let us, dear Friends, endeavor always to set such an example as it will be safe for our sons and daughters to follow. And then I think there will very rarely be found any instance where training, teaching, prayer and a good example have gone together, where the blessing of God has failed to come! God grant to you, Brothers and Sisters, at any rate, the Grace to attend carefully to all these matters. And then if, perhaps, you should prove to be the father of an Ishmael, or the mother of an Ishmael, you will not have to say, "I kept the vineyards of others, but my

own vineyard have I not kept." And then you will feel that you did use such means as were within your reach, even though the blessing of God did not come to your children. I pray, Beloved, that it may the privilege of every one of you to have the Lamb of God for your whole household and that each member of your family, from the youngest to the oldest, may joyfully partake of all the benefits of the common Sacrifice which is provided for all the chosen.

That will suffice for our first point which is that the text reminds us of a primary privilege.

II. Now, secondly, THE TEXT IS SILENT ABOUT A CERTAIN CONTINGENCY WHICH WOULD SEEM TO HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

You observe that it speaks about what was to be done when the household was not large enough to eat the lamb, but *it says nothing about what was to occur if the lamb was not sufficiently large to feed the household.* We can often learn much from the silence of Scripture. We know that it is so in the case of Melchizedek. Since his parentage is not mentioned, the silence is significant. And so here, the silence concerning such a contingency as the *insufficiency* of the paschal lamb for the household is, I think, meant to teach us an important lesson. It is probable that the lamb was, literally speaking, never too little for the household for this reason—the Jews say that the Passover was not intended to be eaten with a view to feasting, but that frequently only a small portion was eaten. There were, doubtless, large families, but there was enough for each one to have a small portion of the lamb—just as we do not come to the Lord's Supper merely to eat and drink, but we come there for a religious observance—and a single portion of bread and a sip of wine suffice us. There may have been as many as 20 persons in one house who would partake of the lamb and, in our Lord's case, we know that at the Last Supper, He sat down to the Passover with the twelve, making 13 with Himself. But the contingency is not supposed that there should be an insufficient provision in the lamb for the proper observance of the feast.

And now, using the type *spiritually*, let us rest assured that *it never can happen that there should not be enough of Jesus Christ to feed all our families*. "Well," says one father, "we are a very numerous household. Our children need a very large table and when they all sit down together they make a tribe equal to that of good old Jacob." Yes, and no doubt some of those Jewish families were as large as that, yet they all fed upon the paschal lamb. And there is enough in Christ for all your family—and there would be enough even if it consisted of 25 persons—of even twenty-five thousand! If any of them perished, it would not be because Christ was not sufficient for them, but because they had not received Him, had not believed on Him. Do not let the number in your household restrain your praying or working for them—and rest not until, by God's good Grace, the whole of them shall know and trust in Jesus!

"But," says another, "our family is more peculiar than that, for we are a family of sinners." It happens, sometimes, that a man who in former times, was a very great offender, is converted, but he is like a speckled bird to all the rest of his family. His brother is a drunk, his sister is godless, his father and mother despise religion and as he looks round upon them, he can only wonder how it was that Sovereign Grace should ever have selected one out of such a family as his. He does not remember any of his relations who ever made a profession of religion. They have been "the devil's own" as far back as he can trace. Well, beloved Friends, if it is so with any of your families, do not hesitate for a single moment in your prayers or in your efforts for them under such a wicked, dishonoring notion as, perhaps, your family is too bad for Christ to save, their sins too many for His blood to wash away and their necessities too great for Him to relieve! That cannot be! You have an All-Sufficient Savior to talk of, to rely upon and to bring before them! Go to Him in prayer for all your family, beseeching that all the members of your ungodly family may yet participate in the blessings procured by the Lamb of God! I do not know anything in the Bible that ought to check our prayers for our whole households. The Doctrine of Election may suggest to some ignorant persons the idea that they cannot pray for all, but let us always remember that the Doctrine of Election which is a most blessed Truth of God—is never used in Scripture as a damper to our prayers!

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men," meaning all ranks and conditions of men and all sorts of men! We are not told concerning anybody that we may not pray for them—with the one exception that if we knew a man to have committed the unpardonable sin—which we do not and cannot know—it is written, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." But, in any other case we may pray hopefully and I know of nothing in the Scriptures that should hinder earnest effort for the salvation of our whole households. Never ought we to look any child of ours in the face and feel, "Well, I never will speak to that child about Christ, it would be useless—he cannot be saved." It would be antagonistic to the whole current of Sacred Scripture for us to imbibe any such notion as that, so may we never imbibe it! Neither do I know of anything in Scripture that should lead us to give up hope concerning any who belong to a household in which some have already been saved. If Christ has saved me, I gather from that fact, this inference, that He can save anybody! I have never doubted the possibility of the salvation of anybody since Jesus Christ saved me, for I feel that He went about as far as He could go then, and all other sinners must come within the reach of His merciful power!

So plead on, work on, train on, teach on and do not relax your efforts, or allow your hopes to be dampened till the whole household shall have been brought to feed upon Jesus Christ, for, rest assured that at the King's banquet of mercy there was never a failure of food yet! Behold how the tables groan with the weight of the oxen and the fatlings for the great

Gospel Supper—and the wine and milk are poured out with unstinted hand! There shall be enough to satisfy the hunger and thirst of all who shall ever come to that Table as long as time shall last! And if, as indeed it shall yet be, thousands and tens of thousands and millions should come flocking to the house of bread, there will always be found enough and to spare for all who come!

III. But now, thirdly, I come to the very heart of the text where it mentions, in so many words, A PROBABILITY FOR WHICH IT PROVIDES—"If the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls."

Brethren, that which was a possibility in Egypt is not only common but universal with us. My household and my father's household—we can rejoice to know that they feed upon the Lamb of God, *but our households alone are much too little for the Lamb*. If I know that I and my sons are saved, I cannot feel that we alone would be sufficient to reward our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the travail of His soul. You, my Friend, said that you had a large family, but you could not call your sons and daughters together and say, "My dear children, now that I see you saved, I feel that Christ is quite sufficiently rewarded for all that He has done." Oh, no! It is a very great proof of His Grace and mercy that He has saved your children, yet you look upon it almost as a little thing in comparison with what His Infinite Sacrifice must have bought and His work and death must deserve as their crown!

Our household is also *too little to sing the praises of Jesus, the Lamb of God*. Suppose that in us and in our children all the attributes of Jesus Christ should be revealed in a very remarkable degree. That will be something for which to praise Him throughout eternity, but, dear Friends, merely to have those attributes revealed in father, mother and five or six children or grandchildren will not suffice—we want Christ to be revealed in thousands, and tens of thousands, and unnumbered millions of saved souls! Our household is, indeed, too little to sing the praises of this blessed Lamb and we do well often to cry—

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"

We long to hear ten thousand times ten thousand tongues singing—

"Worthy the Lamb."

Our household is also too little *to do all the work that is to be done for Jesus in proclaiming Him as the Lamb of God.* It would be a great mercy if God gave us the privilege of having many sons who all preached the Gospel and many daughters who were all eminent in the Church as teachers, deaconesses, missionaries and the like. It would be a great privilege to have a whole family all diligently employed in the service of the Savior. But if a man had 20 sons and they were all preachers, would he say, "There are now quite enough to do Christ's work"? Oh, dear no! Our household is too little for the Lamb in all the senses that I have

mentioned—we need more to feed upon Jesus, more to praise Jesus and more to proclaim Jesus!

There are some Brothers and Sisters who meet in a little building in an out-of-the-way street who seem to feel that their household is quite big enough. The new Jerusalem, according to them, was intended to comprise some little miserable hamlet, bounded on the North and East by a ditch of strict communion and on the South and West by a rampart of Hyper-Calvinistic Doctrine. But I like to think of Jesus Christ's Kingdom as very widely extended, His Throne as high and lifted up and the loyal subjects over whom He reigns as an enormous multitude whom no man can number, who shall be given to Him as the reward of the travail of His soul! This Tabernacle Church, numbering five thousand souls, is much too little for the Lamb! If we could have the Agricultural Hall crowded and all there should say that they were converted—and if they all were *really* converted—it would still be too little for the Lamb! And if we had the Agricultural Hall multiplied 20 times over and all of them full of saved souls, it would still be too little for the Lamb! And if all in England, Scotland, America and France—and in every country where Christ is preached, were converted—it would still be too little for the Lamb! And if we were to have all the inhabitants of Europe and Asia brought to Jesus, I would still say that it was too little for the Lamb—and if we could add all in Africa and Australasia, as long as there was an island of the sea in which the people were not converted to Christ, our hearts would still cry, "The household is too little for the Lamb!"—

"Ah, reign wherever man is found,
Our Spouse, Beloved and Divine!
Then are we rich, and we abound,
When every human heart is Thine!"

But not till then—till over the whole earth the knowledge of the Lord shall be spread as the waters cover the sea! Until then, we shall still feel that the household is too little for the Lamb.

What was the Israelite to do to meet the contingency of the household being too little for the lamb? The provision was, "Let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls." And the Christian whose household is certainly too little for the Lamb of God is to call in his neighbor to share the blessing with him! Brother, if you and all your household are saved, call your neighbor to the great Gospel feast! I do not mean merely the person who lives next door to you, for, in London it often happens that there is nobody further off than the person who lives next door to us. But your neighbor may be the person sitting next to you in the pew, or the man who works at the next bench to yours in the shop, or someone with whom you meet in trade or in the order of God's Providence. Any one of those people may be the neighbor to join with you in feeding upon the lamb! God has put him in your way for some reason or other and, certainly, not that you may be an injury to him! It must be, at least, that you may endeavor to be of service to him. We are all more or less dependent upon one another. One

of the obligations of near neighborhood should be that we should seek our neighbor's good, even as the Commandment says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And although that relates to all mankind, it must refer in a very eminent and emphatic sense to the man who is literally our neighbor.

Look, then, after the man who is near to you. And if you do this, you will not have so far to go as if you looked after anybody else. God is a God of economy, so He did not say to the Israelite, "You are to bring into your house, to make up your company at the Passover, the man who lives at the furthermost end of Goshen." He saved His people as much trouble as possible by saying that the man "and his neighbor next unto his house" were to unite in the celebration. You who live in the South of London are not commanded to go and tramp six or seven miles in order to find someone in the North of London to whom you may be useful. You are first to look after those who live in the street in which you live, or with whom you come into contact in your daily life. There is a very good regulation concerning the clearance of snow—that each householder shall clear the pavement in front of his own house—if that rule could always be carried out, London would be cleaner than it is now after a fall of snow! Let us all try to act like that with regard to the moral and spiritual snow that lies on the pavement opposite to us. All who live in London will soon be evangelized if each Christian seeks to win for Christ, "his neighbor next unto his house." And then if that neighbor seeks to win his next door neighbor, and that one his neighbor and so on. It will not only be a saving of effort, but it will be an orderly regulation by which it will be guaranteed that the Truth of God shall be brought to the notice of all who need it.

Besides, your neighbor is the person who is most likely to be influenced by you. A total stranger would need more time to introduce himself, but your neighbor already knows something of you. And if he sees that you are a consistent Christian, that will materially assist you in delivering your message to him. If you are living as you ought to live, your neighbor knows something about the effect which the Gospel has had upon your life. For you to speak to him, therefore, will be most fitting, for you are the man who can give the living example as well as the spoken Word!

Above all, he is the person whom you are especially bid to seek. We are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature—but there is a special obligation upon us to preach that Gospel to the one who is nearest to us. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you always attend to this matter? Do you talk of Jesus Christ to those who live near you, or with whom you are brought into contact? Some Sundays ago, at the East London Tabernacle, Mr. Archibald Brown spoke to his people about this duty and then he stopped and said, "Now we will put into practice what I have been urging upon you—will every Christian in the Tabernacle speak to the person who is next to him?" And everybody in the building was

spoken to, then and there, about Christ! It was a good plan and it resulted in the conversion of a great number of persons, while there were many others who were brought under conviction of sin and who will, it is hoped, be led to the Savior through that striking personal appeal.

I will not stop my sermon and ask you to do that, but I will ask you to do it every time you come together into this place and as often as you have a proper opportunity of doing it in your daily calling. Be wise and prudent as to the time when you make your appeal. Religion is not to be rammed down people's throats, but watch for a suitable opportunity of speaking for Christ and that opportunity will come to you sooner or later. You may do harm if you do not take care to speak at the right time. The wise man tells us that "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the Heaven," so watch for the occasion of bearing testimony to Christ and then, feeling that your household is too little for the Lamb of God, try to introduce Him to others.

I fancy I hear somebody say, "Ah, but they only brought in Israelites to feed on the paschal lamb. They did not call in the Egyptians." Quite so, nor will you, so you need not be frightened about that matter. None but God's elect ones will spiritually feed upon Christ. Some people seem to be afraid lest we should be the means of saving some of the non-elect—but that is a fear which never troubles either my head or my heart, for I know that with all the effort and preaching in the world, we shall never bring more to Christ than Christ has had given to Him by His Father! You will never fall into that trouble. Our Savior has bid us preach the Gospel to every creature. He has not said, "Preach it only to the elect." And though that might seem to be the most logical thing for us to do, yet, since He has not been pleased to stamp the elect on their foreheads, or to put any distinctive mark upon them, it would be an impossible task for us to perform! Therefore when we preach the Gospel to every creature, the Gospel makes its own division and Christ's sheep hear His voice and follow Him. It is unnecessary to stop the ears of other sheep, or to try to prevent your voice from travelling where other sheep are found—only the true sheep of Christ will recognize His voice in the Gospel message, or be obedient to it. Therefore, let not your zeal be repressed by any doctrinal views, however sound, for, depend upon it, sound Doctrine is never inconsistent with obedience to the command to preach the Gospel to every creature. Sound precept and sound Doctrine must agree!

IV. The last thing upon which I have to speak is not in my text, yet THE WHOLE SUBJECT SUGGESTS THOUGHTS UPON NEIGHBORLY FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL.

Here is a man whose household is too little for the lamb and he has called in his next door neighbor to share the feast with him. "Come in, Friend," he says, "I have a wife and two children, and our household is too little for the lamb. You have a wife and one child—come in and we will keep the Passover together."

I know what the result of that invitation would be. First, *there would be sweet fellowship.* They would feed upon the same lamb and, in doing

so, they would come to know each other as they had never done before. They would talk together most gratefully concerning the Divine plan of sacrifice by which they were being saved while Egypt was being destroyed. They would talk to each other about that remarkable day when there was darkness over all the land of Egypt except in the houses of the Israelites, for they had light in their dwellings. They would talk about those flies and frogs that came up in swarms over the land and how the mighty arm of Jehovah had been outstretched on their behalf. I think that the members of both families would be all the happier after meeting under one roof and feeding together upon the paschal lamb. It would be a pleasant time for all of them and I can assure you that if you are the means of bringing any souls to Jesus Christ, you will find that those whom you bring to Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are the very best companions you have ever had! You will talk together very sweetly of all that the Lord has done for you and you will thus warm each other's hearts. Like two firebrands that might only have smoldered alone, you will burn and blaze when you are put together!

Then, after the feast was over, *there would be pleasant relations established between those two families*. Surely after they had been together that night, sheltering under the same sprinkled blood, feasting on the same paschal lamb, partaking of the same bitter herbs and each one standing with his loins girt and with his staff in his hand, the members of those families would never be at enmity against one another. They must always have felt that they were very near akin to one another and it is a still more blessed kinship that is established and cemented at the Cross of Christ! Where we love each other for Christ's sake and love Christ as we see Him revealed in one another, such love as that will outlast our earthly life and will reach on into eternity—and be sweet even in Heaven!

I should say, dear Friends, that both those families would have very pleasant memories of that Passover and out of those memories would grow future communion. The master of one household, when he met the other, years afterwards in the wilderness, would say to him, "Do you remember, Jacob, coming to my house on the Passover night" "Yes, Ephraim," the other would reply, "I remember it well. Your family was too little for the lamb, so we joined together for the feast." One would ask, "Will you ever forget that night?" "No," the other would say, "it was very solemn, but it was very sweet and I think I liked it all the better because it was in your house." And the first one would say, "And I am sure that I enjoyed it all the more because I had you to come in and share it with me."

So those memories, you see, would beget new communion and *they would be ready to help each other and to cheer each other in the future*. They would often make interchanges of experience—and interchange of experience is like profitable bracing—it enriches all concerned. They that fear the Lord, when they speak often, one to another concerning Him, are

sure to be mutually helpful to one another! And I think that this bringing in of others to increase the family for the observance of the Passover would be certain to lay the foundation of much mutual communion and much mutual benefit in the future. And, surely, Brothers and Sisters, in proportion as, by the Grace of God, we labor successfully to bring others to Christ and so Christ's family is increased, we shall be anticipating the joy of Heaven! It will never be said in Heaven that the household is too little for the Lamb. When Christ comes in all His Glory and all His redeemed ones come with Him—when He gathers all who have been redeemed with His precious blood about Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb—and He Himself drinks the new wine in the Kingdom of His Father, it will not be said, then, that the household is too little for the Lamb, for the whole spiritual household of Israel shall then be gathered together! The complete company redeemed by blood shall muster at that one "general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in Heaven," and Christ shall then "see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Until that glorious gathering shall take place, Brothers and Sisters, keep on inviting others to the Lamb of God!

And as for you who have never yet trusted in the blood of Jesus, or tasted of His Grace, may the Lord, in His Infinite Mercy, bring you to Him this very hour! And then this shall be the beginning of months for you—you will reckon your true life as dating from this hour! The Lord grant it, 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.

JESUS THE WAY
NO. 2938

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1862.

"Jesus said unto him, I am the way."
John 14:6.

IT is coming on dark and we are lost among the mountains. There is an awful precipice there, a quarter of a mile straight down. There is a bog over yonder and if a man once gets into it, he will never get out again. There is a forest yonder and if one should be lost in its tangled paths, he will certainly not find his way out till the rising of the sun. What do we need just now? Why, we need someone who will tell us the way! Our friend the philosopher, with whom we talked half-an-hour ago, was very valuable to us, then, and gave us a great deal of information. But, as he does not happen to know the way, we would sooner have the poorest peasant lad that feeds the sheep upon the hills for a companion than that man. The classic scholar, who has been repeating to us some admirable lines from Horace and delighting us with an admirable quotation from Virgil, did very well, indeed, for us while we could see our path and had hope of reaching our home by nightfall. But now the poorest lass with uncombed hair who can just point the way to the cottage where we may rest tonight will be of more value to us. What we need is to know the way!

This is just the case, dear Friends, with poor fallen humanity. The need of mankind is not the refined lecture of the learned, nor the acute discussion of the debater—we simply need someone, be it a lad or be it a lass, to show us the way! And the most precious person you and I have seen, or ever shall see, will be the person who shall be blessed and honored of God to us to say, "Behold the way to God, to life, to salvation and to Heaven." I shall not need, then, to offer any apology for coming out again to show the way. There are many here who are lost and there are some upon whom the shades of night are falling. Their hair is gray, they pant as they walk and rest upon their staff for the support of their tottering legs. Their case is dangerous and when they cannot, of themselves, discover the pathway, surely they will heed any voice, however hoarse, from any person, however rough he may be, if they may but discover what is the way to eternal life!

Travelling some time ago, the coachman, when it was getting nearly dark, informed us that he had never been on that road before—and one can hardly tell how pleased we were to see a signpost. Now, a signpost is not a very interesting thing—there is nothing very poetical about it. It

may be questionable whether it decorates the road as it sticks out an arm with only a word or two written on it, but, toward night, when neither the driver nor you know the way, it is about the most pleasant thing you can greet! I shall stand here tonight as a simple signpost. The words may be dry, but it shall be enough for you if they do but show you the way! Mr. Jay tells us that on one occasion, when riding on the mail-coach to Bath, he asked a great many questions of the coachman. He asked, "Whose seat is that? What squire owns that fine lawn? And what gentleman is the squire of yonder parish?" To all which questions the driver only answered. "I don't know. I don't know." At last, Mr. Jay said to him, "Well, what do you know?" "Why," he said, "I know how to drive you to Bath." Well, now, I pretend to no greater knowledge than this—I do know the way to Heaven and I do hope I shall be able to tell it to you so plainly and so simply that some here who are lost as in a wild forest may see the path and, by the Grace of God, be enabled to run in it!

I. First of all, then, let us notice THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF OUR TEXT—"I am the way."

Christ declares that He, and only He, is the way to peace with God, to pardon, to righteousness and to Heaven! Falsehood may tolerate falsehood, but truth never can. Two lies can live in the same house and never quarrel. But truth cannot bear a lie even though it should be in the highest part of the attic! Truth has sworn war to the knife against falsehood and hence it never knows what it is to admit that its contrary can shake hands with itself. The Hindu meets the Muslim and he says, "No doubt you are sincere as well as we are, and you and we shall at last meet in the right place." They would salute the Christian, too, and say the same to him, but it is a necessity, if our religion is true, that it should denounce every other and that it should say unto those who know not Christ, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Yes, it goes still further and pronounces its anathema upon those who pretend to any other way! "Though we or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than that which you have received, let him be accursed." I simply mention certain other ways to assure you, in God's name, that there are roads which lead to Hell and that none of them can bring you to Heaven—for there is only one way by which the soul can came to God and find eternal life—and that way is Christ!

I think I see mankind lost as in a great wilderness. There are no paths and there comes suddenly before the sad eyes of the lost wayfarers, a hag whose hand is blood-red and with her eyes flashing fire she points and says, "Lost men, this is the way." And what is that before our eyes? I see the car of Juggernaut rolling through the streets and crushing, at every revolution of its wheels, a poor man's flesh and bones which, when the spirit has departed with a groan, lie there a monument of superstition! And having pointed there, this hag will tell the mother to take her child and throw her dear one into the river Ganges. "This is the way," says the foul hag of *Superstition*, "by which you are to came to God." But we denounce her! In God's name, we denounce her as a demon

escaped from Hell! "Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Ah, no, God abhors such a sacrifice! You cannot, in your reason, think that what is abhorrent to you can be acceptable to God! That what you yourselves would loathe to look upon can be delightful to Him! No, Brothers and Sisters, God asks no laceration of the flesh, no starving, no hair shirts, no cord about the loins—for all these He cares nothing—they are a weariness to Him. If you would please God, speaking after the manner of men, you are more likely to do it by being happy than by being miserable! Do you think that a man would please other men by groans and sighs? I think not. And how, then, should he please God by putting himself to torture if God is such a God as we find revealed to us in Holy Writ? Turn, then, all you nations of the East and oh, that all lands would turn from this cruel lie, for this is not the way to Heaven!

In our own country we have much more lovely deceivers than this old hag—*false prophets* who are more likely to mislead you. Let me glance at some of the popular ways of going to Heaven which will surely lead to Hell. There is *the way of good works*. I had thought that we had scattered so many millions of tracts, preached so much is the streets and talked so long about men being saved by the blood of Christ and not by themselves, that really, the old-fashioned heresy of self-righteousness would have been driven out of the field! But it still holds a firm position. When I get into conversation with people, I find, in all grades of society, there is still the same belief that men will go to Heaven by what they did.

"Ah," said one to me yesterday, "I suppose you sometimes feel cast down." "Yes," I said, "I do." "Why," said he, "I should think the best men at times can hardly look back upon their lives with pleasure and, therefore, they must feel a little afraid for the future." "Oh," I said, "if I had to look on my past life as the ground of my expectations for the future, I would be cast down, indeed! But do you not know that all my good works will not save me and that all the sins I have ever committed in the past will never damn me?" "No," he said, and he looked astonished at such strange doctrine as that! The Gospel teaches, indeed, that when a man believes in Christ, the sin of the past is all blotted out and Christ's righteousness is given to him so the man is not saved by what he *is*, nor damned for who he *was*, but he is "saved through Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ alone."

I sat in a boat not a great while ago, and while the man was rowing me, I thought I would talk with him. He began to talk to me about sundry "new lights" that had sprung up in the village. People always take more notice of will-o-the-wisps than they do of the sun, itself. The question at length arose how he hoped to go to Heaven. Well, he had brought up eight children, he had never had any help from the parish, he was an honest man and always did his neighbors a good turn. When the cholera was rife, he was about the only man in the village that would get up at night and run for the doctor—and he felt that if he did not go to Heaven it would fare very badly with most people. So, indeed, I am afraid it will, and with him, too, if that is all he rests on!

I tell these two stories, culled from two classes of society, because I know we have need to keep on repudiating this old lie of Satan's that men are to be saved by their works. Those fig leaves that Adam wove together to cover his nakedness are still in favor with his descendants. They will not take the robe of Christ's righteousness, but will rather go about to save themselves. A word or two with you, my Friend. Do you say you will go to Heaven by keeping the Law of God? Ah, you have heard the old proverb about locking the stable when the horse is gone? I am afraid it is very applicable to you! So you are going to keep the stable shut, now, and you are sure the horse shall never get out? If you will kindly go and look, you will find it is already out! Why, how can you keep to Law which you have already broken? If you would be saved, the Law of God is like a chaste alabaster vase which must be presented to God without crack or spot—but do you not see that you have broken the vase? Why, there is a crack there! "Ah," you say, "that was a long time ago." Yes, I know it was, but it is still a crack. And there is the black mark of your thumb just underneath there. Why, man, the vase is already broken—and you cannot go to Heaven by your good works when you have none! No, you have broken all God's Commandments. Read the 20th Chapter of Exodus—read it through and see if there is a single Commandment which you have not violated! And I think you will soon find that from the first to the very last, you will be obliged to cry, "I have sinned, O Lord, and am condemned in this thing!" You have already broken the Law of God.

But then you will tell me that you have not broken it in public and that you cultivate an outward respect for it. Yes, but what does it matter if inwardly the heart is wrong? Even if a man could keep the outward letter of the Law without flaw or mistake, yet, inasmuch as by reason of the spirituality of the Law it is utterly impossible that any of the fallen race of Adam can keep it. No man can be saved by it!

I heard a story the other day which illustrates the way in which people make a distinction between inward and outward sin. A certain Sunday school superintendent happened to hear a girl at the end of the school crying very bitterly after the other scholars had gone. He went to her and asked her what she was crying about and she said, "The lady superintendent has kept me and has been talking to me about my dress. She says I ought not to dress so fine. I pay for it, Sir, and I have a right to wear it." The lady was called and after some little conversation with the superintendent, who was wise and prudent, the girl was sent home. Now the lady herself was noted for the fineness of her dress. She was most elaborately dressed at all times so, after the girl was gone, our friend put this question to her, "Miss So-and-So, you will excuse me, but did it never suggest itself to you that your own dress is rather fine?" "Yes," she said, "but then, that girl has flowers in her bonnet." "Well," he said, "excuse me"—and he looked at her—"I think you have flowers in yours." "Ah, yes," she replied," but do you not see, mine are inside my bonnet and hers are outside?" Now, this is just how some people speak about sin. You condemn a man because he is such a sinner—you would

not associate with such a great sinner! If you would but look at yourselves, you would see that you are as great a sinner as he is, only here is the difference—you have the blotches of character *inside* and he has them *outside*! In truth, sometimes, the outside sinner is the less discreditable of the two. Do you really think that God makes such vain and empty distinctions as this? No, verily. If sin is in you or on you, whether it is inward or outward sin, it destroys you! And since you cannot keep the Law in your inward parts, why go about to strain and break yourselves with impossibilities?

This is *not* the way to Heaven. Since Adam fell, no man has ever passed through this gate into everlasting life. Besides, even supposing that the past were blotted out, you cannot keep the Law of God in the future, for what is your nature? It is such a base one that it is sure to violate the Law. You have heard of the women who were ordered to fill a large vessel with water and were told to bring the water in buckets that were full of holes. This is just your toil—you have to fill the tremendous ocean of the Law and your buckets are full of holes! Your nature, mend it all you may, and repair it as you will, is still full of holes and your pretended goodness will ooze out drop by drop and, more than that, your labors shall be like water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up. O Sirs! I pray you, do not seek to enter Heaven by the works of the Law, for thus says the Spirit, "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

There is another guide, however, that is quite as popular, or rather more so. He calls himself *Sincere Obedience*. This is how he puts it—"Well, if I cannot keep the whole of the Law, yet I will trust to the mercy of God to make up for the rest! I have no doubt that what I do may go some considerable way and then the Lord Jesus Christ will make up the weight. I may be a little deficient, perhaps an ounce or two, but them the Atonement will come in and so the scale will be turned in my favor." Ah, and do you think that Jesus Christ will ever yoke Himself with you to work out your salvation? "I have trod the winepress *alone*; and of the people there was none with Me." This is the triumphant shout of the Warrior as He comes back from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah and do you think that after that peerless speech, your puny voice will be heard saying, "But I was there! I did my part and my portion"? No, verily, you sin in indulging the *thought*—and you do but doubly curse yourself in imagining that Christ will ever do part of the work and will allow you to be His helper! Like the work of Creation, so is that of Salvation—of the Lord alone—from the beginning to the end it is not *of* man, neither *by* man.

There is another error, too, which is popular in certain quarters, and that is, *salvation by ceremonies*. We have it in the Catholic Church this very day. Certain hocus-pocuses pronounced by the priest and the thing is done. We have a similar sleight of hand, too, in that which is next door to the Church of Rome—the Puseyite community in our own land. We are nothing! We are not regularly ordained! We are laymen. We have no right to preach and so forth. But they—the immediate descendants of the

Apostles—they are *the* men—one touch of their finger, one mark of the cross and an heir of wrath becomes instantaneously "a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." Tis true, the child may afterwards come to be hanged, but we are told that we ought unfeignedly and devoutly to believe that it was, in holy sprinkling, then and there, made a part of the body of Christ! Do you believe it? Englishmen, do you believe it? Has the echo of Wycliffe's voice so died out that these base-born hirelings of Rome are to come back and usurp dominion over your consciences? Sons of the Covenanters, descendants of the glorious Puritans, will you ever tolerate this—worse than Romanism—this disguised Popery which endeavors to enter by stealth into your church? No, verily, let it be accursed! As said the Apostle, so say we! And from Gerizim to Ebal let all Israel say, "Amen!"

Oliver Cromwell once walked into the House of Commons while he was yet Mr. Cromwell, the member for Huntington and, putting down his hat, he said, "I have just come from St. Paul's Cross, and I have heard a man there preach flat Popery." Indeed, if Mr. Cromwell were here now, he might go into many of our churches and say, "I heard a man there preach flat Popery." But I do trust, dear Friends, that the honest protest of God's ministers and the earnest zeal of those blessed men of God who are in the Established Church—I mean the Evangelical clergy—will still be able to keep down this very popular delusion! You might as well hope to be saved by the mumblings of a witch as by the doings of a priest! You might as well hope to enter Heaven by blasphemies as by a priest mumbling over certain words which he thinks to have virtue in them! God, even our God, has denounced again and again those who delight in these errors and who keep back the blood of Jesus and the power and merit of His righteousness! Do not, I pray you, any of you think that this is the way to Heaven, for it is not! "Jesus said unto him, I am the way."

I scarcely need to mention any more of these old roads, for each man seems to have one for himself. One man is subscribing so many pounds to charity, so it is well with him. Another intends to build a row of almshouses, so it is well with him. Another was always of a very respectable family and hopes he shall not be sent with common folks down to Hell and so, with one thing and another, all men have some sort of refuge! But I say to you again, if you have any refuge but that which is set forth in the text, it is a refuge of lies and the hail shall sweep it away! May God sweep it away tonight and leave you bare and without any shelter, that you may be led to accept Christ as the way, the only way to Heaven!

Understand us, then. We may seem intolerant. We may seem to speak very harshly, but it is as much as our soul is worth to have any mistake here. There is no way to Heaven but one! That one way is Christ and if you walk in it, you must simply, wholly and *only* trust in what Jesus Christ did on the Cross and what He does today in His intercession in Heaven. And he that comes not in by this door shall never come in at all! He that will not bend his back to this yoke shall not be accepted of God. Heaven has but this one gate and if you will not enter this, there remains

nothing for you but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

II. We have now to notice THE PERSONALITY OF THE TEXT—"*I* am the way."

We will suppose again that we have lost our way and we meet a man and ask him which is the way. He says, "I am the way." What does he mean? If he had said, "I am the guide," I could understand that, but he says he is the way! Suppose he has a horse and carriage and I ask him the way and he says, "I am the way"? No, you are the conveyance along the way, not the way. I cannot comprehend how you can be the way. But I will suppose that I am in a tract of country, something like that which is left bare by the receding tide at the mouth of the Solway Firth. Young men and children sometimes go far out on those sands and the tide may suddenly return before they are well aware of it—and so they may be left to drown. We are two children playing on the sands and suddenly we perceive that the sea has shut us in all round and there is no possibility for us to get to land. But here comes a man on a noble horse and as we cry to him, "Sir, which is the way of escape?" he stoops down from his horse, steadily lifts us up, and then says, "My children, I am the way." Now here we can perfectly understand it because he does the work so fully, so wholly, and so entirely himself that it becomes common sense for him to say, "I am the way of escape for you." Or put it in another way. There is a fire yonder. There is a child up at the window and he enquires the way of escape. A strong man lifts up his arms—all he wants the child to do is just drop down and let him catch him, so he answers, "I am the way, my child! If you would be delivered from the burning house, I am the way of deliverance."

You see, if He only *showed us the way* in which we should go, Christ could not say, "I am the way." But when He does it all from first to last, when He takes it altogether out of our hands and makes it His own business, from the Alpha to the Omega, then it becomes no straining of human speech for the Master to say, "I am the way." Let us put it plainly. You are in debt to God, Sinner. You say, "How can I pay Him? Can I lie in the flames of Hell? If I do, even if I should abide with eternal burnings, I cannot pay the debt—I must lie there forever." Christ replies, "I am the way," and He speaks the truth because He is the Payer and the Payment. He, in your place, Sinner—if you now believe on Christ—He, in your place, took all your guilt and paid all your debts, even to the utmost farthing! If you are a Believer, your discharge is signed and sealed, for there is nothing due from you to God but faithfulness and love.

But you tell me that you owe to God perfect obedience. You do—and Christ has perfectly obeyed and He tells you, therefore, "I am the way." He has kept the Law, magnified it and made it honorable. And what you have to do is to take the work that He has finished and you shall find Him to be the way. Do you want to be a child of God tonight? Christ says, "I am the way." Be one with Christ and then, as Christ is God's Son, you will be God's child, too! Would you have peace with God? Trust Christ tonight. Put your soul in Christ's hands—He is our Peace and so

will He be the way to peace for you. Would you, in fine, be saved tonight? O my dear Hearers, are there not some among you who would tonight be saved? Then Jesus says, "I am the way," not merely the Savior, but the Salvation! Trust Christ and you have salvation, for Christ says, "I am your salvation." Take Him and in taking Him, you have the blood that washes, the robe that clothes, the medicine that heals, the jewels that decorate—you have the life that shall persevere and the crown that shall adorn! Christ is All-in-All! All you have to do is trust Christ and, trusting Him, you shall find Him to be the way from the beginning, even to the end!

III. But I must close by urging you to accept the counsel here implied. "I am the way." Not merely, "I *was* the way for the thief on the cross," but, "I *am* the way for you tonight." Not, "I *will be* the way when you feel your need more, and when you have worked yourself into a better state," but, "I am, Sinner, the way right now. I am the way for you just as you are—to all that you need, I am the way." We sometimes see railways approaching towns, but they do not bring them right into the heart of the place. And then you must take a cab or an omnibus to finish the journey. But this "way" runs right from the heart of manhood's depravity into the very center of Glory and there is no need to take anything to complete the road. You recollect what good Richard Weaver said on that platform when he was illustrating the fact of Christ saving sinners and saving them now? He told us a story of his friend in Dublin who took him a first class ticket for Liverpool, as he said, "All the way through," and you will remember how he illustrated this by saying that when he came to Christ, he put his trust in Him and had a first-class ticket to Heaven all the way through. "I did not get out to get a new ticket," he said, "there was no fear that my ticket would be exhausted half-way, for it was a ticket all the way through. I paid nothing," said Richard, "but that didn't matter—my ticket was enough. The guards came and looked in and said, 'Show your tickets, Gentlemen.' They didn't say, 'Show yourselves,' but, 'Show your tickets,' and they didn't come to the door and say, 'Now, Mr. Weaver, you have no business in that class carriage. You are only a poor man. You must come out. You are not dressed smartly enough.' No, as soon as they saw my ticket, the ticket all the way through, that was enough! And so"—well said that man of God—"when the devil comes to me and says, 'Richard Weaver, how do you hope to get to Heaven?' I show him the ticket. He says, 'Look at yourself.' No, I say, that is just what I am not going to do! I look at my ticket. My doubts and fears say, Look at what you are. Ah, never mind what I am—I look to what Christ gave me and which He bought and paid for Himself—that ticket of faith which will surely carry me all the way through."

That is about the end of the journey, you see. The ticket will take you to the end. Christ is the way to the end, too, but I want, tonight, to show you that He is the way to your end as well as to God's end! Christ has run the railroad right into Heaven, but does it run from where I am? Because, if not, if there is a space between me and the place where that railway stops, how am I to get there? I cannot have the cab of Morality,

for the axle is broken. I shall not get up into the great omnibus of Ceremonies, for the driver has lost his badge and I am sure there will be mischief come of that. How, then, am I to get there? I cannot get there at all unless the road comes right here to where I am. Well, glory be to God, it does come to just where you are tonight, Sinner! There needs no addition of yours—no preparing for Christ—no meeting Jesus Christ half-way—no cleaning yourselves to let Him give you the finishing touch—no mending your garments, that He may afterwards make them superfine—no, but, just as you are, Christ says, "I am the way."

But you say, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" "Do?" He says. "Do? Nothing but believe on Me—trust Me—trust Me now." Did I hear one up in those boxes in the top gallery say, "When I get home tonight, I'll pray"? I hope you will, but that is not the Gospel. The Gospel is, trust Jesus Christ now! Christ is the way NOW—not only from your chamber to Heaven, but from this place, from the very spot where you now are, to Heaven! I say again, dear Brothers and Sisters, that I abhor from my very heart that new kind of legality which is preached by some ministers who will have it that we must not tell the sinner to believe on Christ *now*, but that he must undergo a preparatory process of conviction and the like. This is Popery back again, for it has the very essence of Popery within it. Instead of that, I lift up my Master's Cross before the dying and the dead—before the blind, the ruined and the filthy, and say—TRUST JESUS CHRIST AND YOU ARE SAVED!

"But I have many sins." He had many drops of blood! "But I am a great sinner." He is a great Savior! "But I am so black." His blood is so efficacious that it can make you as white as snow! "But I am so old." Yes, but He can make you to be born-again! "But I have rejected Him so often." He will not reject you! "But I am the last person in the world to be saved." Then that is where Christ begins—he always begins at the last man! "But, I cannot believe that." Cannot believe what? What did I ask you to believe? "I cannot believe." Cannot believe what? I say again! My Master is the Lord from Heaven that cannot lie and you tell me you cannot believe Him? My Master never lied to angel or to men and He cannot, for He is Truth itself! And this is what He says, that whoever among you will trust Him tonight, He will save you! And if you say you cannot believe Him, you make God a liar because you believe not on His Son Jesus Christ!

I charge you, by the Day of Judgment and by the flaming world, say not that the God who made you will lie to you! Sinner, there shall never be found in Hell a spirit that can say, "I trusted Christ and was deceived. I rested on the Cross and its rotten timbers creaked and failed me. I looked to the blood of Jesus and it could not cleanse me. I cried to Heaven, but Heaven would not hear. I took Jesus in my arms to be my Mediator and yet I was driven from the gate of mercy. There was no pity for me." Never, never shall there be such a case! I would to God—I was about to say that I were not preaching to depraved men and yet to whom else should we go?—because this is the sorrowful reflection, that so many of you will turn on your heels and say, "There is nothing in it."

But who are those who will look to Christ? Why, those whom God has chosen! In whom the Spirit, as the result of Divine Election, will effectually work and who shall be the real trophies of the Redeemer's passion! But, mark you, you have all heard the Gospel tonight—and when you and I meet face to face while the trumpet of judgment is ringing in every human ear—when this solid earth shall shake, when the Heavens shall bow and the stars shall pale their feeble light—I will bear this witness, that I told you plainly the way of salvation! And in that great day I shall be able to say to each one of you, "If you perish, your blood lies not at my door." Is there one who has not understood me? Is there one who still thinks that he is shut out and that he cannot be saved? To you, Sir, yes, to you, I add this extra word, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him!" And though you are black with robbery, or red with blood, or stained with lust up to your elbows, He is able still to save! And trusting Him—with all your heart trusting Him—you shall find that He will surely bring you to the place where He shall see you with delight, having washed you in His blood!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 6.

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that Grace may abound?* This seems to be a very plausible temptation. It is one which frequently came in the Apostle's way and, therefore, he very often had to denounce it. It is one of the vilest suggestions of Satan that could possibly come to men.

2. *God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The whole spirit of the Gospel is opposed to the idea of sinning because God is gracious. It is a horrible Satanic suggestion—"As pardon can be so easily obtained from God, let us sin the more against Him." The bare suggestion is utterly degrading and diabolical.

3. *Know you not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?* Was not that the real meaning of our Baptism? Had it any meaning whatever unless we were really dead with Christ and therefore were buried with Him?

4. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even as we also should walk in newness of life.* There is a parallel between Christ and the true Christian. There is a likeness between the Head of the Church and the members of His mystical body. Christ died and was buried—and His people are reckoned as dead and buried in Him.

5-7. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.* That is, he that died to sin when Christ died is free from sin's condemning power.

8-10. *Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.* In the next verse, the parallel between Christ and Christians comes up again. As Christ died and was buried, and rose from the dead and now lives to die no more, so is it with us who believe in Him and are in Him by a vital union. In Him we died and in Him we rose, and in Him we now live in newness of life.

11-13. *Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* "Your members"—that is, the various parts of your body and the faculties of your mind are to be yielded up to God "as instruments of righteousness."

14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.* While you were under the Law and simply heard it command you to do your duty, the command seemed to awaken all the hostility of your nature so that you remained under the dominion of sin. But now no longer does the Law speak to you as it did before. You are not now under the Law, but another principle governs you. The Grace, the favor, the love which God has shown to you in Christ Jesus, appeals to your heart and you cheerfully yield to it the obedience which, when the Law demanded it, your unregenerate spirit refused to render!

15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the Law, but under Grace? God forbid!* Again the Apostle is shocked at such a suggestion. There are some who have denied that the Law was binding upon them in any sense and who, therefore, have claimed liberty to sin. But they can find no footing anywhere within the sacred enclosure of God's Word.

16. *Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey? Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* If, then, a man lives a life of sin, he proves that he is the servant of sin, for he has obeyed its commands! And let that man know assuredly that he has nothing to do with Christ while he is living in sin! But if a man lives in obedience to Christ and seeks after righteousness and true holiness, that man is evidently the servant of righteousness and so the servant of God.

17. *But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.* Or, as the marginal reading renders it, in harmony with the original, "whereto you were delivered," for the doctrine was the mold and you were the metal, reduced to a molten condition, and then poured into the mold to take the shape of Gospel Truth. God be thanked for this—that though you did formerly serve sin, you now serve it no longer.

18, 19. *Being then made free from sin, you became the servant of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of*

your flesh: for as you have yielded your members, servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members, servant to righteousness unto holiness. How powerfully this plea ought to sound with any whose former life was full of positive, plain uncleanness in the sight of God! And how earnestly should the redeemed spirit cry to God to preserve the body pure and chaste before Him!

20. *For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.* You did not then trouble yourselves about that matter at all—you left the things of God and piety alone.

21. *What fruit had you then in these things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of these things is death.* You had such pleasure as sin could give you, but was it worth having? You derived some profit, perhaps, from evil pursuits, but did the profit ever make up for the loss which you thereby sustained? O you who have had experience of sin to the full, has it, after all, turned out to be the fair and lovely thing that it once seemed to be? No, the serpent had azure scales, but its fangs have poured poison into your blood! It came to you with all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness, like Jezebel with her painted face, but it has worked nothing for you but sorrow and suffering—and it will work your eternal ruin unless God, in His great mercy, shall prevent it.

22. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and in the end, everlasting life.* Oh, what wondrous changes the Grace of God works! *"But now."* Paul must have rejoiced to write those two words. He had dwelt upon what men were before the Lord began to deal with them in mercy, "but now" he could say, "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life."

23. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ 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.

A STIR—AND WHAT CAME OF IT
NO. 2939

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1875.

"And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"
Matthew 21:10.

MANY things make a stir in a city and, sometimes, these stirs are full of evil. I always think, each time I read Carlyle's history of the French Revolution, how thankful we ought to be that the city of London has not been excited, from end to end, by political storms as the unhappy city of Paris was at that time and has been many times since. We are not grateful enough, I fear, for the social order and quiet which reign in our midst. There are other countries where the people, when they go to bed at night, cannot tell what will be the form of government when they wake in the morning—whether they will still be free nations or beneath a tyrant's heel. I heard an excellent man—one highly esteemed among us—prophesy that before long the streets of London will run with blood. He was afraid of the power of the democracy of whom he stood in great terror. I confess that I have never participated in his fears for a single moment, for I fully believe that, by God's Grace, our country will continue for many years to enjoy the blessing which results from having a form of government which with all its faults and imperfections, is so satisfactory on the whole. May God grant that we may not, on some future day, have to remember with regret our ingratitude for the peace we now possess—when we have lost it—and may we all do our best to cement the various classes of society together and promote that Christian love, that spirit of justice and that spirit of philanthropy which will tend to hold together the whole nation in bonds that cannot easily be broken. Let us not be envious. Let us not be proud. Let us not oppress one another and let us not demand too much from one another. Let the golden rule be the rule of life to all with whom we are brought into contact. Let us do to others as we would they should do to us and so may our country and its capital never be stirred by those terrific senses of strife which would make the pavements run with blood, but may our land enjoy, for many a century, unless Christ should come, the same peace which we have seen in our day!

But there are such things as good stirs—stirs for the better—stirs which help to remove the evil consequences of stagnation. There are, at certain times and seasons, blessed blowing of the sacred wind from Heaven through the garden of mankind and I think, at this period,

London is, to a large extent, enjoying just such a stir as that. At this moment I might almost say concerning this city what was said concerning Jerusalem at the time mentioned in our text, "All the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" There is a great religious excitement at the present time—and a spirit of enquiry and an unusual desire to hear the Word of God. There is more than this, for there is a Divine Power going forth to convert the people—thousands have of late have been converted to the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. For one, I am devoutly thankful for this stir and pray God to continue it for a long time and to bring the richest possible results out of it.

Concerning the stir mentioned in our text, I want to, ask, first, *what caused this stir*? Secondly, *what was the enquiry*, "Who is this?" And *how do we answer it?* And then, lastly, *what came of this stir?*

I. First, WHAT CAUSED THIS STIR? "All the city was moved."

The first cause of this moving of the city was that *Jesus was proclaimed King*. True, the proclamation was uttered by children and by the common people and not by the officers of the State, yet He was proclaimed—and wherever Jesus Christ is proclaimed as King and Lord, there is sure to be a stir! Even if it is nothing but opposition to Him, there must be some movement, for Christ is never without influence either one way or another. He is never savorless—He is always either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It matters very little who it is that proclaims Jesus as King, for the power is not in the voice that utters the proclamation, but in the Truth of God which is uttered! If God is pleased to call men of humble birth and small education to preach Jesus Christ, He will get all the more glory because of the feebleness of the instruments He uses! If He should call little children to yell out the Gospel—out of the mouths of babes and sucklings would He perfect His praise. It is *what* is said, not who says it, that is the important matter. If it is the Gospel, that Gospel will shake the world! Let Luther's preaching bear witness to that fact. The Gospel preached by a tinker will have an everlasting effect upon those who hear it—let Bunyan's preaching be the witness to that fact. The Gospel preached by one who had been a servant at an inn may influence the entire nation, as witness the case of George Whitefield! It is the Gospel, not the man—the Truth, not the mere utterer of it—which is the more important!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, at this time we have Jesus Christ very widely proclaimed in London. I believe that most ministers are preaching more about Jesus Christ than they ever did before. Some of our Brothers and Sisters have become very philosophical—they have given way a great deal to modern thought and have lost power thereby—but I believe there is a pretty general return to the lifting up of the bronze serpent on the pole—the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. And whenever this is the case, if He is proclaimed, the village, the town, the city must be moved thereby!

But there was more than that when all the city of Jerusalem was moved, *for Jesus Christ Himself was present*. He was not proclaimed in His absence. He was riding through the streets in that humble pomp

which well suited His Character, as well as fulfilled the ancient prophecy concerning Him. But He was there and I guarantee you that if the proclamation of the Gospel is a power, much more a power is the Presence of Jesus Christ who is the sum and substance of the Gospel! There must be a stir wherever He is. When He goes where demons make their haunts, they flee before Him. When He stands amid the raging elements and says, "Peace: be still," immediately there is a great calm. All Nature and all created beings feel the majesty of the Presence of the Crucified. The wicked tremble when they perceive Him, but the saints of God, when Jesus comes to them, are stirred in a very different fashion, for they grow strong in His Presence!

Some of our troops, in one of the battles in the Peninsula War, seemed likely to give way, the assault of the French upon them being so terrible. But, just then, the Duke of Wellington rode up into the center of them and one man said to his fellow, "Here comes the Duke! How glad I am to see his face! He is worth more to us than ten thousand men—we will soon drive those Frenchmen to the winds now." And so they did, for the presence of their leader seemed to make each man grow into a giant! And at this time there is a shout of a King is in our midst, for our Lord Jesus Christ has come in the power of His Spirit! He has come with His ministers who preach the Gospel simply and faithfully and He is scattering His foes and putting them to rout! And He is saving souls and so magnifying His holy name. Where Jesus is proclaimed, and where Jesus Himself is, there must be a stir, as there was in Jerusalem when "all the city was moved, saying, Who is this is?"

I do not wonder that there was a stir in Jerusalem when we reflect that *all Christ's disciples were that day in a very lively state*. They were often inclined to be sleepy or sluggish, as we are. Oh, how idle some Christians are and how readily do we slumber! And if the Church of Christ is not itself thoroughly awake, it cannot be expected to awaken the world. Some preaching is a kind of articulate snoring in which the preacher does not appear to be certain whether he is, himself awake and, therefore, it is not very likely that he will be able to awaken others. But that day in Jerusalem Christ's disciples were all full of joy and full of praise to God for all the mighty works that they had seen! Every man's eyes shone with delight. They were, as we say, "all there," all alive and all in earnest! That day, too, they were all generous, for they took off their outer garments and laid them on the colt, or strewed them in the way where Jesus was to ride. There was not one of Christ's disciples who was cowardly that day—they were all ready to give what they could to grace His triumph! We shall never see the world converted while the Church is so stingy as it often is. There are Christian people who will sing that—

"They love their God with zeal so great
That they would give Him all,"

but they never go even to the verge of giving Him all. They seem to have a "saving" faith, in a very bad meaning of that term. But when Christ's Church once brings all her tithes into the storehouse, then will God fulfill His ancient declaration, "Prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts,

if I will not open you the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

That day, too, *Christ's disciples were all obedient to His orders*. They did as their Master commanded them concerning the fetching of the ass and the colt. You sometimes wonder that the Gospel does not spread more rapidly in the earth. But are disobedient servants likely to do their Master's work well? If there are commands of Jesus which we persistently ignore—if there are precepts of the Savior which, year after year, we forget—if there are Doctrines and other parts of His teaching to which we turn a deaf ear, can we expect Him to bless us? O servants of the Lord, obedience within the Church will be sure to bring power outside the Church! And the Church, moving according to the orders of the great Captain of our salvation, step by step and rank by rank, in Gospel order, will be certain to march on to victory! God will be sure to send a stir when His people are in a right state of heart and life.

A further reason for the stir in Jerusalem was that *multitudes were thronging around Christ*. There is something that stirs one in the sight of a crowd and, oftentimes, we gather power in our preaching by the very sight of the multitude of those who have come to listen to our message. And certainly there is a great charm in that mighty volume of praise which we heard just now, which seemed to roll like the waves of the sea in glory and grandeur! A preacher is delighted to see crowds coming to hear the Gospel, for he knows that it is good fishing where there is an abundance of fish! So there was a stir in Jerusalem because there were such crowds of people thronging around Christ. I am glad to hear that crowds are going to listen to the Gospel preached and sung by our two American Brothers, Moody and Sankey. God grant that in their services, there may not be merely the excitement of multitudes gathering together, but the power of the Spirit of God working upon the hearts and consciences of the hearers, for where that is felt, there is sure to be a stir in the city!

In Jerusalem there were not only multitudes thronging around Christ, but *miracles were being worked by Christ*. The lame were leaping, the blind were seeing, the deaf were hearing, the dumb were speaking and, not long before that, a man who had been dead four days had been raised from the grave by the voice of Jesus calling to him, "Lazarus, come forth!" No wonder, then, that the whole city was moved! And nothing moves a family like the salvation of a soul in it. Nothing moves a parish like the conversion of some gross vagabond, some outrageous rebel against his God. If the Lord will but go on saving people in London, we need have no fear about London being moved. Soul-saving work—life to the dead in sin, sight to the spiritually blind, leaping to the spiritually lame—this is what will stir London more than anything else! Therefore, pray for it, O you people of God, and you shall see more and more of it!

Hence it was that crowds in Jerusalem were crying, "Hosanna." How could they help it when Christ was distributing His royal favors on the right hand and on the left? My own heart is ready to cry, "Hosanna," even over the hope that many have been converted to Jesus! And if it is

really so, the angels are rejoicing over those who have repented and returned to the Lord. They must have been having a grand time of it for the last two or three months at least! Heaven's music has them constantly increasing in volume as Christ has called together His friends and neighbors and has said to them, "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." Have the angels been rejoicing with Christ over the finding of any of you, dear Friends? If they have not, God grant that they soon may do so!

II. Secondly, WHAT WAS THE ENQUIRY IN JERUSALEM, AND HOW DO WE ANSWER IT? "Who is this?"

They could all see that this movement was around a Person, so they did not ask, "What is this?" but, "*Who* is this?" And any preaching that is worth anything tells of the Person of Jesus Christ. You cannot enkindle enthusiasm about a mere doctrine. You may lay down certain theses as logically as you will, but they will not stir the soul—you must rally men around a person! It is the presence of his sovereign that makes the soldier brave in the day of battle and it is the preaching of Christ—telling about the Person of Christ—lifting Him up in our preaching even as once He was lifted up upon the Cross that is sure to stir the hearts of men! So the crowd asked, "Who is this?" because the Personality of Christ had come to the front.

Some probably asked the question in a scoffing, contemptuous fashion—"'Who is this?' Oh, the Son of a carpenter of Nazareth! A pretty thing this, for Him to be riding thus through the city! We may expect next to see fishermen and sailors, and tinkers and tailors riding in triumph through our streets." I have heard that kind of remark many a time, haven't you? Christ will give His own answer to that, one of these days, so I bid every scoffer here to prepare for what my Master will say to him at the last. You will talk in quite another tone then, Sir—would God that you might change your tune now!

There were others, no doubt, who asked this question in some such style as this, "'Who is *this*?' The crowd, which is mostly composed of fools is always running after some novelty or other. 'Who is this?'" And there are plenty of persons nowadays who ask questions about great religious movements in that supercilious, offhand kind of way. "I wonder what is up now? What can all this stir be about?" And there the enquiry ends, as far as they are concerned, but a dying Savior, a risen Redeemer is not to be treated in that style! He may be saying to some of you at this very moment, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger?"

I feel sure, however, that there were others who asked this question in quite another spirit. They said, "Who is this?" There was a blind man in Jerusalem and his friends told him of a great Miracle-Worker who had opened the eyes of the blind. So he cried out eagerly, "'Who is this?' Tell me where I can find Him, that I may go to Him and have my eyes opened!" And there was a poor lame man lying at home who could not

rise from his bed and he said, "What did you say?—that So-an-So, who has been paralyzed for so many years has been restored to health and strength? Oh, 'who is this?' Who is performing such miracles of mercy as this? Could you not carry me to Him, that I might ask Him to heal me also?" Doubtless there were many other sufferers in Jerusalem whose hearts leaped within them as they heard of what Christ had done, and said, "Who is this?" And I do hope that among you who are not yet saved, there are some who long to be, and that each one of you is saying, "'Who is this?' If other people are being saved, why should not I be? Tell me how I can be saved! Tell me the old, old story. Let me know the good news about Jesus, the Savior of sinners! Let me understand how Christ is able to save the guilty, that I also may be saved and that, in my case, salvation to the uttermost may be displayed!" Blessed are all of you who ask the question in that way. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Look to Jesus by simple faith and He will work wonders of Grace and mercy for you.

Now I want, briefly, to speak about how we answer this enquiry—"Who is this?" How shall we answer it? Who is this Jesus, about whom we are always preaching? We have really only one answer to that question, but it takes two or three forms. Our one answer to the sons of men is—Jesus, whom we preach, very God of very God, who deigned, more than 1800 years ago, to descend to this earth and to take upon Himself our nature, and so to be both God and Man in one Person and, in that dual Nature, suffered and died upon the Cross in the place of all who believe in Him. We preach this Jesus to the sons and daughters of men as able to cleanse them from sin, to give them pardon, to change their natures and to lift them up from the degradation into which their transgressions have sunk them. No, we do not only preach Him as One who can save, but as *the* One who has been sent into this world on purpose to save the lost! The One whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin!

And, more than that, God has sent Christ with this authority, that whoever will accept Him and trust in Him shall be eternally saved, but that whoever rejects Him shall, beyond all hope of mercy, perish forever! The message we have to deliver to you is not this—"Here is Christ and you may have Him or leave Him, as you please—and it is left to your own choice which you will do." No! But it is this—"In the name of God we *command* you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and it will be at your peril that you will reject Him, for He is soon to come to be your Judge. And if you reject Him as your Savior, He will certainly destroy you in that day. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." O Sirs, we who preach to you are men of like passions with yourselves, with no priestly authority or power to pardon sin! But we are sent to you, in the name of God, lovingly and earnestly to tell you the Truth of God revealed in His Word and, in the name of Jehovah—the Creator of the Heavens and the earth, at whose absolute disposal your breath is—we, I say, are sent by Him to urge you to be at peace with Him! And you cannot be at peace with Him unless

you accept Christ whom He, Himself, in Infinite Grace, has given to bleed that you might not suffer—and to die that you might not perish!

There is Christ on the Cross—refuse Him and you irrevocably seal your destruction. There is Christ on the Cross—look to Him. Lovingly trust Him and you are at once and forever saved! This is God's plan of salvation and this is the answer to the question, "Who is this?" It is no common Person whom we preach, no stranger to whom you have no relation, but we preach Jesus Christ by whom alone you can be saved—and without whom you must perish forever! Oh, I implore you, give good heed to our solemn message and, since it so intimately concerns you, give it your most earnest attention! Lay hold on eternal life, I do beseech you. May the Spirit of God lead you to do so!

But while our answer to the question, "Who is this?" is always the same in substance, it takes different forms according to the person who puts the enquiry to us, "Who is this?" I think I see here a member of a Christian Church who is no credit to that Church and I hear him saying, "Who is this?" What is the meaning of all this stir? I have always gone to a place of worship where I could hear quiet preaching and where everything was conducted in an orderly, decorous fashion. But what is the reason for all this excitement, all this enthusiasm? Who is this?" Brother, it is your Lord and Master who has caused this stir! Unless your profession has been a false one, it is your Savior's Presence which has stirred up this excitement! It is He who bought you with His blood who has come here and He finds you asleep! His power to save is being displayed all over this city, yet you, who ought to be helping Him—who ought to be pleading with sinners and praying for them, are fast asleep! Look at that lamp of yours, my Sister! Do you not see that there is smoke, instead of light, coming from it? It is almost out! Does that mean that you are one of the foolish virgins? Have you no oil in your vessel with your lamp? If you have, trim your lamp and be ready to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, for the call is even now sounding through London, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him." Up, you sluggards! Awake yourselves! Behold, Jesus is coming—will you not be found enlisted beneath His banner and fighting His battles? Remember that ancient message to David, "When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself, for then shall the Lord go out before you to smite the host of the Philistines." When the angels' feet trod lightly over the green leaves at the tops of the trees, then were David and his warriors to march onward to victory! It seems to me that the angels' wings are rustling all round us just now and, better still, that Jehovah, Himself, has come riding upon the wings of the wind to save the multitudes that are perishing! Awake, you slumbering professors! Oh, that I had a voice of thunder that could pierce through ear and heart at once—and make the whole Church wake up! This should be sufficient to awaken you, that He who has come is your Lord and Master! Therefore go you forth to meet Him!

I know also that there are in this congregation, as there are in all congregations, backsliders. You used to be in fellowship with the Church of Christ but you disgraced your profession, you dishonored your Lord and Master, you oppressed the spirit of your minister, you made the whole Church sorrowful and you filled the mouths of the wicked with scoffing because of your backsliding. And this Christ who has come into our midst is He whom you have crucified afresh and put to an open shame! He has not yet come to execute judgment—He has come to display yet more of His mercy. Where are you, Backslider? Do you feel as if you must run away from Him? Oh, do not, but stay, my Brother, and look up into the face of Jesus! He is looking down upon you and may that glance of His be like the look which He gave to Peter, who went out and wept bitterly at the remembrance of his backsliding. Your Lord still loves you! Come back to Him. He has redeemed you—yield your whole soul to Him. Come, Backslider, and kiss the feet which were pierced for you and give yourself again to Jesus. You have wandered away from the good pasture and from the rest of the sheep, but Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is seeking you, so wander no longer, but return unto Him who waits to welcome you. God bless this message to you and make you know that this is a special time of Grace for backsliders!

There is a young man who has lately come up from the country and who has heard of this stir and excitement and he has been asking, "What is this? "I must have a word or two with him. Young man, I will tell you who is the cause of all this stir—it is your mother's Savior! That kiss which she gave you when you left home is still warm upon your cheek. She begged you to read the Scriptures every day, but you have done nothing of the kind. There are some of you who have a father and mother in Heaven, but you are not following in their footsteps. Now that Christ is saving sinners on the right hand and on the left, will He not save the children who have been the subjects of so many anxieties and so many intercessions? Young man, young man, may the Lord save you before you leave this building! Prayer has come up to Heaven on your behalf and it is not lost—may it bring salvation down to you even now!

There is one who asks, "Who is this?" who is really seeking the Savior, but cannot find Him. You say that you have been praying a long time, but have not yet found peace? Do you not know that praying is not the way to find peace? The way to obtain peace with God is not by praying, but by *believing*. "Who is this who is being preached as the one hope of lost mankind? It is Jesus Christ who says, "Believe on Me, and you shall be saved." O you guiltiest of the guilty, you hardest of the hard, you most careless of the careless and you most despairing of the despairing—there is salvation in Jesus Christ even for you if you will only trust Him! Look unto Him and be you saved—and look unto Him right now! This is the Glorious One who has come into our midst, the Almighty Savior who is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

If there are any here who despise Christ, I beseech them to remember that He who has come and whom we preach unto you as the Savior of all who believe in Him, will, if you refuse Him, assuredly come with a rod of

iron to break His adversaries in pieces! I cannot too often remind you that the Lord shall surely come to judge both the quick and the dead—and every one of us must appear before Him! Let me ask you, you who scoff at Him now—will you scoff at Him *then*, when the Lamb of God shall come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah—and the meek and lowly Jesus, who was once crucified on Calvary, shall come in all the Glory of His Father and of the holy angels? Will you utter your infidelities and your mockeries then? No! I can tell you what you will do—you will want to fly from His Presence and you will cry to the rocks and to the hills to hide you from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb—the wrath of Him who wept over Jerusalem and who laid down His life for sinners! Ah, yes! it will be from His wrath that you will want to hide and you will cry, "What fools we were to ever be at enmity against Infinite Love, to rebel against such marvelous mercy, to fight against such amazing tenderness and to show spite against Him who is and always was surpassingly lovely." May the God of mercy and Grace forbid that any one of you should ever have to utter such a lament as that! Yet you will, some of you, as surely as you now live, unless you turn to God! And it may be that some of you will not have many days, or even hours, in which you will be able to turn to Him.

III. I must speak only very briefly upon the last question I mentioned, WHAT CAME OF THIS STIR? I have talked about the stir, the enquiry and the answer to it. Now, what came of this stir?

Well, *there were some who entered very heartily into this movement* and nobody has ever heard that any of them regretted doing so. As for this present stir in the city of London, I urge every Christian to have a share in it. Even if you do not agree with all that is said, or the way it is said, or the way the work is being done, never mind, Brothers and Sisters—go and do God's work in your own way. If your way of doing the Lord's work is really so much better than the plans that others have adopted, that is all the more reason why you should press forward and help all you can. We never had a better opportunity of seeking to extend the Redeemer's Kingdom than we have just now! And if the Church of God does not bestir herself now, it may be that she will have a long and dreary winter and remain for years without the spiritual harvest which now seems ripe for reaping. I do not say, "Join this revivalist, or that," but I do urge you all to do something and to do all that you can to bring honor to the Lord Jesus out of the present stir. As some of Christ's disciples cut down branches of trees and others took their garments and placed them at His disposal, so let each of you, in your own way, do something to honor the Savior now that so many are moved to ask, "Who is this?"

There were *other people who were opposed to that movement.* Some of them even went to Christ to complain about the children crying in the Temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David." They said, "'Hear you what *these* say?'" A pack of boys and girls—'hear you what these say?"' Yes, the chief priests and scribes did not approve of that stir, and there are some who

say, nowadays, "We do not want all this excitement. We can go on very well in our own quiet way." My reply to that remark is that there have been far too many already damned on the quiet and I think it is high time that more souls were saved, even if the work is done in an unusual fashion! But, after all, this talk about excitement in religion has not much in it. About three weeks ago I stood in the Bourse at Paris and looked down from the gallery upon a mass of men all shouting together and endeavoring to sell their various stocks and shares. I thought to myself, "We are sometimes charged with being excited at our services, but we never made such a noise as this!" The din could be heard outside even above the roar of Paris and I felt that I was never in a place before so much like Bedlam. There was a terrible row all about making money, yet, if some poor souls get excited under conviction of sin, or finding salvation through the Savior, somebody is sure to talk about "hair-brained fanaticism!"

I have told you before what good old Rowland Hill said upon this matter, "People say, when I preach the Gospel very earnestly, 'How excited Mr. Hill gets!' Why," he said, "I was walking through Wotton-Under-Edge the other day and saw some men digging gravel. All of a sudden, the earth gave way and buried two or three of their men. I ran off, as fast as my old legs would carry me, and I shouted, 'Help! Help! Help!' but people did not say, 'Poor old Mr. Hill is getting dreadfully excited.'" Oh, no! He might be as excited as he pleased when men's lives were in danger, but when a man's *soul* is in danger, the proper thing would be to say to him, very quietly and calmly, "My dear Friend, unless something shall interpose and you shall, one of these days, become somewhat different from what you now are, it will not be quite so well for you in another world as, perhaps, you might desire." No, we have had far too much of that sort of preaching already! We must talk to men in a very different fashion from that if we would impress them with the solemn Truths of God that we are commanded to preach in the name of Jesus!

There is one sad fact of which I want to remind you before I finish my discourse. Within a few days from the time when all that stir was made about Christ, there was quite another kind of stir concerning Him. Instead of, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" there was heard the cruel cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify Him." They were as eager on that occasion as they had been on the previous one—but what a revulsion of sentiment was thus manifested! Yes, and if this present stir does not lead to decision, to vital godliness, to real faith in Jesus, it will make you worse than you are now and it will make London worse than it is—and the last end of our city will be worse than the first. And, under God, it depends upon Christians whether it shall be so or not! If you get metal up to a certain heat many times, it is harder to heat afterwards. You cannot readily melt cast iron and so is it with people who have been stirred up by religious excitement. If it does not lead to real conversion, they will be worse than they were before! Skepticism and every form of irreligiousness will be more rampant than ever in this city unless we take this opportunity of calling in the arm of the Lord to make real work of it and

not to let it be sham. Anyway, God's purpose was fulfilled in Jerusalem, even though some did reject the Savior, and so will it be fulfilled in this city, whether men are lost or saved, for God is not dependent upon men for the accomplishment of His purposes or the Glory of His Throne. He will be magnified in His Justice, if He is not in His Mercy! That it may be the latter rather than the former, come to Jesus, lay hold upon Him by faith and live forevermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 21:1-5.

Verses 1-3. *And when they drew near unto Jerusalem, and were come the Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if any man says anything unto you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them; and straightway he will send them.* The time was for our Lord to finish His great work on earth. And His going up to Jerusalem was with this intent. He now determines to enter the capital city openly and there to reveal Himself as King. To this end, when He came near to the city, *Jesus sent two disciples* to bring Him the foal of an ass whereon He would ride. His orders to the two disciples whom He commissioned, *when they were come to Bethphage*, are worthy of our serious attention. He directed them as to the place where they would find the animal—"*Go into the village over against you.*" The Lord knows where that which He requires is to be found. Perhaps it is nearer to us than we dream—"over against you." He told them that they would not have to search—"*straightway you shall find.*" When the Lord sends us on an errand, He will speed us on our way. He described the condition of the creatures—"*an ass tied, and a colt with her.*" Our Lord knows the position of every animal in the world and He counts no circumstances to be beneath His notice. Nor did He leave the disciples without orders how they were to proceed—"loose them, and bring them." Demur and debate there would be none—they should act at once! To stand questioning is not for the messengers of our King—it is their duty to obey their Lord's orders and to fear nothing. The two animals would be willingly yielded up by their owner when the disciples said, "*The lord has need of them.*" No, he would not only give them up, but "*straightway he will send them.*" Either the owner was a secret disciple, or some awe of the Lord Jesus was on his mind, but he would right joyfully consent to lend the ass and its foal for the purpose for which they were required.

What a singular conjunction of words is here, "the Lord" and, "has need"! Jesus, without laying aside His Sovereignty, had taken a Nature full of needs, yet, being in need, He was still the Lord and could command His subjects and requisition their property. Whenever we have anything of which the Lord's cause has need, how cheerfully should we hand it over to Him! The owner of the ass and her colt regarded it as an

honor to furnish Jesus with a creature to ride upon. How great is the power of Jesus over human minds, as that by a word He quietly moves them to do His bidding!

We have here the record of two disciples being sent to fetch an ass—those who do little things for Jesus are honored thereby. Their errand appeared strange, for what they did might seem like robbery, but He who sent them took care to protect them from the least shade of suspicion. The messengers raised no question, offered no objection and met with no difficulty. It is ours to do *what* Jesus bids us, *just* as He bids us and *because* He bids us, for His command is our authority!

4, 5. *All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, tell you the daughter of Sion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.* Matthew is always reminding us of the Old Testament, as well, indeed, he may, for our Lord is always fulfilling it! Every point of detail is according to the prophetic model—*All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet*. The Old and New Testaments dovetail into each other. Men have written "Harmonies of the Gospels," but God has given us a Harmony of the Old and New Testament! The passage referred to is in Zechariah 9:9. It represents Zion's King as meek and lowly even in the hour of His triumphant entrance to His metropolis, riding, not upon a warhorse, but upon a young ass, whereon no man had sat. He had before said of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and now He gives one more proof of the truth of His own words and, at the same time of the fulfillment of prophecy—*"Tell you the daughter of Sion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an ass."* He did not, like Solomon, fetch horses out of Egypt to minister to His pride, but He who was greater than Solomon was content with *a colt the foal of an ass*, and even that humble creature was borrowed, for He had none of His own. The tenderness of Jesus comes out in the fact of His having the ass brought with her foal that they might not be parted. He was, as a King, all gentleness and mercy! His grandeur involved no pain, even for the meanest living thing. How blessed is it for us to be ruled by such a King!

—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.

"HE MUST REIGN"
NO. 2940

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 18, 1875.

"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."
1 Corinthians 15:25.

"HE must reign." Here was another, "must," which His disciples were very slow to learn. Very much of our Lord's teaching to His Apostles was concerning the necessity that He must suffer. That doctrine seemed so strange to them that at first they could scarcely catch the idea. When they perceived that Christ really meant it, they could not bear the thought of it. One of them even began to rebuke his Lord, but He sharply stopped him. The notion that Christ must suffer could not be drilled into the Apostles—their very spirits seemed to revolt against it. And do you wonder? If you had lived with that dear and blessed Lord and had seen the perfection of His Character, the liberality of His gifts and the tenderness of His heart and if you had known, as they did, in a measure—the Glory of His Nature and the marvel of His person—could you have endured the thought that He must be despitefully used, spit upon and nailed like a felon to a cross? No, even Christ Himself might have found it difficult to get that thought into your mind. It was such a cruel, "must"—that He must die! Why, even after He *had* died and all the prophecies concerning His death had been fulfilled, it was still a bewilderment to His disciples! The two who walked to Emmaus with Christ were in a maze concerning it and He had to say to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered those things and to enter into His glory?"

That first, "must," cost the people of God much before they learned it, but we know right well that the price of pardon for us was Christ's suffering and death. We understand that there was no other way of access for us but by the Atonement—no other method by which the lost inheritance could come back except by that ransom price which was found in the pierced heart of Christ! And now there is another, "must," which, I think, is almost as difficult for us to learn. The shadow of the Cross has fallen upon us and we live so much in its shade that it is not easy for us to catch the gleam of that necessity which comes from His Throne—"He must reign." The Cross, too, is on our shoulder. It is not merely that we live under the *shadow* of the Cross, but the *burden* of the Cross has to be cheerfully endured from day to day. As we bear it, it is not easy for us to feel that, "He must reign." O Brothers, when you preach and no man gives heed to your message—when you teach, but the children yield not their hearts to your Lord—when you sojourn in

Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar and meet with hard and cold hearts in every place that thaw not even beneath the sunbeams of the love of Jesus, you are very apt to say that it does not appear that, "He must reign."

The long rebellion against Jehovah still continues! The dread revolt against the majesty of Heaven seems as if it will never end and we sometimes fear that the treason will last on to all eternity! It appears impossible that the Crucified Christ shall yet be the universal Conqueror, that the Man of Nazareth will yet mount His white horse and lead His conquering armies to the last charge and to the final victory and yet, as surely as it was true that He must suffer, so surely, "He must reign"! And it becomes us to open our hearts to this predestinated necessity ordained of the Most High. Jesus must reign! His defeat is not to be thought of for a moment! Delay there may be, but the victory must come! "He must reign." Let Heaven ring with the anticipation of it! "He must reign." Let earth resound with the prophecy of it! "He must reign." Let Hell's darkest cavern hear the tidings of that imperative necessity! "He must reign." And let each Christian feel revived and quickened by the joyful sound! He who had to die must surely reign! The second necessity shall be as certainly fulfilled as was the first—"He must reign." Let me try to ring that bell, or to sound that trumpet.

I. There is, first, A FACT WHICH IS A SORT OF PRELUDE OR ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE NECESSITY IN ITS GREATER FULFILLMENT.

The fact is that He does now reign—that is in our text. It says, "He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet." *Jesus is reigning even now in Heaven.* No shame can approach Him there and no scorn can even be whispered at His feet. He reigns there with undisputed sway. It would not be possible for me to fully depict the royal state in which Emmanuel sits enthroned above, but I would like your faith to endeavor to realize it. You may even venture to call in your sanctified imagination to aid you to sketch the scene where He reigns in Glory. There is no province of the celestial domain which does not acknowledge His sway and not one individual of all the happy tribes that dwell in Glory is not glad to call Him, King! The holy angels, whom He has made to be as flames of fire, delight to do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. All the various orders of cherubim and seraphim yield Him their loyal homage and all the angels and principalities and powers in the Heavenly places acknowledge Him as their Lord forever. His redeemed occupy the most honorable place in Heaven. Nearest to the Throne you will find the 24 elders, the representatives of the Church. And then, in an outer ring, stand the angels worshipping and adoring—and all the redeemed spirits, as well they may, since they owe their glory to His blood—call Jesus their Lord and King! He is no servant there! He washes no disciples' feet there! He goes not from there to Pilate's Hall to be judged! Absolute and supreme is He—King of kings, for they are all kings whom He has redeemed—and Lord of lords, for they are all lordly ones over whom He reigns! And He occupies the highest seat amidst the splendors of the celestial realm!

But do not imagine that Christ's reign is limited to these gates of pearl and streets of shining gold. Far from it, for *Jesus reigns today on earth*. It did my ears and heart good, just now, to hear you sing, "Crown Him Lord of All." I dared not hope that every heart here was really crowning Him, but I did believe that there were thousands who, in their inmost souls, were wishing Him all honor and glory and delightedly confessing their allegiance to Him. O Jesus, You have still on earth myriads whose highest joy is found in Your name and who find their Heaven on earth as they think of You! In Your Church You are still Lord and Master! And if there be churches that revolt against You and play the harlot, You still have Your chaste spouse and You reign over her in undisputed Sovereignty!

Nor is Christ's Kingdom limited to the Church in Heaven and the Church on earth, for *He reigns today over all things*. "All power," said He, "is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth." Providence is at the disposal of the Nazarene! Let those doubt it who will, we believe that every event which transpires—political, national, social, domestic—is overruled by Him for the accomplishment of the grand designs of mercy which He has for His own elect! Just as Joseph reigned in Egypt and all had to come to him for food in the time of famine, so does Jesus reign in the courts of earth for the good of His people. His cause must prosper, for He is always at the helm! Yes, even where confusion seems to rule, He is everywhere King, putting a bit into the mouth of the tempest and riding upon the wings of the wind. Just as the seas acknowledged His Presence when He was here Incarnate, so do they acknowledge His Presence now. And just as the earth then felt His footsteps, so does she feel them now, but it is no more the weary tramp of the Son of Man, but the majestic footsteps of the Son of God! He rules everywhere. "The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His, also."

He reigns, too, even in Hell itself. The devils bite their iron bands in grim despair because He reigns. They tried to make this earth their own, but now they know the prowess, the strong arm and the valiant heart of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest and they must do His bidding! "To here shall you come, but no further," is His command to the grim and fierce spirits—and they are compelled to submit to Him, however anxious they are to do still more mischief to the sons of man. Yes, Jesus reigns from the bottomless gulf to the heights of Heaven! Far off, where the sun now gilds the Western hills, and yonder in the East, where we shall watch for its return tomorrow morning—over all those regions Jesus reigns—

"Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar."

He reigns today and let His people proclaim it without fear, "The Lord is King." The fact that He is now reigning cheers our hearts—

"Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore.
Mortals, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore!

Lift up the heart, lift up the voice,
Rejoice aloud, you saints, rejoice!"

II. But, to come still more closely to our text, we ring this bell again and call your attention to THE NECESSITY FOR CHRIST'S REIGN. "He *must* reign." It is not merely that He shall, He can, or He may, but He *must*—"He must reign." Let us see why He must.

Well, the first and weakest argument of all, yet one that has much force in it—*all His servants say that He shall reign.* Weak as the 12 Apostles and the immediate followers of Christ were, they said that, "He must reign," and they meant it and they lived to make it true—and almost all the nations on the earth heard of Jesus within a century after He had been taken up to Heaven! Then came the kings of the earth and set themselves against Him. And they said that He should not reign. But the martyrs came and yielded up their lives with joy, each one singing, "He must reign." While the amphitheatres ran with blood, other champions came into the ring, each one uttering the watchword, "He must reign." The kings of the earth mocked at the saints of God. "What are these feeble Jews doing?" they said, just as Pharaoh might have said, "The locusts, what can they do?" But the locusts might have answered, "We are, each one of us, weak, but there are myriads of us and we will come up and cover your land, and we will eat every green thing that is left in the land!" And they did. It was very much the same with the persecuted saints of God—each individual Believer was weak, but they came by tens, by hundreds, by thousands—they came in countless shoals till the kings threw away their swords and quenched their fires in sheer despair—and they agreed that, nominally at least, Christ should reign, for His disciples would have it so.

And now, today, it becomes us not to speak proudly, but, if persecuting times should ever come again, many of those who say the least about it would be among the first to go boldly to be burned at the stake, or to submit their bodies to the torture of the rack for love of the Lord Jesus Christ! When Mutius Scaevola put his right hand into the fire to burn, he told the king that there were a thousand youths who had sworn that they would be put to death rather than that their country should fall into the king's hands—and the tyrant trembled. And there are thousands now of Christians who only need the dire necessity to rise again, and they would come forward with cheerfulness to yield their lives for their Lord, declaring that, "He must reign," whatever might become of them. We must never let His standard fall, or even tremble in the day of battle! Forward, you sons of heroes, in the name of Him who bled and died for you! Never let there be any question in your mind whether "He must reign" or not. The sun may cease to shine and the moon forget her nightly marches, but Jesus must reign! It must be so, for His people declare it!

I said, however, that this was the weakest of reasons and there are many far stronger ones. "He must reign," for *He is Jehovah's Heir*—the "Heir of all things." Kings cannot always ensure the putting of their crowns upon the heads of their sons. When they die, perhaps a rebellion

breaks out and overthrows the dynasty—but what power can overturn the Divine dynasty and rob the Heir of God of His dominions?

"He must reign," for *by Nature He is a King*. He was *born* a King! You might have seen something of Sovereignty in His eyes when He first opened them upon earth's light. The Wise Men from the East brought gifts which showed that they recognized the royalty of the newborn Babe of Bethlehem. Every characteristic of the life of Christ is royal. He is no tyrant king. He is the people's King, but a true King in every part of His being! There is nothing mean, or low, or selfish, about Him. Every motion of His hand is princely, as He feeds the multitudes, or heals their sicknesses. And every glance of His eyes is kingly, as He weeps over man's sin and fall, or as He rebukes man's transgression.

"He must reign," *for He deserves that honor*. You cannot see Him voluntarily yielding up His soul unto death in order that He might redeem His people by His blood—you cannot hear His cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—without feeling that if there is justice in the courts of Heaven, the death of Christ upon the Cross cannot be the end of Him! That terrible shame must be rewarded and how can it be rewarded except by the brightest crown that can possibly be conceived, or by something brighter, even, than that? Reign He must, for He was so good, so generous, so self-sacrificing, so oblivious of Himself in death! We would lose our faith in the Deity if we could lose faith in the reign of Christ as the reward of all that He suffered upon the Cross.

Besides, "He must reign," *for who is to stop Him?* In the olden days, many tried to do so, but He defeated them all. The Prince of darkness came to Him in the wilderness and offered Him a paltry bauble in the place of His true crown, but the tempter was repulsed by the sentence, "It is written." The Prince of darkness came again and again, but he found nothing in Christ upon which he could lay his hand and, before long, Christ will have the great adversary beneath His foot and finally bruise his head. All the evil forces upon the face of the earth cannot stand against Christ, for if, upon the accursed tree, *He defeated them in His weakness*, He will surely conquer them in the time of His strength! He trod them under His feet when He died—how much more completely shall He vanquish them, now that He is risen again? He scattered them like chaff before the wind with His dying breath—how much more shall He do it, now, in the fullness of His Resurrection Life? Rejoice, O Christians, in the fact that there is nothing that can stand against Jesus!

"He must reign," for the best of all reasons—*the Father has decreed it*. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." God wills it and that stands for us as a sufficient reason. And God is working it. Omnipotence is on the side of Christ. We see Him not yet at the head of His Heavenly armies, but He is there and He is even now going forth conquering and to conquer—and everything that happens is working out the decree that Christ must be King of kings, and Lord of lords!

III. Not only does Christ reign and must Christ reign, but THERE IS A PROGRESS ABOUT HIS KINGDOM. It is growing. It becomes more and more visible among the sons of men. I am not going into prophecies—I

leave them for wiser persons than I am. I am more at home in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John than in the deeps of Revelation—but this one thing I do know from the Word of the Lord, that, first of all, *"He must reign" lovingly over all His elect*. Some of them are hard to bring in, but they must come, sooner or later. Christ Himself said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." Some of them are with us now—they have long resisted Mercy's call, but they will have to yield! Sovereign Grace has determined it, so yield they must. The Lord says, "Compel them to come in," and come in they must, for, "He must reign." He will not suffer one of the sheep He bought with His blood to be lost in the mountains, or one single soul that He ransomed from the enemy to abide forever in captivity. "He must reign" over them and He will! And the day shall come when He shall pass all His sheep, one by one, under the hand of Him that counts them—and they will all be there, all with the blood mark upon them as they come through the gate—and the count of the flock shall be complete, not one shall be devoured by the wolf. The Shepherd shall say to His Father in that day, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost."

It also seems to me to be clear from the Scriptures that *in future ages, Jesus Christ will reign over all nations*. I do not believe that the great drama of the world's history will end till the Truth of God is triumphant. I read, concerning the Messiah, "He also shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust." The North shall give up, and the South shall no longer keep back, but they shall bring His sons from afar and His daughters from the ends of the earth. I cannot help expecting a period when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Happy day! Oh, that it might soon arrive! Push on with mercy's work, O missionaries and evangelists! Toil on, preachers and teachers, for, "He must reign." Ours is not a losing cause—Jesus must yet subdue the nations and be acknowledged by them as Lord and God!

I also know that He must *one day reign over all mankind*, whether by their willing consent, or in spite of their opposition, "for to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"—

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

And over and above that, I look for a time when *Jesus Christ will reign upon this earth over all nature.* When all His enemies being subdued, the new Jerusalem shall come down out of Heaven upon the earth, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Read the Revelation and you will find that much which we generally apply to Heaven is really a description of what is to take place upon this earth. I hope it is not mere poetic fancy that leads me to believe that the mists, which now swathe this planet and make her dim in comparison with her sister stars, will one day all be swept away and she shall shine out as bright as in that pristine morning when the sons of God shouted for joy at the sight of the new creation! I

think it is no fiction to believe that the day shall come when restored manhood, in connection with the personal reign of Christ, shall have dominion over all the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the sea—and when it shall not be a metaphor, but a realized fact that—"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." When whispers of blasphemy shall not merely be drowned in thunders of adoration, but shall not even be known—when the last taint and trace of sin shall have disappeared and the earth shall shine as if she had never been defiled, and the days of her mourning shall be forever ended! And, "Glory, glory, glory," shall be the song from sunrise to sunset and the night watches shall be kept with music of praise, and angels shall go to and fro between the Throne above and the Throne below, and the new Heavens and the new earth shall be seen, wherein dwells righteousness—

"Hallelujah!—Hark! The sound
From the center to the skies
Wakes above, beneath, around,
All creation's harmonies!
See Jehovah's banner furled,
His sword sheathed! He speaks—'tis done!
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son!"

Then comes the grand climax when He shall "put all enemies under His feet"—not annihilate them, not exterminate them, not convert them—but put them under His feet. There shall still be a devil but He shall be a devil under Christ's feet. Lost spirits there shall still be, but the great Conqueror shall hold them down beneath His almighty heels. Death shall be destroyed—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." We shall remember that men died. We shall ourselves remember that we passed beneath the power of death, but all the bitterness of death will be past as far as we are concerned. Through Christ's death, eternal life has become ours. Oh, what a prospect opens up before me! My time flies so nimbly, as it always does when I have such a subject as this, so I must forbear to speak of it as I gladly would. But let your faith project itself into the glorious future of which I have been reminding you. It may be much nearer than you have imagined. If you listen intently, you may hear the chariot wheels of the coming King! Be ready to greet Him whenever He comes! It may be that tonight, before the clock has sounded out the midnight hour, the cry may be heard in Heaven and earth, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" And starting from your beds, you will have to meet Him. Will you be ready to hail Him joyfully as your long-expected King, or will you have to meet Him dolefully and to be trod beneath His feet? "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."

So I close with this question—let each one take it to heart as best he may and may the Spirit of God send it home!—*How do I stand in relation to the great event thus predestinated?* What is my connection with the triumph of Christ? Am I one of His enemies? Suppose a gnat should be able to plunge itself into the inconceivably fierce heat that burns from the orb of day—its instant destruction must follow—and it must be so

with you, also, if you are opposed to Christ! You potsherd of earth, strive with other potsherds like yourself! For you to strive with Jesus is for a potsherd to strive against a rod of iron which will break it in pieces! There is no hope of success for you, so give up the hopeless enterprise. Your utter insignificance will make your opposition to be contemptible in that day when the intelligences of the universe shall judge things aright.

What then? Had we not better yield? I will not say because we must, but because we ought. For, in this case, Christ's might is on the side of right and it is no disgrace to a man to yield to might when it is allied with right. "I yield to Christ" says one. How far do you yield? Do you yield so far as to be saved by Him? "Yes," you say. Do you yield so far as to be forgiven by Him? "Yes," you say. Do you yield so far as to become His disciple? "Yes," you say. But do you yield that He should reign over you—that you should do as He bids you and not do what He forbids? Shall He be King over you? If you want to have Him on any other terms than these, you cannot have Him at all, for, "He must reign"—

"Yet know (nor of the terms complain)
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign!
To reign and with no partial sway—
Thoughts must be slain that disobey."

Will you have Him to thus reign over you? This is the all-important point! Alas, many say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Be not you so senseless as this, but yield to Jesus Christ and let Him be your Lord and King! If you will not do so, I must again remind you of the dread alternative. You must either let Him reign over you, or else you will have to lie beneath His feet! Have you ever reckoned what will be the weight of the rejected love of God Incarnate who died for sinners and yet is rejected by myriads despite His unspeakable love? Take your pens and calculate that weight if you can—Omnipotence indignant that Eternal Love was slighted! Omniscience aroused to anger by the fact that Divine Compassion, such as could never have been dreamt of, was trampled underfoot by impudent sons of men! In the name of the God who made the Heavens and the earth and who made each one of you, I entreat you to yield to that Christ who is your rightful King! As sinners, yield yourselves by trusting in Him! As men, yield yourselves to obey His commands! In the name of Him who will come with sound of trumpet and with angel guards attending Him, swift to judge and stern to punish, I implore you to bow before Him now! As though I felt death's cold hand upon me and heard a voice saying to me, "Speak out now, man, for the last time, and obey your King's command," so I speak in the name of Him who will make earth and Heaven reel beneath His awful Presence when He comes to judge the quick and the dead!

In the name of Him who will shut the gates of Mercy on all those who reject His Gospel, I do not merely ask you, or beseech you, but I *command you*, in His name, to repent and be converted! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but He that believes not shall be damned." O God, acknowledge this message, for it is Your own Truth! Prove it to be so, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

1 CORINTHIANS 15.

Verses 1, 2. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.* What was this Gospel of which Paul thought so highly and which he says is the means of our salvation? Did it consist in sundry doctrinal statements? No, it *contained* doctrinal statements, but it did not consist entirely of them. Here is Paul's declaration concerning the Gospel.

3. *For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* This is the solid basis of the Gospel.

4. *And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* This is the very keystone of the Gospel arch—the Christ who died on the Cross and was buried in Joseph's tomb, "rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." This great Truth of Christ's Resurrection is so important that Paul dwells upon it at length.

5. *And that He was seen of Cephas.* Peter saw Him.

5, 6. *Then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present day.* When the Epistle was written.

6-8. *But some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me, also, as of one born out of due time.* There is no fact, in all history, that is so well attested as the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Whether there ever was such a person as Julius Caesar might be contested, though there were, doubtless, thousands of witnesses who saw him and many who wrote about him. But as to whether Christ rose from the dead, no candid mind can entertain a doubt! He was seen by great companies of Believers and by various individuals who had long known Him most intimately and who had many opportunities of judging whether they were deceived or not. Christ's Resurrection is not only well attested, but it is also the most important fact that ever happened in the history of the world, as Paul goes on to show.

9-14. *For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the Grace of God I am what I am: and His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now if Christ is preached that He rose from the dead, how say among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* "We are deceivers, and you are deceived, and the whole Christian system crumbles into dust unless Christ did really rise from the dead."

15. *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be*

that the dead rise not. Between Christ and His people, there is a union which can never be broken, so that if He rose from the dead, they also must rise. If we are one with Him, who shall separate us? And if we cannot be separated, then we must share and share alike with Him.

16-19. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* To have been quickened into a life which gives great pain and sorrow would be a miserable thing if this were not compensated by the hope of Glory which that life has brought to us! A man who has been always poor can bear his poverty. But let him taste of wealth and luxury for a while and then go back to poverty and how keen is the pang he feels! And let a man be quickened to know God and to rejoice in the new life—and then be told that there is no hereafter and he is, indeed, "of all men most miserable."

20-22. *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* All that were in Adam died in Adam—and all that are in Christ live in Christ and shall rise in Christ!

23-26. *But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must return till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* Death is an enemy, but it is the last one. And it is an enemy that shall be destroyed, but it shall be destroyed last.

27, 28. *For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in all.* There will, one day, be an end of the Mediatorial system. Christ shall have restored us to the Father and then He, as our Head, and we, as making up the family of the redeemed, shall rejoice in the God who is "All in all."

29-32. *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I affirm by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.* If there is no resurrection, the philosophy of the Epicureans is a true one. If we are to come an end when we die, let us enjoy life while we can. If it is to be a short life, let it be a merry one. You see to what a conclusion this theory would lead us, so let us start back from it with horror! The logical consequence convicts the statement of falsehood. There *is* a future state and there *is* to be a resurrection of the body.

33-35. *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manner. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of*

God: I speak this to your shame. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? You know the almost endless questions that may be asked about this matter and you know the snares into which a man may fall if he begins to pry curiously into this mystery. Paul will have no prying into the mystery—and somewhat tartly he answers.

36. *You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it dies.* Would you take a seed into your hand and begin to argue, "How can that little seed ever become a flower?" Could you guess, apart from observation, what kind of flower would come out of such a seed as that? You would make a hundred foolish guesses if you tried it! So is it concerning the resurrection of the body—in due time we shall know and we shall see—but until then, we must wait and trust.

37, 38. *And that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain—perhaps wheat, or of some other grain: but God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed its own body.* Every man shall have his own body. There will be differences and peculiarities, even as there are here—and we shall, therefore, know each other.

39-42. *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption.* You know all about that.

42. *It is raised in incorruption.* What an anticipation for us!

43. *It is sown in dishonor.* For with all the honor that we can pay to our departed dear ones, it is a dishonor to them to have to lie encased in a coffin, in the cold clay of the cemetery.

43. *It is raised in glory.* Oh, the splendor of that resurrection!

43. *It is sown in weakness.* It is so weak that it cannot get into its own last resting place, but must be tenderly laid there by others.

43, 44. *It is raised in power: it is sown a natural body.* A soulish body, a body fitted for the human soul.

44. *It is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* A body fitted for the newborn spirit which is given in regeneration.

45-48. *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy.* You and I have every evidence about us that we are earthy!

48. *And as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are Heavenly.* Glory be to the name of Christ, we belong to Him and already the Heavenly light begins to shine upon us! We are getting ready to soon put on the garments of immortality!

49-51. *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep.* For some will be here when Christ comes again to this earth.

51-58. *But we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? 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.* Therefore, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, "Let us weep and lament"? Oh, no! That is not the Apostle's inference. Therefore, let us throw down our weapons and say, "It is no good to continue the fight, for we must all die"? Far from it!

58. *Be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* "You know," because Christ has risen and because you also shall rise and because there is a reward of Grace laid up in store for you! The Lord's people may die, but the Lord's Church never dies and the Lord Himself, the Ever-Living One, it always with us, blessed be His holy name!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—426, 338, 417.

—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.

MARY'S MAGNIFICAT
NO. 2941

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1875.

"And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."
Luke 1:46, 47.

MARY'S Magnificat was a song of faith. You have thought, perhaps, that you could easily have sung this song if you had been as highly favored as she was, but are you sure that you could have done so? Have you ever realized the difficulties under which this hymn was composed and sung? If not, permit me to remind you that the wondrous birth which had been promised to her had not then been accomplished and in her mind there must have been a consciousness that many would doubt her statements. The visitation of the angel and all its consequences would seem to be ridiculous and even impossible to many to whom she might venture to mention the circumstances—no, more than that—would subject her to many cruel insinuations which would scandalize her character! And that which conferred upon her the highest honor that ever fell to woman would, in the judgment of many, bring upon her the greatest possible dishonor. We know what suspicions even Joseph had and that it was only a Revelation from God that could remove them. Mary would have been sorely troubled if she had been influenced by her natural feelings and had been swayed by external circumstances.

It was only her wondrous faith—in some respects, her *matchless* faith, for no other woman had ever had such a blessed trial of faith as she had—it was only her matchless faith that she should be the mother of the holy Child Jesus, that sustained her. Truly blessed was she in believing that and blessed, indeed, was she in that even before there was an accomplishment of the things that were told her by the angel, she could sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Unbelief would have said, "Wait." Fear would have said, "Be silent." But faith could not wait and could not be silent! She must sing and sing she did most sweetly. I call your attention to this fact because when we ourselves have a song to sing unto the Lord, we may perhaps be tempted not to sing it till our hopes are accomplished and our faith has been exchanged for fact. Brothers and Sisters, if this is your case, do not wait, for your song will spoil if you do! There is another song to be sung for the accomplished mercy, but there is a song to be sung now for the *promised* mercy! Therefore, let not the present hour lose the song which is due to it.

I am not going to expound the text so much as to ask you to practice it with me. So, first, *let us sing.* Secondly, *let us sing after Mary's manner.* And, thirdly, *let us sing with Mary's purpose.*

I. Firstly, then, LET US SING.

Let us sing, first, *because singing is the natural language of joy.* Do not even the ungodly sing when their corn and wine increase? Have they not their harvest hymns and vintage songs? Do they not sing right merrily when they go forth to the dance? And if the wicked sing thus, shall the righteous be silent? Are the jubilant songs all made for the ungodly and the dirges for us? Are they to lift high the festive strain and we to be satisfied with the "Dead March" in *Saul*, or some such melancholy music as that? No, Brothers and Sisters, if they have joy, much more have we! Their joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, but ours is the shining of a star that shall never be quenched. Let us sing, then, for our joy abounds and abides. Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." If the joy of the Lord is your strength, why not express it in holy song? Why should not your joys have a tongue as well as the joys of ungodly men? When warriors win victories, they shout. Have we won no victories through Jesus Christ our Lord? When men celebrate their festivals, they sing. Are there any festivals equal to ours—our Paschal Supper, our passage of the Red Sea, our Jubilee, our expectation of the coronation of our King, our hymn of victory over all the hosts of Hell? Oh surely if the children of earth sing, the children of Heaven ought to sing far more often, far more loudly, far more harmoniously than they do! Come, then, let us sing because we are glad in the Lord!

Let us sing, too, *because singing is the language of Heaven.* It is thus that they express themselves up yonder. Many of the songs and other sounds of earth never penetrate beyond the clouds. Sighs and groans and clamors have never reached those regions of serenity and purity! But they do sing there. Heaven is the home of sacred song and we are the children of Heaven. Heaven's light is in us! Heaven's smile is upon us! Heaven's all belongs to us and, therefore—

"We would begin the music here,
And so our souls should rise.
Oh, for some Heavenly notes to bear
Our passions to the skies!"

The music of joy and the music of Heaven should often be upon our lips in the form of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Let us also sing *because singing is sweet to the ears of God.* I think I may venture to say that even the song of birds is sweet to Him, for in the 104th Psalm, where it is written, "The Lord shall rejoice in His works," it is also mentioned that the birds "sing among the branches." Is there anything sweeter in the world than to wake up, about four or five o'clock in the morning, just at this time of the year and hear the birds singing as if they would burst their little throats and, pouring out in a kind of contest of sweetness, their little hearts in joyous song? I believe that in the wild places of the earth, where no human foot has ever defiled the soil, God loves to walk. When I have been alone among the fir trees, inhaling their sweet fragrance, or have wandered up the hill where the

loudest voice could not be answered by another voice, for no man was there, I have felt that God was there and that He loved to listen to the song of birds that He had created. Yes, even the harshly croaking ravens He hears when they cry!

I do not think that mere music is sweet to God's ears when it comes from man in lewdness, attended with lascivious thoughts. And even sacred music which is sweet in itself, when used for mere amusement, must be an abomination to the Most High when it is so degraded. But He loves to hear us sing when we sing His praises from our hearts. Do you not delight to hear your own children sing and is there anything sweeter than a song from a child? At the Orphanage, the other day, they brought me a little boy who had just been taken in. I felt a special interest in him because his father had been a minister of the Gospel. They told him to sing to me and it was a very sweet song—one of Mr. Sankey's hymns—which came from his lips. His singing quite touched my heart. Had it been my own child, I do not doubt that it would have touched my heart still more! And God loves to hear His children sing. Even your discords, as long as they do not affect your heart, but are only of sound and not of soul, shall please Him. What a beautiful simile is used in the 22nd Psalm—"O You that inhabit the praises of Israel!" Just as God's ancient people, during the feast of tabernacles, dwelt under booths made from the branches of trees, so Jehovah is represented as having made for Himself a tabernacle out of the praises of His people! They are only like fading branches that soon turn brown, yet the great Lord of All condescends to sit beneath them and as we, each one, bring a new branch, plucked from the tree of Mercy, we help to make a new tabernacle for the Most High to dwell in!

One reason why they sing in Heaven is *because all there are seeking to please the heart of God.* They sing not merely that they may practice Psalmody and have their voices in good order, or that they may interest the strangers who are constantly arriving from these nether lands, or even that they may please each other and delight the angels, but unto the Lord is their perpetual song, for He delights in it. Let us also sing unto Him as long as we live. Sometimes it would be well for us to make hymns, rather than to repress the making of them, as we often do. The Moravians were accustomed to gather up in their churches the very poorest rhymes and dibbles that were made by the brethren—and they used to shape them as best they could into something like a singable form. Their hymnbook has in it a great number of hymns that I should not like to hear you sing! But, for all that, I like the spirit that was in the early Moravians. "Let us each one try to make a hymn," they said. "Let us encourage one another to express some personal experience of our life, for we have each one of us had some special point of God's Grace illustrated in us." I would that the men who can so well write popular songs and give to the people attractive words and tunes to sing in the street or in the home, would consecrate their talents to a better purpose by writing hymns and spiritual songs to the praise and glory of God. We would then be the richer in our Psalmody, as, indeed, we always are

when God sends us a true revival of religion, for revivals of religion always bring with them new hymns and spiritual songs.

But if we cannot ourselves compose hymns, let us sing those that somebody else has made and let us sing the right ones—those that suit us best. There are some hymns that I cannot sing at present—they are too high for me, but I shall sing them, by-and-by. There are others that are too low for me—I cannot get down to such depths of doubt and trembling as the poets seem to have been in when they composed them. Every Christian should have some particular hymn that he loves best, so that when his heart is merriest, he should sing that hymn. How many good old people I have known who used to sit and sing, or walk about the house, just humming or crooning—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

Some have other favorites, but whatever our choice is, I think it is well to have a hymn which, although we have not ourselves written it, has, nevertheless, been made our own by our circumstances and experiences. When we have fixed on such a hymn as that, let us sing it unto the Lord again and again!

Let us not be among these who make excuses for not singing. One says that he has no voice. Then, sing with your heart, Brother! Perhaps even your voice would improve if you used it more, but if there is such a grating noise about it that you dare not sing when another person is listening, get *alone* and sing to the Lord.

Do not say that you are unable to sing because you are always in company. I would have you make it your general rule to sing in almost any company where your lot may be cast, though, sometimes it is not right to cast your pearls before swine. Watch your opportunity. If all in the room are silent, perhaps you had better be silent, too. But if one of your workfellows feels that he must sing a song and he has taken the liberty to do it, now is your turn and you may sing, too. I remember being on Mount St. Bernard, spending a night with the monks at the hospice. There was a piano which had been given by the Prince of Wales, and the different persons who were spending the night there, sang and played by turns. One sang a Spanish hymn and another a German hymn. And when it came to our turn, we sang—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

And why should we not sing it? Had we not as much a right to sing as the other people had? Do not abate your rights and privileges, dear Friends, but if others sing, you sing, too, and never mind who listens! It will do no man any harm to hear the praises of the Lord!

And do not say that you cannot sing because of your occupation! Your hands may be just as busy as usual even while the songs of Zion are rising from your lips. You may even be writing, or otherwise mentally occupied and yet, at the same time, your heart may be ascending to God in praise!

Make no excuse because you are ill. Sometimes a little song between the sheets is very sweet in the ears of God, even though it has to be accompanied by sighs and groans. Pain makes every note come out with great effort, yet I believe God bends down His ears to hear such singing as that. I have known birds in cages sing better than those outside—and the Lord sometimes puts us in a cage on purpose that He may hear us sing the sweeter. He loves to hear His sick children sing His praises upon their beds and His high praises in the midst of the furnace of affliction. Are you very poor? Then sing from your heart to the Lord and your music shall be better than silver and gold unto God! Even death, itself, need not stay our songs—let us sing right up to this side of the Glory gate—there is no fear about our keeping on with our song on the other side! As long as we can sing here, let us do so, praising the Lord right up to the last hour of our lives—then shall our voices be tuned immediately to noble songs, for in a moment, we shall—

"Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving-kindness in the skies!"

II. Now, passing on to our second point, LET US SING AFTER MARY'S MANNER, as far as that manner may be transferable to us. No bird ought to try to sing exactly like another. The blackbird ought not to imitate the thrush, nor the thrush the canary—let them all keep to their own notes and let each one of us sing his own song unto the Lord. Yet I think we shall see that there is something about Mary's music that will suit us all.

First, *let us sing reverently*. Mary was very joyful, but there was nothing in her song that would strike you as being irreverent, vulgar, or commonplace. I am not squeamish about music, but I must confess that I hardly like to hear the high praises of God sung to the tune of a comic song or of a dance. There is a certain congruity about things that must be observed and some good music may have associated with it such strange ideas that we had better let it alone till those associations have died out, lest, haply, while we are uttering holy words, some people may be reminded by the tune of unholy things! Mary sings very reverently and so should we. And though I like some of the new tunes very much and am glad that they are so popular, yet, for my own part, I like a good old Psalm tune much better. It seems to me like going away from the snows of Lebanon to seek after the stale cisterns of earth when we leave the old music, and the old hymns, and the old Psalms for any of your modern melodies. Still, if you can praise God better with the new songs, do so, but let it always be done reverently.

But, secondly, *Mary praised God with personal devotion*. Notice how intensely personal her song is. Elizabeth is there, yet Mary sings as though she were all alone—"My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." It seemed as though her song meant something like this, "Elizabeth is glad, but I, Mary, am also glad, and I have a gladness which is all my own, which even Elizabeth cannot know. 'My soul does magnify the Lord.'" It ought to be so in our congregations—we should join with our fellow Christians in their songs of praise, but we must always mind that our personal note is not omitted—"My soul does magnify the Lord." Do you not think that some of

you too often forget this? You come to hear sermons and sometimes you do not come to the assembly as much as you ought for the purpose of directly and distinctly praising God in your own personality and individuality. The music is delightful to us as it rises from thousands of voices, but to God it can be pleasant only as it comes from each heart. "My soul"—whether other people are praising the Lord or not—"*my* soul"—for I have a personal indebtedness to You, my God, and there is a personal union between You and me. I love You and You love me and, therefore, even if all other souls are dumb, "my soul does magnify the Lord." In this fashion, dear Brothers and Sisters, have a song to yourself and mind that it is thoroughly your own.

Thirdly, *in Mary's song we see great spirituality*. You observe how she puts this matter twice over—"My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She is far from being content with mere lip service. Her language is poetic, but she is not satisfied with her language. I have no doubt that her voice was exceedingly sweet, but she does not say anything about that, but she does speak of, "my soul," and, "my spirit." O dear Friends, let us never be satisfied with any kind of worship which does not take up the whole of our inner and higher nature! It is what you are *within*, that you really are before the living God! And it is quite a secondary matter how loud the chant may be, or how sweet the tune of your hymn, or how delightfully you join in it unless your spirit, your soul, truly praises the Lord! You can sometimes do this in "songs without words"—and he that has no voice for singing can, after this fashion, magnify the Lord with his soul and spirit.

Mary also praised the Lord intelligently. Notice how she sings, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." You observe that she varies the names which she uses and she varies them with great propriety. She magnifies Jehovah. She makes Him great, which is the proper thing to do concerning Jehovah. But she rejoices in God, her Savior. In that aspect, her Lord comes nearer to her and becomes more immediately the object of joy to her, so she rejoices in God her Savior. She dwells first upon Jehovah's power to save—"My soul does magnify *the Lord*." Then she dwells upon His willingness to save—"My spirit has rejoiced in *God my Savior*." She seems to see the two points—the greatness and the goodness of the Lord Jehovah, yet her Savior. The Ruler and Lawgiver, yet the gracious One who pardons and blots out sin.

Mary praised God enthusiastically, for the reduplication of the terms, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior," indicates the fervor and ardor of her praise. It is natural to us to repeat ourselves when we begin to glow with holy gladness, so Mary stays, "My soul, my natural life—my spirit, my newborn, my intense, diviner life—my soul, my mind, my intellect—my spirit, my affections, my heart, my emotions, my entire being, my soul and spirit praise the Lord." She did not need to add that her body praised the Lord, for the very sound of her voice bore witness that her body was joining with her soul and spirit—so that her triple nature was magnifying the Lord. There was enthusiasm in her song and if ever any of us ought to be stirred to the very depths of our spirit, it is when we are praising the Lord. Sing,

Brothers and Sisters, sing sweetly, but sing loudly, too, unto God, your strength!

Further, we may sing, as Mary did, Divinely. I mean, of course, with regard to the object of her song. So let it be with us. "My soul does magnify"—a Doctrine? A church! A priest?—God forbid! "My soul does magnify *the Lord* and my spirit has rejoiced in"—the success of my pastor's ministry? Yes, it may do so, but that is one of the inferior themes for joy. "My spirit has rejoiced in" my own success in casting out devils and working miracles? Yes, it may do that, but still, it would be better to rejoice that our names are written in Heaven. The subject of Mary's joy is nothing low, nothing less than Heavenly—"My spirit has rejoiced in *God my Savior*." If that is your declaration, you may well lift up your voice and sing—

"Go up, go up, my heart,
Dwell with your God above."

Note, again, that *Mary sang evangelically* and we must mind that we always do the same, for I am afraid that there are some popular hymns which have something that is not Gospel in them. And whenever there is a hymn that has the slightest taint of that sort in it, we ought to abandon it forever, however sweet its poetry may be. Mary sings, "My spirit does rejoice in God my Savior." She was no Socinian and she was no Romanist—she knew that she needed a Savior and that she needed a God for her Savior, so her spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. When we reach the highest point in our devotions, we still need a Savior. I do not at all like the boastful talk about "the higher life" in which some people seem to revel. We cannot have too high a life, but, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is about as big a prayer as I can manage at present. And often does my soul pray the dying thief's prayer with such earnestness that his petition is forced to my lips, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." The place of the perfect does not suit me yet, at any rate, but the place of the publican and of the penitent more becomes me, as I think it does the most of us. Oh, yes, we still need a Savior! So, like Mary, we will sing about our Savior and even if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we cannot do without the blood of Jesus Christ constantly cleansing us from all sin—for we do still sin.

Once more, *Mary praised the Lord with assurance*. It is a grand thing to be able to sing, "My soul *does* magnify the Lord, and my spirit *has* rejoiced in God"—"who will, I hope, and pray, and sometimes believe, be my Savior"? I have spoilt the music—have I not—by putting in those words of my own? It goes better as Mary sang it, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She was quite assured of that fact and had not any doubts or fears concerning it! It is well to get such a firm grip of the Savior that we rest in Him completely and so can sing to His praise. "Oh!" says one, "I cannot praise Jesus as I would because of my sins." And I reply to that remark—But my dear Friend, would you praise Him if you had no sins? Would He be needed by you and wanted by you then? Could He be of any use to you then? Would you feel any gratitude to Him? If you were not sinners, of what use would a Savior be to you? But we praise Him because though we are conscious of sin, we are equally

conscious of cleansing in His precious blood! We take Him to be our All-in-All because we ourselves are nothing at all! If we had been of any account, He would have been just so much less, but, since we are nothing, there is the opportunity for Him to be All-in-All to us. Let us sing, then, to His praise! May God the Holy Spirit teach us to do so, even as He taught the Virgin Mary!

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, LET US SING WITH MARY'S PURPOSE. That was twofold—"My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

The first part of our PURPOSE, then, should be, *"Magnify the Lord."* How can we do that? We cannot really make God great, though that is the meaning of the word. How, then, can we magnify Him?

Well, first, let us think of His greatness. It will be really praising Him if we thus *think* of Him. You need not speak, but just ponder, weigh, consider, contemplate, meditate, ruminate upon the attributes of the Most High. Begin with His mercy if you cannot begin with His holiness, but take the attributes one by one and think about them. I do not know a single attribute of God which is not wonderfully quickening and powerful to a true Christian. As you think of any one of them, it will ravish you and carry you quite away. You will be lost in wonder, love and praise as you consider it. You will be astonished and amazed as you plunge into its wondrous depths and everything else will vanish from your vision. That is one way of making God great—by often thinking about Him!

The next way to make God great is by often drinking Him into yourself. The lilies stand and worship God simply by being beautiful—by drinking in the sunlight which makes them so charming and the dewdrops which glisten upon them. Stand before the Lord and drink Him in—do you understand what I mean by this expression? You go down to the seaside, when you are sickly, and you get out on a fine morning and there is a delightful breeze coming up from the sea. And you feel as if it came in at every pore of your body and you seem to be drinking in health at every breath you breathe! Do just like that in a spiritual sense with God—go down to the great sea of Godhead—magnify it by thinking how great it is and then take it into your very soul. God cannot be greater than He is, but He can be greater in you than He is at present! He cannot increase—there cannot be more of God than there is—but there may be more of God in you. More of His great love, more of His perfect holiness, more of His Divine power may be manifested in you and more of His likeness and light may be revealed through you. Therefore, make Him great in that respect.

And when you have done that, by His help, then try to make Him great by what you give forth, even as the rose, when she has satisfied herself with the sweet shower, no sooner does the clear shining come after the rain than she deluges the garden all around with her delicious perfume. Do you the same—first drink in all you can of the Deity and then exhale Him—breathe out again, in your praise, in your holy living, in your prayers, in your earnest zeal, in your devout spirit, the God whom you have breathed in! You cannot make more of God than He is, but you can

make God more consciously present to the minds of others and make them think more highly of God by what you say and what you do!

I should like to be able to say, as long as I live, "My soul does magnify the Lord." I should like to have this as the one motto of my life from this moment until I close my eyes in death, "My soul does magnify the Lord." I would gladly preach that way! I would gladly eat and drink that way. I would even sleep that way, so that I could truthfully say, "I have no wish but that God should be great, and that I should help to make Him great in the eyes of others." Will not you also, dear Friends, make this the motto of your life-Psalm?

Then Mary added, "*and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*" Is there any true praise without joy? Is not praise twin brother to joy? And do not joy and praise always dwell together? Rejoice, then, Beloved, not in the scenes you see, for they are fleeting, but rejoice in your Savior—in Him above everything else! Never let any earthly thing or any human being stand higher in your joy then Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Rejoice in Him as most surely yours, for, dear Brothers and Sisters, as a Believer, Christ *is* yours. If you are resting in Him, He belongs to you, so rejoice in your own Savior, for all of Christ is yours—not half a Savior, not one of His wounds for you and one for me, but all His wounds for you, and all for me! Not His thoughtful head for you, and His loving heart for me, but His head and His heart all for you and all for me—He is my Savior, He is your Savior—from His feet that were pierced by the nails to His head that was crowned with thorns!

Oh, how we ought to rejoice in Him, whatever our union with Him may cost us! Mary did not know what that wondrous visitation would cost her—and it was to cost her much, as Simeon said to her—"Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also." But even though the sword must go through her soul, it mattered not to her, for unto her a Child was to be born, unto her a Son was to be given, who was to be called "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." So, if the fact that Christ is ours involves the bearing of the Cross, we are glad to bear it. It may involve suffering and shame and a thousand temptations and trials—if it is so, each true Believer can say with Mary, "'My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior'—in what He is, in what He is to me, in what He is to all His elect, in what He is to poor sinners, in what He is to God, in what He will be when He comes again and in what He will be throughout eternity." If a little bird has nothing else to do but sing, it has a great deal to do. And if you and I should have, tonight, when we get home, nothing to do but to praise the Lord, we have the best employment out of Heaven! We must not think that Christians are wasting time when they pray and praise. Some fussy folk seem to imagine that we must always be talking, or attending meetings, or giving away tracts. Well, do as much as you can of all good things, but still, there must be times for quiet meditation, times for reading, times for praying and times for praising. There is no waste about such things—they are among the best spent hours that we ever have. To work is the stalk of the wheat, but to praise is the full corn in the ear. You and I,

Beloved, are living to praise God. This is the culmination, the very apex of the pyramid of existence, pointing straight up to Heaven—that we praise God with all our heart and soul.

So then, to conclude, here is something for every child of God to do. You can all magnify the Lord and you may all rejoice in Him. You cannot all preach. If you could, who would there be to hear you? If all were preachers, where would be the hearers? But you can all praise God. If there is any Brother or Sister here who has only one talent, let not such an one say, "I cannot do anything." You can magnify the Lord and you can rejoice in Him! To be happy in Him is to praise God. The mere fact of our being happy in the Lord makes music in His ears. If you are one of His children, you can be happy in Him, so get out of those doleful dumps and cast out that spirit of murmuring and complaint which so often possesses you! Pray the Lord to help you shake off your natural tendency to look on the dark side of everything, and say, "No, no, I must not do that. After all, I am not on the road to Hell—I am on the way to Heaven! And this world is the ante-room to Heaven, so my soul shall magnify the Lord and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Savior."

I believe that if we could brighten the faces of all the saints and anoint them with the oil of gladness, we would do more than anything else could do to spread Christianity. I mean if we could make the children of the King rejoice, we should cause worldlings to ask, "Where does this joy come from?" And as they asked this question, we would give them the answer and so the Gospel would be sure to spread.

My closing word is concerning those who cannot magnify the Lord and cannot rejoice in God their Savior, those who cannot sing to God's praise and who never have any joy in the Lord. Then how can they be His children? God has many children and they have many infirmities, but He never yet had a dumb child. They can, every one, say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and they can all sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Prayer and praise are two of the sure signs of a true-born heir of Heaven. If you never praise God, my Friend, you can never go to Heaven. Till the Lord has taken out of you the praise of other things, the love of other things and given you the Grace to love Him and praise Him, you cannot enter into His Glory. May some poor soul here that has not anything for which it could praise itself, begin now to praise that God who freely forgives the greatest sin and who is willing to cleanse the very blackest sinner, for He has given Christ to die, the Just for the unjust, that He may bring them unto God! Oh, begin to magnify Him and rejoice in Him now, and you will never want to leave off doing so, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 1:39-56.

Verses 39-41. *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and*

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. We do not read that Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit, possibly because she was always in that condition, living very near to God in hallowed fellowship. Some of us have occasional fillings with the Holy Spirit, but blessed are they who dwell in Him, having been baptized into Him and enjoying continual nearness to God as the blessed result.

42, 43. *And she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Those who are most holy are most humble. You will always find those two things go together. Elizabeth was the older woman, but, inasmuch as Mary was more highly favored than she was, she asked, "Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should some to me?" Genuine Christians do not exalt themselves above their fellow Believers, but they have a self-depreciatory spirit and each one esteems others better than himself.

44, 45. *For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* What a benediction that is! If any of us truly believe God's Word, we are blessed from that very fact, for God's promise never misses its due performance. Men find it convenient to forget their promises, but God never forgets—He takes as much delight in keeping His promise as He does in making it.

46. *And Mary said.* We do not read that she spoke with a loud voice. Occasionally, the visitation of the Spirit causes excitement. Thus Elizabeth spoke with a loud voice, but Mary, though full of a rapturous joy, spoke calmly and quietly, in a royal tone of holy calm. "Mary said"—

46. *My soul does magnify the Lord.* She was weary, for she had come a long journey, but she was like Abraham's servant who said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand." So Mary will not eat until she has sung the praises of her God! "My soul does magnify the Lord."

47, 48. *And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.* Some have done so to the grief of genuine Christians, for they have apostatized from the faith and made Mary into a kind of goddess and, therefore, Protestant Christians have gone to the other extreme and have not always given her the respect which is due her.

49, 50. *For He that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.* Notice how Mary quotes Scripture. Her mind seems to have been saturated with the Word of God, as though she had learned the Books of Scripture through and had them "by heart" in more senses than one. And it in significant that though the Holy Spirit was speaking by her, yet even He quoted the older Scriptures in preference to uttering new sentences. What honor He put upon the Old Testament by so continually quoting it in the New Testament, even as the Lord Jesus also did. Let us, too, prize every part of God's Word. Let us soak in it till we

are saturated with Scriptural expressions! We cannot find any better ones, for there are none.

51-53. *He has showed strength with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the imagination of the hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.* Mary's song reminds us of the Song of Hannah, yet there is a different tone in it. Hannah's has more of exultation over enemies cast down, but Mary's is more becoming to the new dispensation as Hannah's was to the old. There is a gentle quietness of tone about the Magnificat all through, yet even Mary cannot help rejoicing that the Lord "has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."

54-56. *He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed forever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.* Wondrous as her future was to be, she would not neglect the duties of her home. When any of you are privileged to share high spiritual enjoyments, mind that you always return to your own home fit for your domestic duties. We read that David, after he had danced before the Ark, "returned to bless his household." We must never set up God's altar in opposition to the lawful duties of our home. The two *together* will make us strong for service and enable us to glorify the name of the Lord!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—775, 34, 765.

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

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
NO. 2942

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1877.

"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.

IT seems to me that the Lord's Supper should be received by us often. When the Apostle says, in our text, "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup," and our Lord said, in instituting the ordinance, "This do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me," I will not say that their words absolutely teach that we should frequently come to the Communion Table, but I do think they give us a hint that if we act rightly, we shall often observe this Supper of the Lord. Once or twice in the year can hardly be thought to be a sufficiently frequent memorial of one so dear. In the early Church, it is possible that they broke bread every day—the expression, "breaking bread from house to house," may signify that. From the records preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, it appears that when the saints came together on the first day of the week, they usually broke bread. If there is any rule as to the time for the observance of this ordinance, it surely is every Lord's day. At any rate, let it be often. Do not, dear Friends absent yourselves long from the Table, but since your Lord has instituted this Supper as a necessary and admirable reminder of His death, take care that you celebrate it often.

This Supper is, according to the verse before our text, to be received by all Christians. "This do you, as often as you drink it." It is not to the Apostles, nor to a few men who shall dare to call themselves priests, but to the members of the Church at Corinth and, by implication, to the members of all Christian Churches, that the Apostle wrote, "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." Though it is but half a dozen of the very poorest and most illiterate Christians who meet together to break bread, they are helping to proclaim Christ's death till He comes. It is the duty and the privilege of all the people of God—not merely of some of them—to observe this ordinance!

It is to be observed by eating and drinking, not by eating alone, as in the Roman Catholic church! "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." It is most strange that the Papists should have taken away the cup from the "laity" so-called, since our Lord never said to His disciples concerning the bread, "Eat you all of it," but, as if He foresaw that this error would arise, He did

say concerning the cup, as He presented it to His Apostles, "Drink you all of it." If you leave out the cup, you have marred the ordinance and, as I shall have to show you presently, you have robbed it of a great part of its meaning. In the Roman Catholic church—Roman Catholic, did I say? Why there is another church, nearer home, that is twin sister to it and is getting very much like it! And there, too, it is taught that looking at the cup does the spectators good. It is not necessary that your should "communicate," but if they see the "priest" lift the cup, it will do them great good. This is a new way of blessing souls. Salvation used to be by the hearing of the Word, but now, forsooth, it is to be by seeing fine sights! But the Apostle says, "As often as you eat this bread, and *drink this cup*"—not as often as you look on as spectators, but as often as you actually become partakers in this symbolic feast, "you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

You notice that our translators have put this sentence in the indicative, but it is probable that the marginal reading is more correct and that it may be read thus, "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, show you the Lord's death till He comes." *Endeavor* to do it—*realize* that you are doing it—let your feelings be appropriate to the meaning of the ordinance—"show you the Lord's death till He comes." As often as true Believers meet together to eat this bread, and drink this cup, they do show, both to themselves and to all who look on, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just in passing, notice that it is bread that they eat and it is wine that they drink—nothing is said about transubstantiation here! But "as often as you eat this bread"—and it is *bread* and nothing but *bread*—"and drink this cup," which still remains but a cup and its contents just what they were before—"you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

This will suffice upon the words of the text. And, now, the doctrine that I want to draw from it is that at all times when we come to the Communion Table, we show or proclaim the death of Christ. That is the great end and objective of the Lord's Supper—to set forth—to yell out anew—to proclaim afresh the death of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I. First, let us consider HOW THIS ORDINANCE DOES PROCLAIM THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

It is all very simple. There is nothing but bread broken and eaten, and wine poured out and afterwards drunk. How can this proclaim the death of Christ? Well, it does. It has done so ever since it was instituted and there are multitudes of Believers who delight to see that death set forth by it!

First, *it sets forth the painfulness of Christ's death*. It is death that is represented by these emblems, for there is the bread and there is the wine, both separate from one another. When the flesh and the blood of a person are together, they do not present to us the image of death. But the bread, which represents the flesh, altogether separate from the wine, which represents the blood, is the picture of death and death in a violent form—death by wounding, by bleeding. The separation of the life-blood from the body is the form of death which is manifestly set forth here to

all onlookers. To my mind the very bread, as we break it, seems to say, "Thus Christ becomes our food." Bread has to pass through many tortures before it becomes food to us. The wheat was sown in the ground. It was buried, it sprang up, it was exposed to cold winds and to hot sunshine before it ripened—and then it was cut down by a sharp sickle. After being cut down, it was threshed, then it was ground into flour, then the dough was kneaded into bread which was baked in an oven and cut with a knife—all of which processes may be used as *images of suffering*. So the broken bread which we eat at the Communion sets forth the suffering of Jesus. And the juice of the grape also sets forth suffering, for the clusters from the vine are flung together into the winepress and trod by the feet of men, or otherwise pressed until their life-blood spurts forth. Even so was the Savior pressed in the winepress of Jehovah's wrath till His blood was poured forth on our behalf. This Supper sets forth to all who choose to see it, the painfulness of Christ's death.

It sets forth, next, that *it was a death of a peculiar kind, a death for others*, just as that bread is for us to eat and that cup is for us to partake of. So we say, by this ordinance, to all who look on and especially to ourselves, "When the Lord Jesus died, He died for all His people." We here declare that we believe in Substitution—that Christ died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And that He, "His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." That is the teaching of this Supper, that Christ's death was a painful death and a death on behalf of others.

This Supper also shows that *we believe the death of Christ to be acceptable to God*. Why do we spread this Table here in the place where we customarily meet for worship? Is this also an act of worship? Assuredly it is and one of the highest kind! But we should not dare to put these memorials of the death of Christ before the Father if we did not know that the Father had accepted Him. But "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" and He was pleased with the Sacrifice which His Son offered. He smelled a sweet savor of rest in the death of His dear Son. Therefore, when we worship Him in the most humble manner and after the most solemn fashion, we say to the Lord, "We know that You have accepted the Atonement offered by Your dear Son and we set Him forth before all mankind as the accepted Sacrifice before His Father's face." And I think that we also mean to say by this ordinance, that *Christ's Sacrifice is complete and perfect*. We would not wish to show it to others if it were not worthy of being looked at! If it were incomplete, we might well keep it in the background until Christ had finished it. But because the cry, "It is finished," rang out from the lips of the dying Sufferer of Calvary, we rejoice to set forth His death to all who come this way! Behold and see that He has not partly paid the price, but He has paid it all! Look here—He has so finished His atoning work that He has spread a feast to which His servants may come and rejoice with exceeding joy! If the Sacrifice were not finished, it would not yet be feasting time. But it is complete and, therefore, do we proclaim it forth after this fashion.

Another great Truth of God that we teach to everybody who sees us at the Communion Table is this—*Jesus Christ has died and we live upon His death*. This bread and this wine are the emblems of His broken body and His shed blood and, therefore, we eat them and drink them, and so say to you that Christ's dying is our life. Whenever we want to get spiritually stronger, we always feed upon the Truth that Christ died for us. Do any of you deny the Doctrine of Substitution? We tell you that it is the very essence of our being—that, henceforth, it has become the wellspring of life to us! We could not be happy—we could not have any peace—if that were taken away from us! My heart speaks now in words of truth and soberness and says to you, "There is no Truth which I dare to deny, but, concerning this Truth of God of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it would be absolutely impossible for me to doubt it." Tortures and racks may tear away the strings that are bound about my heart, but they can never make me relax the hold that I have of Jesus Christ my Lord! No, the Lamb of Calvary, bleeding in our place, has become essential to our very being and we cannot, we must not, we will not becloud that blessed Doctrine of His Substitutionary Sacrifice! Is it not all-in-all to us?

We also say to dear friends who may look on at this feast that *the death of Jesus Christ has now become to us the source of our highest joy*. We are not about to celebrate a funeral. When we come to this Table, we do not come in mournful guise. I know that it has pleased the authorities of certain churches to make men kneel before what they call the altar, but why have they to kneel? Is there any passage of Scripture in which there is even the shadow of any teaching which looks that way? At the Passover, the Israelites stood with their loins girt and their staves in their hand. Why was that? Because they were expecting to go out of Egypt and were not, then, out of the land of bondage. He who is under the Law, when he eats his Passover, must eat it with his loins girt and with his staff in his hand. But how did the disciples eat the Lord's Supper? Why, reclining in the easiest posture possible! It was a most solemn supper, but it was a supper. It was the ordinary meal consecrated by the Lord to the great purpose of setting forth His death! And to make us kneel to receive it is, to my mind, to take away a great part of the teaching of it! We should sit at the Communion as easily as we possibly can—as we would at our own table—because "we which have believed do enter into rest"—and part of the teaching of the Lord's Supper is that now, in Christ, we have perfect peace and we rest in Him as we feed upon Him. This ordinance is a feast, not now a subject for sorrow, but a theme for delight!

And once more, Beloved, when we come to the Lord's Table to proclaim Christ's death, *we show it as the bond of Christian union*. The point of union among Christians is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid that it will be many long years before we shall get all Believers to agree concerning Baptism. I hope right views of that ordinance are spreading, but it does not seem to me to be a point where all Christians are likely yet to unite. But, concerning our Lord's death, all who really

are His people are agreed! If we are in Him, we rejoice in that grand foundational Truth, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and we delight to think that by His death He has redeemed us from death. So, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you cannot meet your fellow Christians on certain doctrines because some of you are strong men in Christ and others are but babes—and the babes cannot crack the nuts or eat the strong meat upon which swine feed—you can all unite in Christ! He is like the manna which suited all the Israelites in the wilderness—young or old, they could all feed on the manna and so can all the saints feed on Christ! And when we sit at the Communion Table, we say to all the world, "We are all one in Christ Jesus. We do not come to this Table as Baptists, or Episcopalians, or Methodists, or Presbyterians—we come here simply as those who form one body in Christ—they who agree to show forth to all mankind the death of our adorable Lord."

II. Secondly, let us consider WHY THE LORD HAS TAKEN MEANS TO SHOW THIS TRUTH.

There are a great many important Truths in the Bible and every Truth of God ought to be kept in remembrance, but it is not concerning every Truth that the Lord has appointed an ordinance to keep it in memory. The Doctrine of Election is one that we firmly believe, but we have no special token, type, or symbol to set it forth.

It is the death of Christ which is set forth by this memorial Supper. Why was that chosen? I answer, *because it is the most vital of all Truths*. Concerning the sacrificial death of Christ there must not be tolerated any dispute in the Christian Church. That must forever stand as a settled Doctrine of the Gospel. The atoning death of Jesus Christ once put away, you have taken the sun out of the Church's Heavens. Indeed, you have taken away all reason for the very existence of the Church of Christ! I think it was Dr. Priestley, a Unitarian, who had a brother who was a sound Calvinistic Divine and who came and visited him. And he agreed to let him preach for him one Sabbath morning, on condition that he promised not to preach on any controversial subject. The good man gave the promise, but rather regretted, afterwards, that he had done so, yet he managed to redeem his promise and also to clear his conscience, for he preached on the next Sabbath morning from this text—"Without, controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh," from which he proved that the Godhead of Christ is a Truth about which no controversy could be allowed. We put the Doctrine of His Substitutionary Sacrifice in the same category—these is no true Christianity without it! You have given us merely the shell and the husk if you take away this great central Truth of the Gospel—God's Justice vindicated by the death of His dear Son and, on that ground, free pardon published by the Grace of God to the very chief of sinners who believe in Him! This Doctrine, which some despise and decry, is the very essence of the Gospel of Christ! We have no question with regard to the truth of it, neither do we speak with bated breath concerning it, for our Lord Jesus

instituted this Supper in order to keep this Truth of God before men's minds because it is the point above all others that is vital to the Gospel.

Another reason is *because so many combat this Doctrine*. It has been the Hougomont of the great Waterloo which has been fought against Christ. All His adversaries rally against this Truth. When any man becomes unsound upon other points, if you probe deeply enough, you will find that he has become unsound upon the Doctrine of the Atonement. The Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ is the one thing which His enemies are aiming to overthrow. They cannot endure it! They profess to be greatly offended by our frequent use of the word, *blood*, yet that word is one of the most conspicuous words in both the Old and the New Testaments, so we will still say, "Without shedding of blood is no remission," and, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." This Communion Table sets forth the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and so brings His atoning Sacrifice before men's minds—and thus His Church, so often as she observes this ordinance, proclaims Christ's death in the teeth of all opposers—and this she means still to do "till He comes"!

No doubt the Lord also instituted a symbol for the maintenance and propagation of this Truth *because it is a most blessed one to sinners*. Poor souls, there is no comfort for you till you know that Christ died in your place. Your conscience, if it is really awakened, will never be pacified with ceremonies! Nor will it be contented with moral precepts which you cannot carry out. Nor will it be lulled to sleep with the idea of your own religiousness ever saving you. Your awakened conscience makes you ask, "How can God be just and yet pardon *me*?" And it is the martyred body of your Lord that answers that question—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind."

But when you come to see Christ on the Cross dying instead of you, then will comfort come into your mind, O distracted seeker—but not till then! Therefore is it that God bids His ministers preach Jesus Christ and Him Crucified and, therefore is it that as often as we come to this Table, we proclaim His death because sinners need that beyond everything else.

And, Beloved, there is another reason, I think, why this Truth of God was selected to be set forth in this memorial Supper, namely, *that it might certify the Truth to your own soul*. What arrow will ever pierce the heart of sin unless it is dipped in the blood of Jesus? When I see sin punished on Christ, I see the evil of it. When I see Christ dying for my sin, I see the great motive for my dying for my sin. When I behold His griefs and pangs on my behalf, I see a reason why I should make abundant sacrifices in order that I may glorify Him. Beloved, the death of Christ is the great sin-killer and he who truly knows it and understands it, will feel its sanctifying power!

At the same time, *this Truth greatly glorifies God*. When do you ever praise God so well as when you, a poor guilty sinner, stand at the feet of the Cross and see that Christ died there for you? The sweetest songs in

all the world are those that are sung around the Cross by sinners saved by Sovereign Grace. And each one sings unto the Lord, "Wash me in the fountain and make me whiter than snow. Then shall every part of my being praise You and my whole nature shall break forth in ecstatic joy magnifying and blessing the name of the Lord who is able to put away such offenses as mine through the precious blood of His dear Son." You will thus be enabled to glorify God when you come to this Table and meditate on the great atoning Sacrifice by which your sin is forever put away.

I feel that I can say, without boasting, that my ministry and this ordinance agree well together. I have long preached to you Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. I have fully preached to you His vicarious Sacrifice. And when you come to this Table, you can realize that the Truth which I have preached to you links on to this ordinance. But how anyone can piece together a dry philosophy and this service, I do not know. Having left out the grand fundamental Doctrine of Atonement, how they can make anything but a farce of the Communion, I cannot even guess! I should think they might as well abolish it from their services and let the symbol go when the substance has already gone! But it cannot be so with us, for we feel that God would have His people always think of Jesus! He would have them often speak of Jesus! He would have them continually bear witness to the death of Jesus and, therefore, He makes this Communion to be the sweetest of ordinances to point us, with unerring finger, to Christ on the Cross!

III. Now, thirdly, will you please take notice of THE PERPETUITY OF THIS ORDINANCE AND THE REASON FOR THAT PERPETUITY? "You do proclaim the Lord's death *till He comes*." When He comes, we shall not need these symbols, for we shall have the Master, Himself, with us, but, "*till He comes*" we are to observe this ordinance.

What do I learn from this? Why, dear Friends, that His death will be efficacious "*till He comes*." You are not called to show to the world something that is worn out. You do not come to this Table to set forth to the people who will look on something whose force is spent. Oh, no! You can still 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!"

And every time any of you who are unconverted, but are seeking the Lord, see this Table spread, you should say to yourselves, "Those people believe that there is still efficacy in Christ's blood, or else they would not keep up the observance of that Supper." Yes, we do believe just that, and we believe that Jesus is able to save you now if you come to Him—able at once to speak peace and pardon to your heart if you do but trust Him!

Another thing I learn from our text is that as this Supper is to be celebrated "till He comes," *it shows that there will always be a Church of Christ to celebrate it*. There always has been a Church of Christ since He founded it. In the darkest Popish days, Christ always had His little

Church to observe this ordinance. In the catacombs at Rome, in the mountains of Bohemia, in the Vaudois valleys, in the wild glens of Scotland and in almost every land, in the simple breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine Believers still remembered Christ's death even though they met together at the peril of their lives! And right on down to these brighter days in which we can meet two or three at a time, or hundreds or thousands at once to break bread and to drink wine in remembrance of our dying Lord, there has always been a Church of Christ and there will always be a Church of Christ! So do not despair however dark the days may yet be. Neither Rome nor Hell, itself, can put out the candle which has been lit by the Lord! There will be a Church of Christ "till He comes."

It is true that there will always be people to oppose this Doctrine and one reason why you are to continue to observe this ordinance is because there will always be some people who will deny Christ's substitutionary death. Dear Friends and fellow-helpers in the Lord, it seems such a sweet thing to me to think that all the communicants at this ordinance tonight will be helping to preach a sermon upon our text! I alone must do the talking, but you who will presently gather around the Communion Table will unite in this act, by which we shall all say, "Christ died on Calvary's Cross. Christ died for us!" And all the other Truths that I have been mentioning to you—by the very eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, you will proclaim again that there are some who believe in the bleeding Savior—some who still believe in Him as dying in their place! Let others deny it if they will, you will maintain that testimony.

Beloved, this ordinance is to be perpetual, *because Christian hearts will always need it*. There were some people, a little while ago, who were getting so wonderfully perfect (in their own estimation) that I thought, at the time, they would soon give up the observance of ordinances. I read of one of them who said that he did not pray any longer, for his mind was so perfectly sanctified and conformed to the will of God that he did not need to ask anything of God! Poor fool—that is all I can say of a person in such a state of heart as that! When any man gets beyond the need of prayer, he has urgent need to begin his Christian life over! And it is the same with those who have got beyond the need of ordinances. Christ knew that we should never, in this life, be able to do without outward ordinances. He knew that His people would be forgetful, even of Himself, so He gave us this double "forget-me-not"—this sweet memorial of His death, that as often as we observe it, we may observe it in remembrance of Him.

Moreover, *the world, itself, will always need this ordinance*. There will never come a day when the world will not need to have the Crucified Christ set before it. There will never be an hour in which there will not be breaking hearts that need consolation, wandering souls that need reclaiming and others who are seeking self-salvation, who will need to be taught that salvation lies in Another—and is to be found only in the bleeding Lamb of Calvary. May God help us to maintain this testimony

for the world's sake, for the poor sinner's sake, for our own sake and for Christ's sake "till He comes."

IV. I have done when I have made one more remark, which is this. If what I have said about this ordinance is true, then, LET US ATTEND TO IT. If in this way we set forth Christ's death—if our coming to the Communion Table calls attention to that great fact—if we unite in this act of fellowship in testimony to the death of Christ, let us attend to it.

What shall I say to some of you who, I trust, have Christ as your Master, but who have never yet obeyed this command of His? Let me ask you whether He has ever given you exemption from the observance of this ordinance and let me also ask you whether, as He though it wise to ordain this ordinance, you ought not to think it wise to observe it? Did He institute it in order that you might neglect it? Has He instituted any ordinance which it is right for His people to neglect? Do you know how much you have already lost through your disobedience to your Lord's command? You tell me that it will not save you. I know that. And you know as well as I do that you should not come to the Communion Table if you thought it would save you, for none are invited to come but those who are already saved! But I should like you to look at this matter in the way in which a poor young man spoke of the other ordinance instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

He had not all his wits, but the Grace of God had been at work within him and, as he lay dying, his chief regret was that he had not been baptized. His sisters said to him, "Well, but you know, Isaac, that baptism will not save you." He answered, "I know that very well, for I am already saved. But," He added, "I expect to meet the Lord Jesus Christ very soon and I should not like Him to say to me, 'Why did you not do that little thing to please Me?'" There is much force in that remark. The smaller the thing is, the greater reason is there why we should attend to it directly, lest we should be supposed to have said, "I would not do even that little thing to please Christ." If coming to the Communion Table would save you, of course you would come out of sheer selfishness! But if your religion is nothing but selfishness, may the Lord have mercy upon you and give you a far better one! It is the privilege of those who are saved to show their obedience to Christ and their love to Him by coming to His Table. Do you think that you can look Him in the face and say, "My Lord, You have instituted this ordinance to be observed in remembrance of You, but I have never observed it"? May He not look upon you and say, "It is but a small thing and it is for your soul's good—can you not do that for Me?" You ought to question whether you are in a right state of heart if you can be negligent of this command of your Lord.

But I must also speak to those who do observe the ordinance in a fashion, but who do not enter into the true spirit of it. Those who come rightly to the Table proclaim Christ's death "till He comes," but I am afraid that there are, at all Communion Services, some who do not think aright concerning Christ's death. I always feel very sad, when I am presiding at this ordinance, if I find my thoughts wandering away from the last dread scene upon the Cross. I would rather not be at the Table of

my Lord than be here thinking of something else beside His sufferings and death. What can be the use of the outward ordinance if inward and spiritual Grace is lacking? Beg the Lord to restrict all your thoughts to the Cross. Make this your prayer, "Bind the Sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar," and let that Altar be the broken body of your Lord upon the Cross. Of Him let me think, and in Him let me rest all through the Communion Service, and let me see to it that I do reverently, humbly, heartily proclaim His death "till He comes."

Come then, Beloved, unworthy as you are, come to His Table! Come trembling because of your sin, but rejoicing in His Sacrifice and grateful for His great love! Come and trust Him over again! Come and give yourselves up to Him once more. Come and renew your vows of affection and devotion. Come and put your finger into the print of the nails and thrust your hand into His pierced side. No, more than that, say what the spouse does as she begins the song of songs, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." Seek to get near to Him, to come into close contact with Him and when you do so, hold Him fast and do not let Him go, but call together your friends and Christian Brothers and Sisters and say to them, "Here is the Master! Come with me and let us together have sweet fellowship with Him." If, tonight, at the Communion Table, I might thus lay hold of the great Angel of the Covenant, I think I should feel inclined to hold Him till the break of day, as Jacob did at Jabbok. And if He should make my sinews shrink, yet would I bless His name for condescending to tarry and wrestle with me! If you can get into contact with Him, make this your resolve, that you will hold fast and will say to Him, "I will not let You go, except You bless me."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 22:1-9; MATTHEW 27:33-44.

Psalm 22:1. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* What a dolorous cry! How terrible it must have been to have heard that cry! How much more terrible to have uttered it! For the dear Son of God, the Well-Beloved, with whom the Father is always pleased, to be forsaken of His God was, indeed, unfathomable grief!

1. *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?* It seems as if the Savior's voice and almost His mind had failed Him, for He calls His prayer, "roaring," likening Himself to a wounded beast. When any of You cannot pray, or think You cannot, remember these words of your Lord! If He, the Ever-Blessed Son of God, speaks of His own prayer as a, "roaring," what must ours be? You know that Isaiah spoke of his own prayer as being like the chattering of a crane or a swallow, or the mourning of a dove, as if there were no articulate utterance about it. But to the ears and eyes of God, there is music in a sigh and beauty in a tear. As our Lord had to pray like this, do not wonder if we, sometimes, should feel that God has forsaken us. If there were such dark clouds for Christ, there may well be some for us also.

2. *O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.* If we remember Gethsemane and think how Jesus prayed there, even to an agony and a bloody sweat, shall we wonder if, sometime, our prayers seem to be put on one side and we do not immediately receive answers of peace to them? Yet, You see, our Lord kept on crying to God both day and night.

3. *But You are holy, O You that inhabits the praises of Israel.* Settle it in your hearts that whatever God does, He is holy. Never harbor a thought against Him, never imagine that He is hard, or unjust, or unfaithful. That cannot be, so if the worst comes to the worst, never let your faith have any question upon this point.

4, 5. *Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded.* Look back and see how God helped our ancestors. Recall how, in the past ages, the Lord always was the Deliverer of all those that trusted in Him. Was a righteous man ever finally forsaken of God? Since the world began, has not the Lord, sooner or later, appeared to deliver His children? It is wonderful to hear our Divine Master pleading in this fashion! But most wonderful of all is that next verse—

6. *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.* There is a little red worm which seems to be nothing else but blood when it is crushed. It seems all gone except a blood-stain and the Savior, in the deep humiliation of His spirit, compares Himself to that little red worm. How true it is that, "He made Himself of no reputation" for our sakes! He emptied Himself of all His Glory and if there is any glory natural to manhood, He emptied Himself even of that! Not only the glories of His Godhead, but the honors of His Manhood He laid aside that it might be seen that, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor."

7, 8. *All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.* Or, as the passage is quoted in Matthew, "Let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him."

9. *But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts.* This is a very amazing thing. I do not think we remember as we ought that for years after our birth, we could do nothing to help ourselves, yet we were taken care of even then. He who has passed safely through his infancy need not be afraid that God will not help him through the rest of his life. And if we should live so long that we come to a second infancy, the God who carried us through the first will carry us through the second! He has already done so much for us that we are bound to trust Him for all the future. Now let us see, as I reminded You just now, how this passage is referred to in the Gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew 27:33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* This was a stupefying draught which was usually given to prisoners

about to die in order to mitigate their pain and, therefore, Christ would not drink it, for He was determined to suffer even to the bitter end. He did not come to have any mitigation of His agony when He was offering His Atonement for us. And so, "when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."

35. *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.* This is a point upon which we cannot say much, but, to the peculiarly sensitive soul of Jesus, it must have been a great part of His shame thus to be stripped of every garment and hung up before the sun.

36, 37. *And sitting down they watched Him there; and set up over His head His accusation written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* By their own confession, He died for being a King and He died for being too greatly good, too royal in His love. He, being King of kings, died that you and I might live forever and be kings and priests unto God.

38, 39. *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.* Not only they that sat there, such as the scribes, and Pharisee, and soldiers, and they that hung there, the thieves that were crucified with Him, but the passers-by reviled Him, indulging in a sneer.

40-43. *And saying, You, that destroy the Temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priest 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.* That is the cry of the mockers today. If we will but give up the Atonement, men say that they will believe in Christ. His Character is so excellent that they will accept Him as an example, (so they say), but they will not have His Godhead, nor His precious blood! This proves that they are enemies, for they use the same language as His bitterest foes did when He hung upon the Cross. As for the scribes, they were learned in the Psalms and, therefore, they quoted what we have already read.

43, 44. *He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.* Thus the Master passed through bitter trial and ignominy for our sakes.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 284.

—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.

RESTRAINING PRAYER
NO. 2943

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

"You...restrain prayer before God."
Job 15:4.

THIS is one of the charges brought by Eliphaz the Temanite against Job, "Yes, you cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God." I shall not use this sentence as an accusation against those who never pray, though there may be some in this House of Prayer whose heads are unaccustomed to bow down and whose knees are unaccustomed to kneel before the Lord, their Maker. You have been fed by God's bounty, you owe all the breath in your nostrils to Him, yet you have never done homage to His name! The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but you know not, neither do you consider the Most High. The cattle on a thousand hills low forth their gratitude and every sheep praises God in its bleating—but these beings, worse than natural brute beasts—still continue to receive from the lavish hand of Divine Benevolence, but they return no thanks whatever to their Benefactor! Let such remember that that ground which has long been rained upon, and plowed, and sown which yet brings forth no fruit, is near unto cursing—whose end is to be burned. Prayerless souls are Christless souls, Christless souls are Graceless souls and Graceless souls shall soon be damned souls! See your peril, you that neglect altogether the blessed privilege of prayer! You are in the bonds of iniquity, you are in the gall of bitterness. God deliver you, for His name's sake!

Nor do I intend to use this text in an address to those who are in the habit of formal prayer, though there are many such. Taught from their childhood to utter certain sacred words, they have carried through youth and even up to manhood, the same practice! I will not discuss that question just now, whether the practice of teaching children a form of prayer is proper or not. I would not do it. Children should be instructed in the *meaning* of prayer, and their little minds should be taught to pray, but it should be rather the matter of prayer than the words of prayer that should be suggested. And I think they should be taught to use their own words and to speak to God in such phrases and terms as their own childlike capacities, assisted by a mother's love, may be able to suggest. Full many there are who, from early education, grow up habituated to some form of words which either stands in lieu of the heart's devotion, or cripples its free exercise. No doubt there may be true prayer linked with a form, and the soul of many a saint has gone up to Heaven in some holy

prayer or in the words of some beautiful liturgy, but, for all that, we are absolutely certain that tens of thousands use the mere language without heart or soul, under the impression that they are "praying."

I consider the form of prayer to be no more worthy of being called prayer than a coach may be called a horse. The horse will be better without the coach, travel much more rapidly and find himself much more at ease. He may drag the coach, it is true, and still travel well. Without the heart of prayer, the form is no prayer—it will not stir or move—it is simply a vehicle that may have wheels that might move, but it has no inner force or power within itself to propel it. Flatter not yourselves that your devotion has been acceptable to God, you that have been merely saluting the ears of the Most High with forms! They have been only mockeries when your heart has been absent. What though a parliament of bishops should have posed the words you use? What though they should be absolutely faultless, yes, what if they should even be inspired? Though you have used them a thousand times, yet you have never prayed if you consider that the repetition of the form is prayer. No! There is more than the chatter of the tongue in genuine supplication! More than the repetition of words in truly drawing near to God! Take care lest, with the form of godliness, you neglect the power and go down to Hell having a lie in your right hand, but not the Truth of God in your heart!

What I do intend, however, is to address this text to the true people of God who understand the sacred art of prayer and are prevalent therein, but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have restrained prayer. If there is no other person in this Congregation to whom the preacher will speak personally, he feels shamefully conscious that he will have to speak very plainly to himself. We know that our prayers are heard. We are certain—it is not a question with us—that there is an efficacy in the Divine office of intercession. And yet (oh, how we should blush when we make the confession!) we must acknowledge that we do restrain or neglect prayer. Now, inasmuch as we speak to those who grieve and repent that they should have done so, we shall use but little sharpness. But we shall try to use much plainness of speech. Let us see how and in what respect we have neglected prayer.

I. Do you not think, dear Friends, that we often neglect prayer IN THE FEWNESS OF THE OCCASIONS THAT WE SET APART FOR SUPPLICATION?

From hoary tradition and modern precedents we have come to believe that the morning should be opened with the offering of prayer and that the day should be shut in with the nightly sacrifice. We do ill if we neglect those two sessions of prayer. Do you not think that often, in the morning, we rise so near to the time of labor, when duty calls us to our daily avocation, that we hurry through the familiar exercises with unseemly haste, instead of diligently seeking the Lord and earnestly calling upon His name? And even at night, when we are very weary and jaded, it is just possible that our prayer is uttered somewhere between sleeping and waking. Is not this restraining or neglecting prayer? And throughout the 365 days of the year, if we continue to pray thus, and

this is all, how small an amount of true supplication will have gone up to Heaven!

I trust there are none here present who profess to be followers of Christ who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is as much in accord with the genius and spirit of the Gospel, and that it is so commended by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency! Now, how often is this family worship conducted in a slovenly manner? An inconvenient hour is fixed and a knock at the door, a ring at the bell, the call of a customer may hurry the Believer from his knees to go and attend to his worldly concerns. Of course, many excuses might be offered, but the fact would still remain that in this way we often neglect prayer!

And then, when you come up to the House of God—I hope you do not come up to this Tabernacle without prayer—yet I fear we do not all pray as we should, even when in the place dedicated to God's worship. There should always be a devout prayer lifted up to Heaven as soon as you enter the place where you would meet with God. What a preparation is often made to appear in the assembly! Some of you get here half an hour before the service commences—if there were no talking, if each one of you looked into the Bible, or if the time was spent in silent supplication—what a cloud of holy incense would go smoking up to Heaven!

I think it would be comely for you and profitable for us if as soon as the minister enters the pulpit, you engaged yourself to plead with God for him. For me, I may especially say it is desirable. I claim it at your hands above every other man. With this overwhelming congregation and with the terrible reliability of so numerous a church, and with the Word of God spoken here published within a few hours, and disseminated over the country, scattered throughout all Europe, no—to the very ends of the earth—I may well ask you to lift up your hearts in supplication that the words spoken may be those of truth and soberness, directed of the Holy Spirit and made mighty through God, like arrows shot from His own bow, to find a target in the hearts that He means to bless!

And in going home, with what earnestness should we ask the Master to let what we have heard live in our hearts! We lose very much of the effects of our Sabbaths through not pleading with God on the Saturday night for a blessing upon the day of rest, and through not also pleading at the end of the Sunday, beseeching Him to make that which we have heard abide in our memories and appear in our actions. We have restrained prayer, I fear, in the fewness of the occasions.

Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, every day of the week, and every part of the day should be an occasion for prayer. Cries such as these, "Oh, would that!" "Lord, save me!" "Help me!" "More light, Lord!" "Teach me!" "Guide me!" and a thousand such, should be constantly going up from our hearts to the Throne of God. You may enjoy a refreshing solitude, if you please, in the midst of crowded Cheapside, or contrariwise, you may have your head in the whirl of a busy crowd when you have retired to your closet. It is not so much where we *are* as in what state our *heart* is.

Let the regular seasons for devotion be constantly attended to. These things ought you to have done, but let your heart be habitually in a state of prayer—you must not leave this undone. Oh, that we prayed more, that we set apart more time for it! Good Bishop Farrar had an idea in his head which he carried out. Being a man of some substance and having some 24 persons in his household, he divided the day and there was always some person engaged either in holy song or else in devout supplication through the whole of the 24 hours! There was never a moment when the censor ceased to smoke, or the altar was without its sacrifice. Happy shall it be for us when, day and night, we shall circle the Throne of God rejoicing, but till then, let us emulate the ceaseless praise of seraphs before the Throne of God, continually drawing near unto God and making supplication and thanksgiving.

II. But to proceed to a second remark, dear Friends, I think it will be very clear, upon a little reflection, that we constantly restrain or neglect prayer BY NOT HAVING OUR HEARTS IN A PROPER STATE WHEN WE COME TO ITS EXERCISE.

We rush into prayer too often. We would think it necessary, if we were to address the Queen, that our petition should be prepared. But often we dash before the Throne of God as though it were but some common house of call, without even having a thought in our minds of what we are going for. Now, just let me suggest some few things which I think should always be subjects of meditation before our season of prayer and I think if you confess that you have not thought of these things, you will also be obliged to acknowledge that you have restrained prayer.

We should, *before prayer*, *meditate upon Him to whom it is to be addressed*. Let our thoughts be directed to the living and true God. Let me remember that He is Omnipotent, then I shall ask large things. Let me remember that He is very tender and full of compassion, then I shall ask little things and be minute in my supplication. Let me remember the greatness of His Covenant, then I shall come very boldly. Let me remember, also, that His faithfulness is like the great mountains and that His promises are sure to all the seed, then I shall ask very confidently, for I shall be persuaded that He will do as He has said. Let me fill my soul with the reflection of the greatness of His majesty, then I shall be struck with awe, with the equal greatness of His love, then I shall be filled with delight! We would pray better than we do if we meditated more, before prayer, upon the God whom we address in our supplications!

Then, let me *meditate also upon the way through which my prayer is offered.* Let my soul behold the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat before I venture to draw near to God. Let me go to Gethsemane and see the Savior as He prays. Let me stand in holy vision at the foot of Calvary and see His body torn, that the veil which parted my soul from all access to God might be torn, too, that I might come close to my Father, even to His feet. O dear Friends, I am sure if we thought about the way of access in prayer, we would be more mighty in it, but our neglect of so doing has led us to restrain prayer.

And yet, again, *ought I not, before prayer, to be duly conscious of my many sins?* Oh, when I hear men pray cold, careless prayers, surely they forget that they are sinners, or else, renouncing gaudy words and flowing periods, they would smite upon their breast with the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" They would come to the point at once, with force and fervency—"I, black, unclean, defiled, condemned by the Law, make my appeal unto You, O God!" What prostration of spirit, what zeal, what fervor, what earnestness and then, consequently, what *prevalence* would there be if we were duly sensible of our sin!

If we can add to this *a little meditation upon what our needs are*, how much better we would pray! We often fail in prayer because we come without an errand, not having thought of what our necessities are. But if we have reckoned up that we need pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation—that, besides the blessings of this life, we need that our decaying Graces should be revived, that such-and-such a temptation should be removed, and that through such-and-such a trial we should be carried and prove more than conquerors—then, coming with an errand, we would prevail before the Most High! But we bring to the altar bowls that have no bottom—and if the treasure should be put in them, it would fall through! We do not know what we need and, therefore, we ask not for what we really need. We try to lay our necessities before the Lord without having duly considered how great our necessities are. See yourself as an abject bankrupt, weak, sick, dying—and this will make you plead. See your necessities to be deep as the ocean, broad as the expanse of Heaven—and this will make you cry. There will be no restraining of prayer, Beloved, when we have got a due sense of our soul's poverty. But because we think we are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing, therefore it is that we restrain prayer before God.

How well it would be for us if, *before prayer, we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day.* What courage that would give us to ask for more! The deliverances we have experienced through our life, how boldly should we plead to be delivered yet again! He that has been with me in six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh! Do but remember how you passed through the fires and was not burnt, and you should be confident that the flame will not kindle upon you now. Christian, remember how before, when you passed through the rivers, God was with you, and surely you may plead with Him to deliver you from the flood that now threatens to inundate you. Think of the past ages too, of what He did of old, where He brought His people out of Egypt and of all the mighty deeds which He has done—are they not written in the Book of the Wars of the Lord? Plead all these and say unto Him in your supplications—"O You that are a God that hears prayer, hear me now and send me an answer of peace!" I think, without needing to point that arrow, you can see which way I would shoot. Because we do not come to the Throne of Grace in a proper state of supplication, therefore it is that too often we restrain prayer before God.

III. Now, thirdly, it is not to be denied by a man who is conscious of his own error, that IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER, ITSELF, WE ARE TOO

OFTEN STRAITENED IN OUR OWN HEART, AND SO RESTRAIN PRAYER.

Prayer has been differently divided by different authors. We might roughly say that prayer consists, first, of *invocation.* "Our Father, which are in Heaven." We begin by stating the title and our own apprehension of the Glory and majesty of the Person whom we address. Do you not think, dear Friends, that we fail here, and restrain prayer here? Oh, how we ought to sound forth His praises! I think, on the Sabbath, it is always the minister's special duty to bring out the titles of THE ALMIGHTY ONE, such as "King of kings, and Lord of lords!" He is not to be addressed in common terms. We should endeavor, as we search the Scripture through, to find those mighty phrases which the ancient saints were known to apply to Jehovah! And we should make His Temple ring with His Glory and make our closet full of that holy adoration with which prayer must always be linked! I think the rebuking angel might often say, "You think that the Lord is such an one as yourself, and you talk not to Him as to the God of the whole earth but, as though He were a man you address Him in slighting and unseemly terms." Let all our invocations come more deeply from our soul's reverence to the Most High and let us address Him, not in high-sounding words of fleshly homage, but still in words which set forth our awe and our reverence while they express His majesty and the Glory of His holiness.

From invocation we usually go to *confession*, and how often do we fail here! In your closet are you in the habit of confessing your real sins to God? Do you not find, Brothers and Sisters, a tendency to acknowledge that sin which is common to all men, but not that which is certainly peculiar to you? We are all Sauls in our way—we want the best of the cattle and the sheep. Those favorite sins, those Agag sins—it is not so easy to hew them in pieces before the Lord. The right-eye sin—happy is that Christian who has learned to pluck it out by confession. The right-hand sin—he is blessed and well taught who aims the axe at that sin and cuts it from him! But no, we say that we have sinned—we are willing to use the terms of any general confession that any church may publish! But to say, "Lord, You know that I love the world, and the things of the world! You know that I am covetous." Or to say, "Lord, You know I was envious of So-and-So, because he shone brighter than I did at such and-such a public meeting. Lord, I was jealous of such-and-such a member of the church because I evidently saw that he was preferred before me!" And for the husband to confess before God that he has been overbearing, that he has spoken rashly to a child. For a wife to acknowledge that she has been willful, that she has had a fault—this would be *letting out* prayer—but the hiding of these things is *restraining* prayer and we shall surely come under that charge of having restrained prayer unless we make our private confessions of sin very explicit, coming to the point.

I have thought, in teaching children in the Sunday school, we should not so much talk about sin in general as the sins in which children most commonly indulge, such as little thefts, naughty tempers, disobedience to parents. These are the things that children should confess. Men in the

dawn of their manhood should confess those ripening evil imaginations, those lustful things that rise in the heart, while the man in business should always make this a point—to see most to the sins which attack businessmen. I have no doubt that I might be very easily led, in my confession, to look to all the offenses I may have committed against the laws of business because I should not need to deal very harshly with myself there, for I do not have the temptations of these men. And I should not wonder if some of you merchants will find it very easy to examine ourselves according to a code that is proper to me, but not to you! Let the workman pray to God as a workman and confess the sins common to his craft. Let the trader examine himself according to his standing and let each man make his confession like the confessions of old, when everyone confessed apart—the mother apart and the daughter apart, the father apart and the son apart. Let each one thus make a clean breast of the matter and I am sure there will not be so much need to say that we have restrained prayer before God.

As to the next part of prayer, which is *petition*, we all fail lamentably, indeed! We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We are ready enough to ask for deliverance from trial, but how often we forget to ask that it may be sanctified to us! We are quite ready to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." How often, however, do we fail to ask that He would give us the Bread which comes down from Heaven and enable us blessedly to feed upon His flesh and His blood? Brothers and Sisters, we come before God with little desires and the desires we get have so little fervency in them. And when we get the fervency, we so often fail to get the faith which grasps the promise and believes that God will give, that, in all these points, when we come to the matter of spreading our needs before God, we restrain prayer!

Oh, for the Luthers that can shake the gates of Heaven by supplication! Oh, for men that can lay hold upon the golden knocker of Heaven's gate and make it ring and ring again as if they meant it to be heard! Cold prayers court a denial. God hears by fire and the God that answers by fire let Him be God! But first there must be prayer in Elijah's heart—fire in Elijah's heart—before the fire will come down in answer to the prayer! Our fervency goes up to Heaven and then God's Grace, which gave us the fervency, comes down and gives us the answer.

But you know, too, that all true prayer has thanksgiving in it. "Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever." What prayer is complete without the doxology? And here, too, we restrain prayer. We do not praise, and bless, and magnify the Lord as we should. If our hearts were more full of gratitude, our expressions would be far more noble and comprehensive when we speak forth His praise. I wish I could put this so plainly that every Christian might mourn on account of his sin and mend his ways. But, indeed, it is only mine to speak—it is my Master's to open your eyes, to let you see and to set you upon the solemnly important duty of self-examination! In this respect, I am sure even the prayers that you and I have offered today may well cry out against us, and say, "You have restrained prayer."

IV. Yet, again, I fear we must all join in acknowledging A SERIOUS FAULT WITH REGARD TO THE AFTER-PART OF OUR PRAYERS. When prayer is done, do you not think we very much restrain it?

For, *after prayer, we often go immediately into the world*. That may be absolutely necessary, but we go there and leave behind us what we ought to carry with us. When we have got into a good frame in prayer, we should consider that this is like the meat which the angel gave to Elijah that he might go on his forty day's journey in its strength. Have we felt Heavenly-minded? The moment we cross the threshold and get into the family or business, where is the Heavenly mind? Oh, to get real prayer, inwrought prayer—not the surface prayer, as though it were a sort of sacred masquerading, but to have it *inside*, in the warp and woof of our being—till prayer becomes a part of ourselves! Then, Brothers and Sisters, we have not restrained it! We get hot in our closets—when I say, "we," oh, how few can say as much as that!—but, still, we get hot in our closets and go out into the world, into the draughts of its temptations, without wrapping ourselves about with promises—and we catch well-near our death of cold! Oh, to carry that heat and fervor with us!

You know that as you carry a bar of hot iron along, how soon it begins to return to its common ordinary appearance and the heat is gone. How hot, then, we ought to make ourselves in prayer, that we may burn the longer and how, all day long, we ought to keep thrusting the iron into the fire so that, when it ceases to glow, it may go into the hot embers once more and the flame may glow upon it and we may once again be brought into a vehement heat. But we are not careful enough to keep up the Grace and seek to nurture and to cherish the young child which God seems to give in the morning into our hands that we may nurse it for Him.

Old Master Dyer speaks of locking up his heart by prayer in the morning and giving Christ the key. I am afraid we do the opposite—we lock up our hearts in the morning and give the devil the key—and think that he will be honest enough not to rob us! Ah, it is in bad hands when it is trusted with him. He keeps stealing all day long the precious things that were in the safe until, at night it is quite empty and needs to be filled all over again! Would God that we put the key in Christ's hands, by looking up to Him all day!

I think, too, that *after prayer, we often fail in unbelief*. We do not expect God to hear us. If God were to hear some of you, you would be more surprised than with the greatest novelty that could occur! We ask blessings, but do not think of having them. When you and I were children and had a little piece of garden, we sowed some seeds one day and the next morning, before breakfast, we went to see if they were up. And the next day, seeing that no appearance of the green blade could be discovered, we began to move the dirt to look for our seeds. Ah, we were children then! I wish we were children now with regard to our prayers. We would go out, the next morning, to see if they had begun to sprout and disturb the ground a bit to look after our prayers, for fear they should have miscarried. Do you believe God hears prayer?

I saw, the other day, in a newspaper, a little sketch concerning myself in which the author, who is evidently very friendly, gives a much better description of me than I deserve. But he offers me one rather pointed rebuke. I was preaching at the time in a tent and only part of the people were covered. It began to rain just before prayer, and one petition was, "O Lord, be pleased to grant us favorable weather for this service and command the clouds that they rain not upon this assembly!" Now he thought this very preposterous. To say the least, it was rash, if not blasphemous! He admits that it did not rain a drop after the prayer, still, of course, he did not infer that God heard and answered the prayer. If I had asked for a rain of Grace, it would have been quite credible that God would send that, but when I ask Him not to send a temporal rain, that is fanaticism! To think that God meddles with the clouds at the wish of a man, or that He may answer us in temporal things is pronounced absurd! I bless God, however, that I fully believe the absurdity, preposterous as it may appear! I know that God hears prayer in temporal things! I know it by as clear a demonstration as ever any proposition in Euclid was solved. I know it by abundant facts and incidents which my own life has revealed. God does hear prayer! The majority of people do not think that He does. At least, if He does, they suppose that it is in some high, clerical, mysterious, unknown sense. As to ordinary things ever happening as the result of prayer, they account it a delusion! "The *Bank of Faith*!" How many have said it is a bank of nonsense and yet there are many who have been able to say, "We could write as good a book as Huntington's '*Bank of Faith*,' that would be no more believed than Huntington's was, though it might be even more true."

We restrain prayer, I am sure, by not believing our God. We ask a favor, which, if granted, we attribute to "accident" rather than ascribe it to Grace, and we do not receive it. Then the next time we come, of course we cannot pray, because unbelief has cut the sinews of prayer and left us powerless before the Throne of God.

You are a professor of religion. After you have been to a party of ungodly people, can you pray? You are a merchant, and profess to be a follower of Christ. When you engage in a hazardous speculation and you know you ought not to, can you pray? Or, when you have had a heavy loss in business and repine against God and will not say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"—can you pray? Pity the man who can sin and pray, too! In a certain sense, Brooks was right when he said, "Praying will make you leave off sinning, or else sin will make you leave off praying." Of course, that is not meant in the absolute sense of the term, but as to certain sins, especially gross sins—and some of the sins to which God's people are liable, are gross sins—I am certain they cannot come before their Father's face with the confidence they had before, after having been rolling in the mire, or wandering in By-Path Meadow.

Look at your own child—he meets you in the morning with a smiling face, so pleased. He asks what he likes of you and you give it to him. Now he has been doing wrong. He knows he has and you have frowned upon

him, you have chastened him. How does he come now? He may come because he is a child and with tears in his eyes because he is a penitent—but he cannot come with the power he once had. Look at a king's favorite—as long as he feels that he is in the king's favor, he will take up your suit and plead for you. Ask him tomorrow whether he will do you a good turn and he says, "No, I am out of favor. I don't feel as if I could speak now." A Christian is not out of Covenant favor, but he may be experimentally under a cloud—he loses the Light of God's Countenance and then he feels he cannot plead—his prayers become weak and feeble.

Take heed unto yourselves and consider your ways. The path of declension is very abrupt in some parts. We may go on gradually declining in prayer till faith grows weak, love cold and patience is exhausted. We may go on for years and maintain a consistent profession, but, all of a sudden, the road which had long been descending at a gradual incline may come to a precipice and we may fall, and that when we little think of it. We may have ruined our reputation, blasted our comfort, destroyed our usefulness and we may have to go to our graves with a sword in our bones because of sin. Stop while you may, Believer! Stop and guard against the temptation. I charge you, by the trials you must meet with, by the temptations that surround you, by the corruptions that are within, by the assaults that come from Hell and by the trials that come from Heaven, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

I speak especially to the members of this church. Think of what has God worked for us! When we were a few people, what intense agony of prayer we had! We have had Prayer Meetings in Park Street that have moved our souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging Jerusalem, each man determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession and the blessings came upon us, so that we had not room to receive them! The hallowed cloud still rests over us! The holy drops still fall! Will you now cease from intercession? At the borders of the promised land, will you turn back to the wilderness, when God is with us and the standard of a King is in the midst of our armies? Will you now fail in the day of trial? Who knows but you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this? Who knows but that He will preserve in the land a small company of poor people who fear God intensely, hold the faith earnestly and love God vehemently—that infidelity may be driven from the high places of the earth—that Naphtali again may be a people made triumphant in the high places of the field?

God of Heaven, grant this! Oh, let us restrain prayer no longer! You that have never prayed, may you be taught to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner," uttered from your heart, with your eyes upon the Cross! You will receive a gracious answer and you shall go on your way rejoicing, for—

"When God inclines the heart to pray,
He has an ear to hear!
To Him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."

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

1 John 2:1-4. *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby do 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.* Holy living is the sure fruit and proof of anyone being in Christ. Where it is not manifest, the profession of being in Christ is a lie.

5. *But whoever keeps His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him.* Note the gradation—we know Him, we are in Him—we know that we are in Him.

6. *He that says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.* Abiding in Christ helps us to live as Christ lived, not, as one well observes, that we can walk on the water as Christ walked upon it, but that we can walk in our daily life even as He did because we abide in Him.

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning.* The old commandment is the word which we have heard from the beginning, yet it is always fresh and new.

8-10. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shines. He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.* Love is the great and sure way of abiding in the light, abiding in Christ.

11-14. *But he that hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One. I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Wicked One.* Having overcome him, at the first by your faith in Christ, you still go on to conquer him by abiding in Christ.

15-17. *Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.*

Everything else is transient, fleeting and soon passes away. But he that does the will of God has entered into the eternal regions and he has become one of those who abide forever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation and from your eternal union to Christ.

18-20. *Little children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. 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: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.* You are taught of God, so you know all that is necessary for the attainment of true godliness, and the accomplishment of the Divine purposes.

21-25. *I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life.* Not transient life, but eternal life is the great promise of the Covenant of Grace, and abiding in Christ we possess it.

26, 27. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you,* What a wonderful declaration this is—not only that we have this holy anointing, but that we have it always!

27, 28. *And you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him. And now little children, abide in Him.* See how the Apostle rings out this note again and again? Our Savior repeated the word, "abide," or, "remain," many times in the short parable of the Vine, and now John strikes this same silver bell over and over again—"And now, little children, abide in Him"—

28, 29. *That when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him.*

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URGING LOT
NO. 2944

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 13, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 25, 1875.

"When the morning arose, then the angels urged Lot."
Genesis 19:15.

[This sermon was originally titled "Hastening Lot."]

I WILL not spend even a minute in considering whether these were Divine persons veiled in angelic form, or whether they were actually angels. In either case, I would make the same remark and lead to the same practical result. Let us learn from these angels how to do our work. "Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak?" As a rule, they are not sent to be the means of saving men. They are not called to be teachers, or preachers, or pastors, but, on this occasion, they were sent to bring Lot out of Sodom—and we may take them as exemplars in our endeavors to win souls for Christ.

How did these angels do their work? Well, first, they went to Lot's house. They got at Lot himself—and if we want to be the means of saving men, we must, somehow or other, get at them. I have seen the fishermen, in the Scot rivers, stand right down in the water while they are fishing and I believe that is the best way to fish—if we stand right down among you and come to you in your homes—we shall likely be the means of blessing to your souls.

The angels told Lot very distinctly what was going to happen in Sodom. They did not mince the matter, but revealed what its doom was to be. The city was to be destroyed and he must get out of it, or else he also would be destroyed. In like manner, we too must warn men of their danger and we must not at all flinch even if we have to utter words that have a very harsh sound about them, for love does not manifest itself by lying and smooth utterances, but by speaking the truth—even most threatening words, yet mixing sobs with them, predicting most sorrowful judgments in a most sorrowful tone.

After these angels had told Lot the truth about his peril, they were not content with doing that, but began pressing and urging him to flee out of the doomed city—"The angels urged Lot"—and when that urging did not seem to be sufficient to convince him, they laid hands upon him, his wife and his daughters. And if, my Brother, you and I, ourselves saved, wish to be the means of saving others, we must not merely tell them the old, old story, however simply, earnestly and as often we tell it—but we must come to wrestling with them! We must plead with them, we must weep

over them and we must make up our minds that if we cannot break their hearts, we will break our own. And if we cannot get them to flee out of Sodom, at any rate it shall not be because we did not labor with all our might to bring them out! Oh, that we might be as clear of the blood of all men as these angels were clear concerning the fate of Lot's wife! We shall not be able to rescue them all—even the angels did not do that. Lot's wife was a signal example of a person perishing after the best possible instruction—and Lot's sons-in-law were examples of how, with some men, the most earnest pleading may only end in mockery! Yes, dear Friend, we cannot wonder if some reject our message when so many rejected the teaching of the Master, Himself! But we must so deliver it that, at any rate, if they do refuse it, the blame shall lie entirely at their own door.

The special point in the angelic ministry, to which I desire to call your attention on this occasion, is the fact that they urged Lot. And I am going to use that fact in two ways. First, I will try to show you, that *the righteous need to be urged*, for Lot was a righteous man, notwithstanding his imperfections. And, secondly, that sinners—of whom, being in Sodom, Lot had become a type—*sinners especially need earnest urging*. We must try not only to preach about these two things, but to do them as the Holy Spirit shall help us.

I. So my first remark is, that EVEN THE RIGHTEOUS NEED TO BE URGED.

In what? Well, in almost everything good, for Dr. Watts well said—

"Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys.
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys."

And old Francis Quarles, in one of his poems, writes—

"When our dull souls direct our thoughts to Thee,
As slow as snails are we!
But at the earth we dart our winged desire—
We burn, we burn like fire."

Some Christians need quickening even concerning common matters of Christian duty. I used to know a man—he is dead now—who professed to have been converted for 40 years, yet he had never made a profession of his faith in Baptism, though he believed it to be his duty to do so. When I stirred him up a little concerning his neglect, he said to me, "He that believes shall not make haste." And I replied, "That is a shameful perversion of Scripture! You profess to have been converted for 40 years, yet you have not obeyed your Savior's command." I explained to him the meaning of the text which he had so wickedly perverted and then I said to him, "David said, 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments.' That is a more suitable text for you." Why, if that good Brother had been baptized that very day on the next morning before breakfast, I do not think he could have been considered guilty of any haste after the long time that he had waited! Some people, when they are young, know that they ought to unite themselves with the Church of

God, but they put it off. And when they grow older, they seem confirmed in continuing in a condition which is not a right one for a Christian.

I do not lay undue stress upon Baptism, as though it were the main thing in a Christian's life. Still, it is an important matter in which some Christians need urging, as they take such a long time over it. It seems to me that half the beauty of obedience consists in obeying the command at once! Suppose you have a boy and you say to him, "John, I want you to go on an errand," and he says, "Very well, Father, I will go next week"? What sort of a lad is he? Suppose he says, "Yes, Father, I really mean to go, but not until tomorrow"? Is not that virtually disobedience? Call it what you may, delaying to obey is disobedience. Has it ever struck you, dear Friends, that when you postpone attendance to a duty, you sin in the postponement? How many times do you sin? I cannot calculate. If it is a duty you ought to do at this hour, yet you put it off hour after hour, do you not sin as many times as there are hours in which you delay? Perhaps it would be even more correct to say that for every moment that a duty is neglected, there is a sin every time the clock ticks—certainly, you are keeping on in one long-continued act of sin and thereby provoking God to anger!

Neglect of duty is continuous sin. Let that little sentence abide in your memory and let it get down into your heart and irritate you into prompt obedience, for there are some of you who seem to fancy that when you have made up your minds to do a certain thing, and have good intentions concerning it, you have practically done the thing and need not trouble yourself any further about it! But it is not so for, "to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him"—particularly and above other men—"it is sin."

There was a certain prince of Monaco who left instructions that this inscription should be put on his grave, "Here lies So-and-So, prince of Monaco, a man of good intentions." That was all he could say about himself! He had not done anything, but he had *intended* to do something. And this is the epitaph that will have to be put over some of you unless you turn intention into action. But what is this but a confession that you have the responsibility of knowing what you ought to do, but you lack either the manliness, or the Divine Grace, or something else to impel you to do what you ought long ago to have done? As the angels urged Lot, so, my Christian Brothers and Sisters who are slow to move in the path of duty, would I urge you. Lie not down tonight with any duty undone if you can attend to it tonight. Rest not while there are any arrears of obedience due to your God. Even when you have done all your duty, you will be but an unprofitable servant to your God—but what shall be said of you if precept after precept shall be left neglected? At any rate, be not so foolish as to imagine that intending to obey it is the same thing as having really obeyed the commandment of your God.

Some Christians also need urging concerning coming out from the world and taking up the place of separation. Lot was in sinful Sodom and the great concern of the angels was to get him out of it. There are many

righteous men still in Sodom—they have never thoroughly taken their place with Christ "outside the camp, bearing His reproach." Many a Christian knows that there is a higher spiritual life than he has ever yet reached. He feels that his standard is too low and that his household is too much conformed to the world in its manners and customs. He knows that his business is not conducted as his Lord and Master would wish it to be and he intends that these things shall all be set right some time or other. Possibly there is one person in the household of whom he is afraid. If that person should, in the order of God's Providence, be removed, then the way would be cleared for him to make the necessary alteration, or it may be that there is one engagement which has been made which he thinks must be fulfilled—and after that is over, things will take quite a different complexion.

My dear Brother, wherever you may be just now, I do charge you, before the living God, never trifle with your convictions and never postpone the coming away from sin and the world until it shall be more convenient for you! Do you not see what it is that you thus say to the Lord? "I will follow Jesus when it pleases me. I will follow Him when it will not cost me anything. I will follow Him when everybody will clap hands at my doing it, but when the task is difficult, I must decline it." That is very like the talk of a rebel, not like the talk of a true disciple of our blessed Lord! Oh, that you might have the Grace to say—

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

"fashionable or unfashionable, condemned or applauded, loved or hated, I will take up the Cross for Christ and be as He would have me to be in the midst of an ungodly world." The angels are urging you to this decision, dear Brother, dear Sister, as once they urged the lingering Lot to escape from sinful Sodom!

Again, many good men need urging with regard to their attempts to be of servants to others. Lot went to his sons-in-law to try to persuade them to leave Sodom, but, though the morning light was beginning to break and Sodom's doom was imminent, he did not hurry to conduct his wife and daughters out of the doomed place. It is amazing how long Christians linger over the work of seeking the conversion of their own children. I know, dear Friend, that you have resolved in your heart to pray with your boy—you say that you mean to do it, yet you never seem to force yourself up to the decisive point! I know, dear Mother, that you do not intend that your daughter shall go away from home until you have talked with her about her soul and set forth Christ to her. You have that new Bible ready to give to her as a kind of help to you—a thin end of the wedge—that you may have some reason for getting her alone and talking to her. But why do you keep putting it off? Should it ever be hard work for a mother to talk with her own child about her soul? Yet, to some parents, this is a very difficult task. Should it ever be hard, good woman, for a wife to put her arms about her unconverted husband's neck and plead with him to see to his soul's affairs and lay hold on eternal life? Yet perhaps you feel as if you cannot do it—you know that you ought, but

you cannot. Should it ever be hard, dear Sister, for you to talk to that brother of yours, who scoffs so much at sacred things that he often hurts your feelings? I know it does seem hard, but ought it to be so? You love him and if you knew that he was in any bodily danger, you would not hesitate to warn him. And now that you know that he is in spiritual and eternal peril, do not, I pray you, delay to give the warning word.

"I mean to do it," says one. Yes, you mean to, but I want you to do it tonight! "But perhaps I may not have a suitable opportunity tonight?" Well, if there should be no opportunity tonight, you may be excused, but do not make a pretext—let it be a genuine lack of opportunity that will excuse you and, for common humanity's sake—far more for Christ's sake, for His dear wounds sake—do immediately seek the salvation of all that are round about you! The angels urged Lot, so what can I do to urge you? You will probably find your task a great deal easier than you think and you may receive a response that you little expect! I believe that in nine cases out of ten, when a Christian begins to speak thus to his unsaved friend, the friend gratefully says, "I have long been expecting you to speak to me about my soul. How is it that you have not done it before?"

I will tell you what happened in a case with which I was personally connected. There was a young man whose minister used to come to his father's house very frequently. And this young man was in great distress of soul. Every time the minister came in, the young man used to say to himself, "I hope Mr. So-and-So will speak to me about my soul today." He put himself in the minister's way, but the minister never spoke to him as he wished and hoped. After a time, that young man went to another place of worship and there found the Lord. He told his father and the father told the minister—and *then* the minister came to see him and said, "My dear Brother, I am glad to hear that you have been converted. I have always felt anxious about you." "Have you?" asked the young man. "Yes, I have," replied the minister. "But, Sir, you never said a word to me to show that you were anxious." There the interview ended and I am afraid that they have had little esteem for one another ever since. And I know that the young man said, "When I was converted, the minister wanted to get me into his church, but as long as I was unconverted, he never made the slightest effort to win me to Christ." I should not like to have that said of any minister here present and I should not like to hear that you are always looking after other people's sheep. There is a certain denomination which is constantly engaged in stealing the sheep that are in other flocks—it would be much better if such people would ask the Lord, by His almighty Grace to turn lions into lambs and sheep so that they might gather their own flocks! That is the proper spirit in which all Christians should act. So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us without delay set about the task of endeavoring, in the name and in the strength of God, to bring our relatives and neighbors to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Putting a great many things under this general head, I may say that Christians need urging all round. Occasionally, I hear or read remarks about the great excitement caused by our Brothers, Moody and Sankey, in their evangelistic services, but I must confess that I have failed to see the excitement, although I have been to several of their meetings. We Londoners do not know anything about real religious excitement—we have not begun to be excited yet, though I pray God that we soon may. I would like to see such a stir all over the metropolis, that the press would rave and rage about our fanaticism—and I shall not believe that God has done very much among us until we are accused of something like that! We *are* enjoying a spiritual spring time—we have heard the cuckoo and have seen one swallow, but we must not yet say that the summer has come. Our friends from America have done something, but little compared with what we ought to desire and pray for, and expect—little, indeed, compared with what we shall see if we are but true to God. We still need the angels to come and urge lingering Lots—may we be urged ourselves!

Why is it that Christians need so mulch urging? The best answer I can make is that their spirit is willing, but their flesh is weak. Another reason is that it is easier to run fast at first than to keep on at a rapid pace. And, perhaps they have found their breath failing them. If so, may they drink in fresh air from the upper realm! Some Christians, too, are passing through the Enchanted Ground, the air of which Bunyan says made the pilgrims sleepy. Some Christians appear to have taken up their residence in that perilous place. In the case of others, the prevailing lethargy in the hearts of so many professing Christians tends to make them idle, just as in a chilly atmosphere, we are colder than we would be if our surroundings were warmer. I fear that some Christians need quickening for God's service because they have so much to do for themselves. The shop shutters are down so long that there is little time for anything but business, and the ledger is such a big book that it quite hides the Bible! Some, on the other hand, need to be urged because they have not anything to do. Of the two things, it is better to have too much to do than to have nothing to do—and those people who do not know how to occupy their time are often the most difficult to move to anything like earnestness in spiritual things!

Whatever may be the cause of the lingering, ministers are bound to be continually urging God's people onward in the spiritual life and warfare. Under what great obligations we are Brothers! We are not our own, we are bought with a price. How much Christ has done for us, Brothers and Sisters! What manner of persons ought we to be! What a destiny awaits us! Ought we not to walk worthily of that which is to be our heritage? See how fast time is dying. We cannot make up for that which we have already lost, but let us lose no more! See how rapidly our cemeteries are being crowded and dare even to look down and see how Hell is being thronged with souls that have perished through ignorance! See how Christ's name is being constantly blasphemed and how little power the

ministry of the Gospel seems to have—and what great power we find attending erroneous teaching! Oh, may God quicken us, dear Friends!

Sometimes, when I look at myself, and look at my fellow Christians, I can scarcely believe that we can be the result of such a great work as God has been carrying on. In Amsterdam I went into workshops where great wheels and much machinery were at work cutting diamonds. They were very small things to have all that machinery operating upon them. Still, they were diamonds—and when I look at some Christians, I suppose they must be diamonds, but they appear to be very insignificant in comparison with the work which is being worked upon them! Here is Jesus Christ plowing that field with His armies, watering it with His bloody sweat, casting Himself like a seed into it—and what comes up as the result? Only that poor shriveled thing! O God, must Eternal Election and Immutable Love, and a bleeding Savior's heart, and the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit all be set to work to produce such results as that?

God forbid that I should ever slight any of His work! The question naturally arises, "Can it be His if it only comes to that?" Here is a man who goes to a Prayer Meeting, perhaps, once in seven years, gives a four-penny piece to the collection if he has not a three-penny piece in his wallet, takes a sitting in the place of worship and then considers that all his work is done! He never opens his mouth for the Lord Jesus Christ from the first of January to the last of December! He is, at home, about as worldly as other people, yet he says that he is—

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

We have heard of mountains bringing forth mice, but we can scarcely think that Mount Zion can bring forth such creatures as these! We ought to be something better than this, Brothers and Sisters, and we must be. In the name of the dying Savior, now exalted in Heaven, whose disciples we profess to be, let us awaken ourselves and let us seek with heart and soul and strength to glorify Christ throughout the rest of life that may be allotted to us—lest we go back, dishonored, to the dust from which we sprang, after having had grand opportunities, noble possibilities and a Divine calling—and yet having lived beneath the dignity of any one of them!

II. Now I must turn to the second part of my subject, which is, that SINNERS NEED TO BE URGED AS MUCH AS SAINTS DO, for sinners, also, are very slow.

I thought, this afternoon, when my head was almost splitting with pain and I could not fix my thoughts upon my theme for this evening, "Oh, dear, dear, dear, if these sinners were only sensible, preaching would be very easy work, for all I would have to do would be just to set before them the way of salvation and they would at once walk in it!" But we have to rack our brains and to pour out our very heart in order to get you to attend to your chief business and to give heed to that which is for your lasting good! Sometimes our hearers say, "The preachers always tell us that same story and their sermons are not as polished as we would like them to be." Ah, but if you would only believe in Jesus, and so be

saved, we would polish our sermons up for you! If you would only seek and find Jesus Christ as your Savior, then we would try to give you some eloquence! But, as long as you will not have Christ and resolve to remain as you are, the only thing we can do is to keep on persuading, entreating and even compelling you to come in to the great Gospel feast! We are obliged to put the old Truth of God in very much the same old way. It is not poetical work to be a Royal Humane Society's officer, seeking to pull drowning people out of the river—and there is not much poetry about our work in trying to be the means of saving your souls!

But what makes you men and women so slow to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ which is the only way of salvation? Are you so fond of your sins that you are not willing to give them up, or are you really so self-righteous that you do not believe that you need to be saved? I think the most of you do believe, in a way, that there is a Hell—and that you will go there unless you are converted. But you do not really believe it because you do not realize what it means. You are very earnestly listening to me just now, but if somebody over there by the door were to cry out because a piece of plaster had dropped off the ceiling, how wide awake you would become compared with what you are now when I am talking about your going to Hell and being lost forever! Somehow or other, there is a lack of reality about you when spiritual matters are being discussed. I fear that the same spirit is getting into some good people's prayers. We do not pray real prayers, at least not as real as they ought to be. I do try to preach to you as if I meant it and I would willingly lay down my life if, by doing so, I could save you. Yet you listen to me as if it were merely a very proper thing for me to preach and for you to hear on Sunday—but as if you had nothing to do with the Gospel on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday!

You hear that the city in which you are dwelling is to be destroyed. You do not tell the angel that the prophecy is a lie, but you sit down so comfortably that it is clear that you do not believe it. Or if you do, you need to be pressed again, and again, and again to act as if it were true. Just now, as you took your seat, you missed a diamond ring off your finger and you will not be at all comfortable until you get home and see if it is there. You are concerned about the loss of a ring, yet your souls are lost and you are quite unconcerned about them. This terrible truth does not fret and worry you! I wish it would, so that you would say, "I will never rest till I know that I am saved through Jesus Christ the Savior." Surely, madness is bound up in the heart of sinners or else they would not need to be urged to escape.

"Well," say some of you, "we intend to think about this matter." I know you do and that thought of yours is Satan's biggest net. He has a number of nets of different sorts and sizes—some of them are only meant for eagles and he does not often use them, for there are not many eagles about. But he has a big net which he uses for catching small birds. I picture the great enemy of souls going out with his big net and I fancy I can hear him whistling with unholy glee at the thought of the many birds he will take in it. This is the style of his temptation—you are not to

quibble at the Truth of God. You are e not to be an avowed infidel. You are not to despise the Savior, you are not to say that the salvation of your soul is an unimportant matter, but you are to say to the minister, "Yes, Sir, what you preach is all very true and I am glad you put it in the way that you do. I like earnest preaching! I like to be told personally about my need of salvation and I will attend to the matter very soon—tomorrow, if possible. Oh, I just remembered there is something on that day which will be rather in the way, but, as soon as that is over, I will give heed to what you say." That is just what has happened a long while with some of you, but you are no nearer the deciding point.

A gentleman in this neighborhood told me that he could not come to hear me preach again. I asked him, "Why is that?" "Well," he answered, "I only came once and then you pointed me out and said, 'There sits a gray-headed old fool.' At least, you said that a gray-headed old sinner is a gray-headed old fool." "Well," I said, "I do not remember seeing you before, but are you a gray-headed old sinner? Because, if you are, then you are the other thing as well." He just looked at me and said nothing, and I have not seen him since that time. I am afraid there are others here to whom I might say just the same and it would be true. They must be foolish, for they have not done what they have admitted it would be wise for them to do! Again and again, a man has said, "I will do it." Now, Sir, you are a fool to say, "I will do it," if it was a foolish thing! But if it was a wise thing and you said, "I will do it," yet you have not done it, what are you?

Some of you are good arithmeticians—will you take your pencils and work out a sum for me? Here is a man of 50 years of age, and I want you to calculate the probabilities of his ever being saved. He had an excellent early training from a very godly father and mother whose many prayers for him he cannot forget, though he remained unsaved in spite of them all. He went to a Sunday school and had a very gracious teacher who set him a good example and was very earnest in pleading with him—but he would not yield. As he grew up, he had many Christian friends who wrote letters to him and used every possible opportunity to impress him. He resisted all that and for 20 years attended the ministry of a very earnest preacher. There was a great revival and many were saved, but he was not one of them. Since then, he has been sitting under another very faithful minister of God's Word and he has been impressed again and again. Put that down and figure it out if you can. He has been impressed 50 times, or a hundred, perhaps 200 times and he has got over all that. What are the probabilities that he will ever be saved? To tell you the truth, I greatly fear that the probability is that the man will be lost, that he never will be converted, but will continue as he has already been despite every instrumentality that has been employed on his behalf.

O you Sinners, with such terrible probabilities against you, you do, indeed, need to be urged and gladly would we put our hands upon you and urge you to escape for your lives, and to do it now, for it is now or never with some of you who are present here tonight! I have no doubt

that if we could read the past history of some who are here, we would see abundant reasons for urging them to immediate decision. I have already shown you where these reasons would be found and the probabilities against their conversion. But, as to the future, happily that is hidden from all of us. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet and, therefore, I shall not attempt to utter a prediction. But you all must know that out of some 6,000 persons assembled here, there is a great probability that we shall not all be alive next Lord's Day. It is a certainty that we shall never, all of us, meet here again, and the probability that some of us will have gone from this earth before next Sabbath is very great. In the membership of this Church, I notice, as regularly as the year rolls around, that our death-list comes to between 50 and seventy. There is usually one death a week or, if there should happen to be one week in which a member of the Church does not die, there will be two or three in the week following. The average is one a week so that if not out of this present assembly, yet out of the usual congregation at this Tabernacle, it is a certainty that two will die in a week. Two, in a week!

I wonder where the two victims for this week are? Perhaps at home, dying by degrees, with a good hope in Jesus Christ. Blessed be God if that is the case! We will shout the harvest home as they are gathered in! Possibly they are lying at home sick, yet without hope. Let us pray for them if that is their condition. Lord, help them to believe in Jesus Christ this very night, before they tread death's awful road, O Lord, save them! But perhaps one out of the two may be here, in good health, and unconverted. I am not saying what is at all improbable, am I? It may be so and if I knew that someone here would die before next Sabbath, I would beg him to stay after the service, that I might give him a squeeze of the hand and say to him, "My dear Friend, do not let this day go by without your looking to Christ and committing your soul into His hands." Now, as I do not know who it is to be, give me your hands, all of you, all around the building. I should like to look you dear men and women in the face and say to each one of you, "Now, dear Soul, do not live and die without the Savior! Do lay this matter to heart. I am not an angel, but I am one who would gladly do you good. If it is right to believe in Jesus Christ, the sooner you do it, the better. And if it is right to love and serve God, the sooner you do it, the better. And if to trust in Christ's precious blood is the only safe course, the sooner you do that, the better. May the eternal Spirit come and lead you, even now, to lay hold on Jesus Christ and find eternal life in Him this very hour!"

Now, look me in the face and say whether it shall be so or not. I will not ask you to speak—there will be too much noise if you all do so. But in your heart, I ask you to speak. Will you, or will you not? This may be the turning point in your life's history. There is a spot, under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, where there is a mark made by the chisel of a man who fell from the top and was killed. There is also a mark, which angel eyes can see, in that pew, or in that aisle, or up in that gallery where you have sat and said, "Not, tonight. I will decide tomorrow." Or where you have said, "No, I will not have anything to do with Christ." I wish that

instead of such a mark as that, there could be a star etched into the floor which would mean, "Here, a poor soul believed in Jesus."

I know a little Primitive Methodist chapel in Colchester. I went to see it some time ago and I went into the very pew where I sat, as a boy 15 years of age, and heard a sermon from the text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I should have liked to buy the seat and take it home, for I love the spot where Jesus met with me and saved me. And there are some of you who feel like that concerning these pews. They are very sacred to you and always will be, for there you were born for God! Oh, that some of you might be born here this very night! Some of you are in no need of instruction—you need urging. You do not need to be impressed concerning the guilt of your sins so much as to be urged to give them up and to put your trust in Jesus Christ! You do not need to be brought to the water so much as to be made to drink of it. There it is. Oh, that you would open your mouths and let the blessed stream flow in, for that is all that is needed! Receive Christ! Receive Christ now, by a simple act of faith, and He will give you Grace and strength to battle with your sins and to make you holy. Oh, that now, *now*, NOW, the great work may be done!

I do not suppose you can hear this clock tick, but when you get home, listen to your old clock on the stairs, or in your room, and it will say to you, "Now, now, now, now." I have sometimes thought that in the night I have heard the clock say, "Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never!" You need not listen to me any longer, but listen to that message from the clock.

May the Holy Spirit speak to you through it, and may you answer, "Now, even now, I will believe in Jesus Christ and be saved." May God bless you! May Christ save you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 17:11-32.

Verses 11, 12. *And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him 10 men who were lepers which stood afar off.* Leprosy was very common in Palestine in Christ's day. How thankful we ought to be that in this country, at any rate, it has almost entirely died out! There used to be, in almost every town, a lazar-house provided for lepers, so common was leprosy in this country. Certain diseases seem to die out by degrees and we should be very grateful that some of the worst forms of disease by which men have been afflicted have passed away. In this case, there were no less than 10 in one village. They "stood afar off," as was most proper, lest they should communicate the contagion to others. They had to cry out and warn men not to come too near them, saying, with covered lips, "Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!" The muffled sound that they made, if the word could not be distinguished, helped to warn the passersby to give them a wide berth.

13, 14. *And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests.* For no man could be pronounced clean even if he were healed, until he had undergone the ceremony prescribed in the Mosaic Law. These lepers were to go to the priests just as they were, so their going was an act of faith!

14. *And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed.* What a wonderful thing that must have been!

15, 16. *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.* One of those outcasts that the Jews would not acknowledge—one of the men that they said were of a mongrel breed—only half Israelite and half idolater—

"O Grace, it is your custom
Into unlikeliest hearts to come!"

17-25. *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger? And He said unto him, Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole. And when He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God comes not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it. And they shall say to you 'See here,' or, 'see there,' go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under Heaven shines unto the other part under Heaven; so also shall the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.* Though our Lord purposely left much with regard to His coming indefinite, He gave His disciples two instances, from the early history of the world, of the condition in which many would be found at His appearing.

26-32. *And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he who shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.* Remember Lot's wife.

—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.

NIGHT—AND JESUS NOT THERE!
NO. 2945

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 20, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1875.

"And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them."
John 6:17.

CHRIST'S disciples, when they joined Him, had some very happy times with Him—and they had just had a very grand day in feeding the multitude. I wish I had been there to help in the feeding of 5,000 men. Everyone who had a share in that service was highly honored and those who were not there might well regret their absence on such an eventful day! But notice fair days have foul eventides and the Christ manifested during the day may become a Christ hidden during the night. Close on the heels of the intense excitement of great success comes the relapse into darkness of spirit and absence of joy. The very same men who had been rejoicing with unspeakable joy in the Divine power of their Master, are now left to endure that which is a very sad experience for anyone to have—everything dark—and Jesus not there!

I am going to talk about the condition of the men described in our text. "It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them." And, first, I shall speak about *the affliction of His absence.* Secondly, about *some considerations which may cheer us under it.* And then, thirdly, I shall take a *very different and far more terrible view of this condition* and apply it to quite another class of persons.

I. First, then, "It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. "This suggests to us THE AFFLICTION OF HIS ABSENCE.

It was a great affliction for these disciples to have Christ away from them at all. Whenever He was away, they were as sheep without a shepherd and as soldiers without a leader, but for Him to be away when they were at sea—when they were at sea in the dark—when they were at sea in a storm—all this made it much worse for them, for, although we always need Jesus, yet we more peculiarly recognize the value of His Presence when we can derive no comfort from anything else.

Christ's absence was, in itself, an affliction to His disciples and, in proportion as we love Him, we shall acknowledge it to be an affliction to have Him absent from us. Those who never knew the sweetness of the society of Christ do not feel any sorrow that He is absent from them. A person who had never tasted pure water, but has always had to drink some foul draught, would not sigh for the cooling spring because he had never known its sweetness. There is no poverty in the world so dire as the poverty of those who have been rich—and there are none who can

know the value of the Savior, in His absence, but those who have enjoyed His preciousness by dwelling in His Presence! If your love to Jesus Christ is chilled, you will not miss Him much. Prince Emmanuel went away from Mansoul and when He was gone, the townspeople did not miss Him. But had they been enjoying continual fellowship with Him and He had departed from them only for a little while, they would have begun to sigh and cry in the bitterness of their souls—and would not have been content till they had Him back again—and would have been ready to die if He did not come back to them at once! To those who intensely love Him, it is, in itself, an affliction to be without the Savior! And it is an affliction in proportion as they love Him.

These men were put to many inconveniences by Christ's absence. To be without the Savior made the darkness seem all the darker. Had He been there, they might have sung—if the lines had then been written—

"Mid darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun!"

If Christ is in the boat with us, I do not know that it matters much whether the sun is shining or not, for, if the sun shall shine, we shall see HIM, and delight to see Him by the light of the sun. But if it is dark, we will see Christ by His own light and rejoice to see, in that *brighter light*, what we might not have recognized had the sunlight still shone upon us! You all know what it is to be in the dark and you know that material darkness is not comfortable. I remember being in a third-class railway carriage with a large number of other people travelling a long journey at night. Somebody struck a match and lit a candle. That became the most cheerful part of the carriage and our eyes could not help turning in that direction, for we did not like the darkness. Nobody does. There is also a kind of mental darkness in which you are disturbed, perplexed, worried troubled—not, perhaps, about anything tangible—you could not write down your troubles. It may even be that you really don't have any, but you feel troubled and dismayed. Other people say that you are nervous and they blame you and say, "You ought not to give way in this manner." That is what they think. But when a person gets into your present condition, that is the unkindest thing that anyone can possibly say—and the least likely to do any good to the poor troubled soul! I do not mind a trouble which I can see and understand. Manfully would I shoulder it in my Master's strength. But when the spirit, itself, is in the dark, one imagines a thousand evil things! Even good things, themselves, seem to be evil and what should be to your encouragement becomes often a source of discouragement! Have any of you ever been in that condition? If you have, and if Jesus has not come to you, then, I am sure that you have felt it very difficult and you have greatly needed His Presence.

There are a great many of you who appear to have a large stock of faith, but it is only because you are in very good health and your business is prospering. If you happened to get a disordered liver, or your business should fail, I would not be surprised if nine parts out of ten of your wonderful faith would evaporate! I have noticed that certain brethren who talk about being perfect are generally persons of robust constitution with a very comfortable income and not much to do except

to go about to conferences and conventions—and talk about themselves. But the tried people of God do not often ride upon those high horses. They have to cry out very frequently! They have many anxieties and cares which, although they cast them upon the Lord, make them realize that they are not yet pure spirits, but are still in the body. Let a man have a bad headache for about half an hour and let him see whether he does not feel himself to be mortal and to still have something sinful about him!

Another part of the affliction of the disciples when "it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them," was that *their toil became very wearisome*. They were rowing and they had rowed their boat several furlongs from the shore and it was wearisome work in Christ's absence. When He was with them and favored them with a cheering glance, and spoke comforting messages to them, I can well imagine how merrily that boat went along—how they tugged the oar as the Venetian gondolier tugs his to the sound of song, and how the vessel would glide over the waves! But now they had to toil by themselves and there was no sweet word from Jesus, no gracious promise from His lips, no loving glance from His dark eyes which were to them "like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-Rabbim." Now that their Lord was absent, it was all tugging and straining till muscle and sinew were weary. It is just so with our Christian service—if Christ is with us, it is glorious work to teach in the Sunday school or to preach in the congregation! And going from house to house is light work to the visitor, for he is conscious of the Presence of his Master. But if the Lord's Presence is withdrawn, you feel that you must do these things from a sense of duty. You will do them and you will nerve yourself up to persevere with the task, but it is hard, trying work.

Not only did the darkness seem to get darker and the toil become more wearisome, but *the way grew rougher*, for we are told that "the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew." When our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, rough roads grow smooth, but when He is absent, smooth roads grow rough. It is marvelous how a man who lives in the light of Christ's Countenance makes light of losses and crosses. He takes them as a matter of course, or, better still, he accepts them as *gifts* from God and believes that they will be overruled for good—and so he keeps on singing as he passes over the rough road. But if Jesus Christ is absent, a comparatively easy lot appears to be a heavy one and where we should have seen a thousand mercies, we only have an eye to observe our discomforts. It is trying traveling when the waves are rough and it is dark—and Jesus is not there.

Worst of all, when Jesus is away, *all perils become more terrible.* Many a boat has perished on the Galilean Lake, beneath those waters which sometimes gleam so placidly as though they tempted the boat to float upon their surface. And many a man has found a watery grave in that land-locked sea when it has worked tempestuously beneath the gusts from the surrounding hills. If Jesus had been with His disciples on that stormy night. If He had been awake to speak to and cheer them, they would have rejoiced to see the boat go up and down, from the trough of

the wave to the billow's crown, like some great sea bird in its play! They would have felt a sort of hilarity of spirit at being in such a brisk gale when the Lord High Admiral of all the seas was in command of their boat! But now that He was away from them, they feared that the vessel would go down. They thought they would never survive that storm, they would drift onto a rock and not one of them would again reach the shore! The perils are, indeed, great when it is dark and Jesus is not there!

You will say, dear Friends, that I am describing a very sad condition of things. Well, it is no fancied one to me, at any rate, and I think it is no unusual thing for those whom Jesus loves to be put into such a condition. There are many saints of whom we read in the Word who were precious in the sight of the Lord, but, among them all, where do you find one who was not tried? "O man greatly beloved," was said to Daniel and, therefore, it might have been added, "O man greatly tried and passed through stern processes to prove whether you really are what you seem to be." Whatever God keeps away from His servants, I do not think He ever keeps away the rod from them! He had one Son without sin, but He never had one son without chastisement. If there are many of God's children who have not yet had any trials, I would not recommend them to pray for it—that would be very wrong. The Lord's children need not ask to be whipped, but I would advise them to reckon that somewhere between here and Heaven they will have to realize the truth of that saying of the Apostle, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?"

There I leave this first point—the affliction of Christ's absence.

II. Now, secondly, I am going to mention SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY CHEER US WHEN IN THIS CONDITION.

The first consideration I would mention is this. Dear Friend, *perhaps it may not really be as you think it is*. You say that Christ is absent from you, but, possibly He is not. Perhaps you have not really lost His Presence. "Oh, but I am not as happy as I once was!" I do not know that Christ's company in the soul necessarily makes that soul consciously happy continually. I know that Jesus was very near to Peter when a look from Him made the sinful disciple go out and weep bitterly. I think that the Presence of Christ may sometimes tend to breed in us a certain holy sorrow which, though not so sweet, is yet as precious as holy joy itself. Perhaps, dear Friend, you are not just now in a right state of body or in a right mental condition to get joy and happiness from the Presence of Christ. At any rate, if He were not there, your spirit would have sunk much lower than it does now. Sad as you are, you would have been much sadder if it had not been for the sacred influence of His more than magnetic Presence which is really staying your soul. You might have fallen into despair, but you have not come to that condition yet and it is because His left hand is under your head so that, although you sink, you do not sink lower. You might have been utterly overwhelmed if it had not been for the Divine supports which have been given to keep you where you are!

I will tell you a secret from my own experience. I have had times in which I have blamed myself and grieved before God and if anyone had asked me, "What is your soul's condition?" I would have said, "Bad." Yet, in a month or two's time, I have longed to have that very condition over again, for I have said to myself, "I am happy now, but I wish I could grieve over sin as I did then. I think I have strong faith now, but I wish I had the same tender consciousness of the least touch and taint of sin that I had in what I regarded as my dark days." We are very bad judges of our own spiritual experiences. We often undervalue who God esteems and set great store by that which God does not prize. So it may be that Christ is really with you, dear Friend, although you are writing such bitter things against yourself and mourning His absence.

If He is, indeed, absent, there is one thing to comfort you, namely, that *you have not driven Him away by your sins.* That is to say if you are in the same condition as those disciples were in the vessel. Their Master had bid them go, and they had gone at His command. He had left them—they had not left Him, so they had not to blame themselves because He was not there when the darkness came on.

If you are conscious that you have been living in some known sin, go and bitterly repent of it before God. If you have grieved the Spirit of God and driven Him away from you, listen to the voice which says, "Return, you backsliding children." But that is not the subject upon which I am now speaking. I am addressing these who think they have lost the Presence of Christ, these whose conscious joy has departed, who, nevertheless, are not aware that there has been anything in them which would separate them from their God. You, dear Friends, may derive comfort from this fact. Say, "Well, as the Lord has sent us to sea and left us, we are where He put us. And as this is His Sovereign appointment, even if it is the post of trial, so let it be. We will kiss the rod and even in the dark we will believe that all is well! And just as a child, when it is put to bed without a candle, must not cry, but must go to sleep, so we will not weep, but bow submissively to whatever our Lord ordains."

Further, if Jesus Christ is not in the boat with His disciples, although it is dark, they have this thought to comfort them—that He still loves them. He is not there, but He loves them, so His heart is with them. They seem to be alone, but their names are written on His heart just as they used to be. Yes, Beloved, our condition before God does not depend upon our conscious enjoyment. Do you believe that we are children of God today because we are happy, and that we may be children of the devil tomorrow because we may then be desponding? Oh, no!—

"If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ should fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day!"

But the mercy is that even though we believe not, He is faithful! We change, but He changes not! And when His servants are in a storm or under a cloud, the love of Jesus Christ for them is just the same as when they rejoiced in the full sunlight of conscious enjoyment of His Presence.

Recollect, also, that *although you cannot see Jesus and He is not with you, He knows where you are*. You cannot see Him, but He can see you. "What a terrible blast came down from the hills just now!" The Lord knows all about it and how it made the ship rock and reel, and stagger like a drunken man. "That wave seemed to come right over us and to wet us to the skin." Yes, but Christ knew every drop that was in it and just where each drop would fall. "But see how every timber in the vessel starts—it must surely go to pieces soon." But Christ knows all about the starting of the timbers and the straining of the masts. He is not ignorant of the condition of any of His children. And if He has put them in a position of trial, He Himself watches over them with tender and sympathetic eyes and knows exactly their perils and their needs.

And, more than that, our blessed Lord not only knows where we are and all about our circumstances—and loves us and feels for us—but *He can come to us.* "How can He come to us? We are many furlongs out at sea." Yes, but He can come to you. "But there is no other boat near and if there were, how could it live in such a storm as this? Would you have us believe that He will came riding upon the wings of the wind or walking upon the waves? It cannot be!" Yet it was, you know, for Jesus did come to them. And if you say, in the time of your distress, that the Lord Jesus cannot come to you, I must tell you that you know not what you are saying! His people never can be in a place where He cannot get to them!

And what is more—let this comfort you—*He will come to you for He did come to His disciples*. He came walking on the water and so reached them—and He will come to you, also. Though He may tarry a little while, for the trial of your faith, He will come to you before long. If you believe in Christ even when it is dark with you, the clear shining will come to you before long—

"When your eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim"—

and in due time Christ must come to you. He cannot finally forsake one of His people and when He comes, He will say, "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer." So be of good cheer, for Jesus Christ will come to you even when it is all dark around you!

And here is another word of cheer for you, namely *that when He does come, it will be in a way that will give you a higher sense of His Glory than you ever had before*. You have seen Him on the land, but you have never yet seen Him on the water! Well, you could not see Him walking on the water unless you were on the water, yourself—and you could not see Jesus Christ calming the storm unless there was a storm to be quieted! And if the wind did not blow, you could not tell whether He could control it. Trial is absolutely necessary in order to reveal to us some of the attributes of our gracious God! We cannot, ordinarily, see the stars in the daytime, but if we go down a mine or a well, we can. And often in the deep mines or wells of trouble, as we go down, down, down, we see the brightness of our Lord Jesus Christ as we never saw it before! You know that there is a certain kind of ink with which you may write but no one

will perceive that there is any writing on the paper until it is held near a fire—the heat of the fire makes the writing legible. There are many precious promises that are written with this invisible ink and, until you hold them to the fire of affliction or trial, you will never read them and understand them. You must be brought into this trial! You must be in the dark, or Jesus will not come to you with such a splendid display of His marvelous power and love as He gave to His disciples on that stormy sea! But, look—over the tops of those rolling billows He comes—the Man, the Christ, the God—swift to help and deliver you in your hour of greatest peril! Oh, it is worthwhile to miss His Presence for a while—and to be in darkness for a time—if we may afterwards see Him in a still nobler Character and understand more of His mighty power to save!

It is very possible that when your Lord comes back to you, *His return will be to you the end of a great many troubles, toils and difficulties.* I do not understand how it was, but when our Lord came walking on the water and entered the little vessel, "immediately the ship was at the land where they went." There was some sudden lift, or darting forward of the vessel and immediately it was at the shore! Have you ever noticed how when you have had a time of great spiritual darkness and, perhaps, of great labor and trial, and you have worried yourself because you could not see the Lord's hand in it all and could not trace the Lord's love overruling it, Jesus Christ has at last come to you and there has been an immediate end to your spiritual trouble—and what has been possibly more remarkable, there has been an end to all the rest of your trials? Perhaps, for months afterwards, you have not had any spiritual darkness, or stormy winds or contrary waves! There was a great calm after all your trials, just as, when the children of Israel had been so oppressed in Egypt and were about to be delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, the Lord said, "Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue."

I have had those seasons of wonderful calm when not a dog has moved his tongue against me, although I have had all the dogs of Hell at my heels a little while before! There have been no troubles from above, around, or beneath—not a devil has dared to tempt me and nothing external has afflicted me—all seemed to come exactly as I would have it and all in a moment! Perhaps it would not be safe for us to get to land so quickly without having first been in the dark a little while. We cannot bear sudden prosperity. Great success is one of the worst perils of mankind. Many a man has been elevated until his brain has grown dizzy and he has fallen to his destruction. He who is to be made to stand securely on a high place has need to be put through sharp affliction. More men are destroyed by prosperity and success then by affliction and apparent failure.

These are some of the considerations which may cheer those of God's people who, for a time, walk in darkness and see no Light of God. May God bless these words to any mourning saint who may hear or read them!

III. But now, in concluding my discourse, I am going to make a very different use of the text. There are some of you—I am glad to see you here and I pray the Lord to bless the message which I am about to give you—there are some of you who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and who are not trusting in Him. Your condition may be described in those amazing words of the Apostle Paul, (to me they are very amazing), "*without Christ*." That is one of the saddest things that can be said of anybody—"without Christ." Possibly you say that you do not see any sadness in your present condition. You enjoy yourself very much. You are young, in good health, the world is bright and life seems to be one continual dance to you. It is true that Jesus has not come to you, but you do not need Him and you think that you can do very well without Him. But one of these days it will be very dark all around you—and it is a very terrible thing for a man when it is dark and Jesus does not come to him!

I have seen such people. I saw some of them during the recent financial panic—they were men of considerable business and they were making money, but everything around them seemed to be shaking. Many firms were failing and presently the news came that there was a failure in a certain house which would involve them in its ruin. All was gone in a moment and there was nothing to be done but to call their creditors together and tell them the truth. In such a time as that, a man who has a large family depending upon him and who occupied a high position in society may have to come down to almost absolute poverty. I do not know what some men whom I saw then, did, for they had not any Christ to go and talk to—they had not the Well-Beloved into whose ear they could whisper the sad tale of their troubles. I know that some of them were glad to get anybody to listen to what they had to say, and it was a sorry story. Well now, some of you have been prospering in worldly matters. God has blessed you with temporal goods, but reverses may come to you and what will you do, then, without Christ?

But there is something worse than that! It may be that your worldly business may continue to prosper, but there may come to you a mental trouble. It does come to you sometimes, does it not? You have been out to a very merry party, but when you come home you feel dreadfully flat. Do you not occasionally get into that state? Perhaps I am addressing someone who used to be very interested in the theater. He has been again, lately, but somehow or other the plays are not so interesting as they used to be, or else he has changed his attitude towards them. The fact is that the man has not the tastes and desires that he once had. If he goes where he used to go, he does not any longer find the mirth and merriment that he used to find there—the laughter seems to him to be folly and madness—he cannot enjoy it. Well now, if you have lost your taste for this world, it is a sorry thing for you if you have not acquired a taste for another and a better world! If your old friend has gone from you, it is a sad thing if the new best Friend does not came to you! I pity those of you who once thought yourselves so very good and whose self-righteousness is all gone, but who have nothing better in the place of it—

it is very dark and Jesus has not come to you. I pity you who were once so self-contained and dogmatic, but who now begin to tremble and to be afraid because Jesus does not come to you it is night with you—mental night—and it is night in your circumstances, yet Jesus has not come to you. What I would bid you do is just look through the thick darkness, for on the crest of the wave, the crucified Savior is standing! And if you will but look to Him with the eye of faith, He will come into your vessel and deliver you. He will sanctify your trouble, clear away the affliction from your mind and give you peace and rest!

Remember, also, that in a very short time all of you will die. Will you picture yourself lying upon the bed of sickness? I cannot describe the room, for I have not seen it, but I can well imagine you propped up with pillows, for you can scarcely get your breath. And the physician has told your wife that in a few hours it will be all over. And you have been very gently told—at least, you have spelt it out for yourself—that they have given you up and that the sweat that they are wiping from your brow is really the death-sweat. It is very dark. There, bid "good-bye" to your wife and children, for you must leave them. Look out of the window and see what you can of the surroundings of the old homestead, for you are going to leave it and you have no home to dwell in forever. It is very dark. Money cannot help you now. The honors you have gained cannot help you now. And the fondness of affection, which would help you if it could, cannot help you now. It is very dark, but, worst of all, Jesus has not come to you—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows"—

but if He does not come to you then, man, what will you do? What will you do? What will you do? To die in the dark is terrible! To live in the dark is more than I would choose, but what must it be to *die* in the dark and not to have Jesus with you? May God deliver you! But if you will not have Christ as your Savior in life, how can you expect to have Him in death? Fly to Him now, lest tomorrow you should see the picture which I have sketched, executed to the very life—and you the subject of it!

But if it is dreadful to die without the Savior, what will it be to wake up in the unseen world without Him? And, at the last, what will it be when the great trumpet sounds, to have no Savior to welcome you, but, instead thereof, to see Him far away, seated upon that Great White Throne as your Judge? What will it be to have no Jesus coming to help you when the earth is rocking and reeling and the Heavens are on fire, and the books are opened, and the Judge is dividing, to the right and to the left, the sheep and the goats? And, all the while, He has not darted one glance of love at you, or opened His lips to say one friendly word to you? Think what will be your despair when, at last, it comes your turn to hear the terrible words, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there."

Look to Him and live! God help you to look now! And then, when it is dark, Jesus will come to you—no, better still, He will live with you forever and ever!

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *JOHN 6:14-40.*

Verses 14, 15. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet who should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself alone.* Our Lord Jesus had just worked the miracle of feeding the five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, so He was very popular at that time. The people even wanted to come and take Him by force and make Him a king, but He escaped from them, for He knew the value of that popularity! What was it but a puff of wind? Probably many of the very people who tried then to crown Him were among the crowds in Jerusalem who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And, nowadays there may be a great deal of anxiety to hear the Gospel, yet very little result may follow from it. A crowded House of Prayer is certainly a very hopeful sight, yet it may end in disappointment to those who are looking for souls to be won for the Savior.

16-26. *And when evening was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near unto the boat and they were afraid. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they went. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one which His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone, (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius near unto the place where they did eat bread, after the Lord had given thanks). When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* How faithful and truthful the Master was! There was in Him nothing of the political concealment of His knowledge and the endeavor to please everybody which we see in so many! He speaks the truth whether it offends or pleases His hearers—and so should His servants. "You seek Me," He said, "not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

27. *Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for Him has God the Father sealed.* He rebuked their excessive ardor in seeking meat for their bodies and urged them rather to seek food for their souls. But did you ever notice what an extraordinary piece of advice our Savior gave to these people? It is one of His paradoxes. He bade them not to labor for the very thing which they could not get without laboring, and to labor for that which they never could get by laboring. "Labor not for the meat which perishes"—yet how else can we have it? "But for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." It is a free gift and not the reward of labor, yet Christ told them to labor for it! Did He not mean just this—"Let not your greatest efforts be expended upon the things of time and sense, but let them go out after eternal and spiritual blessings"?

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* "What is the noblest work that we can do? What is that work which will please God most?"

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.* The grandest work that any man can do is to believe on the Savior whom God has sent. There are some who despise faith, but Christ was not of that number. He honored it exceedingly when He said, in effect, "This is the Godlike work, the work which is nearest to God's heart, 'that you believe on Him whom He has sent.'" Dear Friend, are you struggling after that which is high and noble? Would you do the best day's work that was ever done in any mortal life? Then run not to this or that invention of your own, but be content to believe on Him whom God has sent! This is the first, the highest, the noblest work—the work which gives to God the greatest pleasure!

30. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work?* What strange questions for them to ask when He had amazed them with His wonderful works!

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.* They talked about "bread" again—how they persist in coming back to that! You know the questions that men of the world are always asking, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?" This is the world's wretched trinity!

32. *Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven.* Moses did not give Israel the manna, God gave it. And it did not come from Heaven, that is, from the celestial sphere, in the sense in which Christ, the true Bread, came from Heaven.

33. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world.* The Bread of God is Jesus Christ, Himself! The man who would feed so as to satisfy his spiritual nature, and live thereby, must feed upon Jesus Christ, Himself.

34. *Then said they unto Him, Lord, give us this bread.* They did not understand the meaning of their own prayer. Sometimes, in our services,

when people are very quickly convicted of sin and fall to praying all of a sudden, a wise conductor ought to enquire carefully whether it is not a mistaken prayer. I do not doubt that many of the cries and many of the professions made in enquiry-rooms are mistaken ones, after all, and that we put down as the results of our work much of which we shall have cause to be ashamed when it comes to the time of testing.

35. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger and he that believes in Me shall never thirst.* Hear this, poor starving people! The needs of your soul can all be met by Jesus Christ! If you have Him, the hunger of your spirit shall be appeased and the thirst of your heart shall be quenched.

36. *But I said unto you that you have seen Me, and believe not.* How the Savior brings the truth home to these people and He might do the same to some of you. You pray, "Give us this bread" and He replies, "I have given it to you, yet you have not eaten it. You have seen Me, you have heard Me, you know Me and yet you do not believe on Me." If Christ were to appear in this building at this moment, might He not say to many of you, "You have heard of Me from your childhood and you know all you need to know about Me, yet you have not believed in Me"? Would God it were not so with so many of you!

37-40. *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* This is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God—that everyone who looks to Christ with eyes of faith has everlasting life, and though his body may die, yet even for that there is everlasting life, for Christ will raise him up again at the last day. Oh, that you would all believe on Jesus Christ and so find that eternal life!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—778, 1028, 700.

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

A PROCESSION OF CROSS-BEARERS
NO. 2946

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 27, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 2, 1875.

"Take up the cross, and follow Me."
Mark 10:21.

YOUR mind's eye can see that procession yonder. Notice it carefully. At the head of it there walks One whom we rightly call Master and Lord. You may know Him by the prints of the nails in His hands and feet. I observe that He carries a Cross and that it is a very heavy one. Do you see the long line following Him? They are all those of whom the world was not worthy. That line has been continued even to this day and will be continued until the present dispensation shall close. As you watch these different followers of Christ in the procession, one thing will strike you—however much they differ in some respects, they are all alike in one thing—every one of them carries a cross. There is no exception to this rule! From the Master down to the last disciple, it is a procession of cross-bearers. The day will come when there will be a transformation scene and you will see all these cross-bearers transformed into crown-wearers! But, rest assured that the old motto, "No cross, no crown," is certainly true and those who refuse to carry the cross after Christ on earth shall never be permitted to wear the crown with Christ in the land that is beyond the stars.

The chief business of a Christian is to follow Christ. You may sum up all his life in that expression. He has Christ in him, Christ gives him new life from day to day and the very way in which that life expends its force is in the following of Christ. I would, dear Friends, that you and I would aim at so following Him as to gain a distinction for the closeness of our walk—for there are some in Heaven of whom it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." There are some who seem to follow Him but partially. There are many wanderings and many inconsistencies in their life, but thrice blessed shall he be who, like Caleb, follows the Lord fully and with purpose of heart puts his foot down in the very footprints of his crucified Lord! If you are a disciple of Jesus, your chief business is to follow Jesus. But there are difficulties in the way and these difficulties are what is meant by "the cross." There are difficulties in the way of making a profession of faith in Jesus and of walking worthy of it. And these difficulties are a burden too heavy for flesh and blood to carry. Only Divine Grace can enable us to take it up—and when we do take it up, we are fulfilling the words of the text, "Take up the cross, and follow Me."

I am going to urge you to ask yourselves, each one, first, "*What is my cross?*" Secondly, "*What shall I do with it?*" And, thirdly, "*What should encourage me to do so?*"

I. First, then, WHAT IS MY CROSS?

I have said that the meaning of the cross is, principally, that which is involved by difficulties in following Christ. To some, the cross they will have to carry, if they become Christians, is that of *reproach and rebuke for Christ's sake.* Perhaps they have relatives who hate all true religion so that if they should profess to be converted, they would be sneered at, ridiculed and misrepresented. All their action would be twisted to mischievous ends and motives would be imputed to them which they, themselves, abhor. It is very hard for young people, especially in ungodly families, to dare to call themselves followers of the Crucified! Nor is it easy for a working man, in the workshop, to bear that perpetual "chaffing," as his companions call it, which they delight to inflict on those who are better than themselves. The same kind of thing takes place in other classes of society, though it is not generally done quite so overtly. There is the cold shoulder, there are suggestive hints and innuendoes and there are avoidances of the company of those who come out decidedly on the Lord's side. Some of you do not know much about this style of treatment. You were dandled on the lap of ease in this respect, for your parents rejoiced over you when you were converted and all your Christian acquaintances kept high holiday, as it were, when they heard that you had decided to be a follower of Jesus! I wonder whether you would have been quite as firm as we might have wished if your first speech upon religious matters had been met with an oath, or if some brutal father had proceeded yet further and uttered horrible threats against you? There is many a child who has had to bear all that. Or if you had had a coarse, drunken husband who hated the very name of Jesus, I wonder whether you would have been able to bear it, as I have known some good women do from year to year, enduring a lifelong martyrdom for the sake of Jesus Christ? Now, dear Friend, whoever you may be, if anybody will sneer at you, or think the less of you, or say hard things about you because you become a Christian, that is *your cross*, and Christ says to you, in our text, "Take up the cross, and follow Me."

Sometimes the cross comes in another shape. A man is converted to God and he then discovers that his position in life is not one which a Christian ought to hold—certainly not one in which piety is likely to flourish. This case often comes under my notice. A man often comes to me and he says, "Sir, I trust I love the Lord. I am at the Tabernacle as often as possible, but I am sorry to say that I have half a dozen girls behind the bar serving drinks to people and I cannot bear the thought of it. It is a trade that I cannot now endure and I must get out of it." Often has this difficulty come before me and I have been gratified when I have seen men who have loved the Lord so much that they have said, "This business must no longer be carried on by me. I love my Lord too much for that. How can I bow my knee to Him and ask His blessing on such a business as this?" And they have escaped from it as fast as they possibly could! And there are many positions into which a man may get in trade

in which he becomes entangled in evil. If he were quite free, he could do the right and straightforward thing, but his partner, perhaps, will do the opposite and he knows that it will not do for him to be always throwing the blame of doing a wrong thing upon another man. And then pocketing his half of the profits, he says, "Come what may, I must get out of this business, for it would be better for me to enter into life as poor as the poorest beggar than, having a prosperous but sinful business, to be cast into Hell."

And many, too, suffer losses in business, *because, as soon as they become Christians, they have to make a great many alterations*. "Sunday is our best day for business," says somebody. Well, then, so much more opportunity is there for you to make a greater sacrifice to prove your love to Jesus! Up with the shutters and mind that you do it at once. If you have to lose anything, in any way for Christ's sake, in order to be His conscientious disciple, that is your cross—and He says to you, "Take up the cross, and follow Me."

Sometimes, however, the cross may be of a somewhat different kind. *It may be the giving up of some pleasure, or habit which has been peculiarly gratifying to you.* The Christian man discovers that although this habit may be allowable for others, it is not so for him—it would injure him. It would ruin him. He cannot pray, he cannot think of Divine things as long as he clings to this habit. It is his duty, if there is anything that hinders the growth of his soul, or his fellowship with Christ, to shake it off at once as Paul shook off the viper into the fire! But some have found it difficult to do this. Dear Friend, if that is your case, pluck out your right eye, cut off your right hand rather than keep them and perish in your sin! Better to lose everything else than lose your soul! Better to give up everything else than give up the hope of eternal life!

With some, however, the cross does not assume that shape. If we are to be Christ's disciples at all, *He demands of us that we give up ourselves wholly and unreservedly to Him*. Jesus Christ will not have half of a man! He will have the whole of him—body, soul and spirit! You cannot be Christi's disciple unless you are prepared to renounce everything you have at His bidding. For instance, if it should come to pass that to be a Christian required your imprisonment for Christ's sake, you must be willing to lie in prison and to die for Him. If it were required, as once it was, that you should be dragged into the amphitheatre to be slain by wild beasts, you must be willing to do as the Christians did then—to die such a death, if necessary, for Christ. My Lord and Master will not be content with the shell of a man—He must have his heart and soul, his entire being—and he who will not thus give himself up to Christ cannot be His disciple. This is a cross to many who want to make some little reserve, or some provision for the flesh. If this is your cross, I pray you to take it up and follow Christ.

We must not forget that the Cross, as far as *Christ* was concerned, was not merely a matter of shame and reproach. It was that towards men, but, before God, *when Jesus carried His Cross, He was bearing a burden which it pleased the Father to lay upon Him.* So, to some, the

cross is poverty. They strive hard but they can never rise above grinding poverty. To others, it is a body which from their earliest childhood has been weak and feeble. To some, the cross is a proneness to disease and pain. To others, a wearing sickness which scarcely permits them to leave their bed. To others, an affliction which, while it allows them a considerable measure of bodily vigor, yet, nevertheless, frequently gnaws at their very heart and they feel as if they could die from the weariness of a long life of pain. Oh, how many of God's children have to carry this cross! Or if it is not that, perhaps the cross takes the form of an ungodly husband or an ungrateful child. But I need not try to make a list of your crosses. We have a saying that there is a skeleton in every closet and, certainly, there is a cross in every lot—

"Shall Simon bear his cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone
And there's a cross for me."

We all know what our own cross is. And if our Heavenly Father has appointed it for us, we must take it up and follow Christ!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT AM I TO DO WITH THE CROSS?

Well, first, *let me never try to make a cross of my own.* I know some people who do that. They have pretty nearly everything that heart could wish for, yet they are dissatisfied. They are of a fretful, discontented disposition and they can always see something to trouble them even when nobody else can see it. I charge you, Friends, to watch against that state of heart which leads a man, when he looks up to the sun, to say, "Ah, it has spots on its surface." And when he observes the beauty of the moonlight, to draw only this reflection, "This light of the moon is very cold." If he were to look at the greenest landscape in the world, he would say that he believed there was an extinct volcano somewhere underneath it and, perhaps, it might not be quite extinct and might erupt again. Whenever he reads the Bible, he always likes to read about the pouring out of the vials and he is particularly fond of the star called Wormwood. And he almost hopes to see the day when there shall be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in divers places, and I know not what besides! Some people seem to have a little trouble factory at the back of their houses. They appear to be always engaged in making new crosses! I have often said that homemade troubles are like homemade clothes—they seldom fit, and they are likely to last a very long while! O child of God, do not make your life one continual groan! Far better to make it one happy song of praise, one joyful Psalm of thanksgiving to the Most High! Do not make a cross for yourself.

And, next, *do not try to choose your cross.* Of course you cannot do it, but there are many people who wish they had So-and-So's lot. Ah, you do not know how heavy his cross is! Have you never heard the fable that once upon a time all the cross-bearers were invited to come and bring their crosses and put them in one heap and each man might take up the cross that he liked best? So, of course, nobody took the one that he had brought, but each one went away with his neighbor's cross on his back. But, before many hours, they were all back again, asking to have their old crosses, for they found that the cross they had carried before had so

worn their shoulders that they had become used to that particular burden, but the new cross was galling them in fresh places, so they were glad, each one, to put his neighbor's cross down and go away with his own. On the whole, my Brothers and Sisters, you have the best lot that you could have, for if you had a better one in some respects, it would be worse for you in other respects. Be satisfied as you are and do not wish to choose another man's cross. Christ says, "Take up the cross, and follow Me." He does not say, "Desire to have another man's cross."

Observe, too, that Christ does not say, *"Murmur at your cross."* That is the very reverse of taking it up! As long as a man is alive and out of Hell, he cannot have any cause to complain! Be he where he may—be he placed in the most abject position conceivable—the man is better off than he deserves to be. Let not a single murmur, then, ever escape our lips. Blessed is the Grace of patience, but it is difficult to be acquired. May the Lord, of His Infinite Mercy, teach us to bear all His holy will and bear it cheerfully—and so to take up our cross for Jesus sake!

Christ does not tell us *to run away from our cross*. There are some who try to do that. I have often observed that when people change their position in order to escape from trial, the old saying has been fulfilled to them, for they have leaped out of the frying pan into the fire. I have known some of them emigrate because of the difficulties of living in this country and, in about six months, they have thought that this old country is about the best under Heaven, as I reckon it is, after all! And glad would they have been if they could only have gone back to the place whence they came out. If you expect to go to a land where you will have no trials to bear, there is but one such place that I know of, except Heaven, and that is the fool's paradise—and I would not advise you to attempt to enter that! Oh, no, we were born into this world that in the sweat of our brow we might eat bread—and the sweat must be on our brow in some form or other, and the burden must be on our back. If thorns and thistles grow in your garden, it is no use for you to move to the next street, for they will grow there, also. And it is no use moving to another country, for you will have thorns growing in France as well as in England—in Australia as well as in the British Islands—it is no use to try to run away from your cross and it is also cowardly. Do as Christ bids you, "Take up the cross, and follow Me."

And, dear Friends, there is another thing which we are rather apt to do and that is, *to faint under our cross, or to feel that it is too heavy for us to carry*. Do I address anyone in such a condition? Dear Brother, dear Sister, there are many promises suited to your case. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." "God is faithful, who will not suffer 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." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be." Let these texts be like a cordial to your spirit, and say, "I will not faint, after all. There is

hope for me that I shall yet be revived." How can a man despair who can lift up his eyes to Heaven and call God his Father?

What, then, is meant by taking up the cross, but this? First, dear brethren, *if following Christ will involve you in any scoffing and shame, bear it and be glad to bear it.* If it will cause you any loss, say with Paul, "Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him." Does anyone drop your acquaintance because you belong to Christ? O my dear Friend, will you go to Hell for the sake of an earthly acquaintance? I hope not! Let the acquaintance be dropped, rather than drop your acquaintance with Christ! Will worldlings scowl at you? Let them scowl, as long as Jesus smiles. Will men put you out of their synagogue because you are a Christian? Let them put you out, for Christ will find you and if He shall welcome you, it will not matter who casts you away. Therefore, for Christ's sake, boldly bear whatever has to be borne and be faithful in your following of Him even unto death.

Taking up the cross means, next, *be resigned to those afflictions which come to you from God your Father.* It is easier to say this, my dear Friends, than to do it, as you will find. But, still, there is the cup which our Heavenly Father has filled for us, so shall we not drink it? He has made that cross for us to carry, so dare we say, "We will not carry it"? You will find that a disobedient spirit will be sure to bring upon you a dreadful chastisement. But the kindly yielding spirit of an obedient child will make the cross lighter than it would otherwise have been. May God grant us that yielding spirit! I love to see it and how often one does see it in God's poor, sick children! We pity them, for their pain is great and they can scarcely bear it—but when we speak to them about their Heavenly Father, they have not a word to say against Him—but they have a thousand words to say for Him! They tell us how He sustains them—how, in the dreary night, their heart is gladdened by the Presence of Jesus—how, when it seems as if they could not suffer any longer the pain which has become so intense, the Presence of Jesus has flooded their souls with delight! It is a blessed thing to see Christians take up their cross resignedly, accepting the will of their Father in Heaven—and this is exactly what we are called upon to do! I trust that in both senses, namely, in a bold willingness to suffer for Christ's sake and for the Truth of God's sake—and in a patient willingness to accept the Divine will, whatever it may be—we may take up our cross and follow Christ.

But this is the great point, *in carrying our cross—we are to follow Christ.* We must keep on doing that. Through floods or flames we must follow Him. In life or in death we must follow Him and never, never step aside. And what an honor it is for us to be allowed to follow such a Lord! I was thinking, just now, that if the glorified spirits in Heaven, for whom Jesus shed His precious blood, had all gone there along a smooth pathway, without a tear or a sigh—if they had never suffered anything for His sake—I can almost picture them gathering round their Lord in Heaven and saying, "Dear Master, is it not possible for us to have the opportunity of suffering somewhat for You? We were allowed to do

something for You on earth—we preached and we prayed—but we never suffered."

And the devil might whisper from his infernal den, "Had these men been tried—if God had put forth His hand and touched their bone and their flesh—they would have cursed Him to His face!" But, dear Friends, the devil can never say that, for they *have been* touched in their bone and in their flesh. Take down Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* when you are at home—I hope you all have it, for that book ought to be kept in every Christian's house, to the everlasting shame of the Church of Rome—take it down and look at the long list of martyrs who counted not their lives dear unto them! It was one of the noblest sights upon which the eyes of Jesus ever rested when He could look upon them and see them gladly die for His dear sake! I think the angels must have crowded the battlements of Heaven and looked down and said, "See how they love their Lord! See how bravely they die for Him! See how the timid, trembling women come forward and are stretched upon the rack without a groan, and then are fastened to the stake and burnt there, smiling as they die, and saying, 'None but Jesus! None but Jesus!'" I do not think that all the cherubim and seraphim in Heaven ever praised God as they have done who have died in prison for Jesus' sake, or at the stake have poured forth their blood rather than deny Him. Be glad that you may prove your love by suffering for Christ! The ruby crown of martyrdom is not within your reach today, but be thankful if some jewels of suffering may be yours. And count it all joy when you can endure this cross for the name of Jesus Christ.

III. Now, for a few minutes I want to answer the last question. WHAT SHOULD ENCOURAGE US TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND FOLLOW CHRIST?

First, *I cannot be Christ's disciple unless I do this* and, oh, I must be His disciple! He is such a Master that I must follow Him! He is such a Lord that I cannot but serve Him! And if service should involve the carrying of the cross, I say, "Welcome cross! Lord, put it on my back!" I would gladly bear the burden which goes with His service.

Let each one of us encourage himself with the next reflection, "*Better people than I am have carried a heavier cross than I have to carry*." I know, dear Sister, that your cup is one of peculiar bitterness, but there are some who have drunk a far bitterer cup than yours, and they were better people than you are. Think of them—I have alluded to them already—the noble army of martyrs and sufferers for Christ's sake! Will you refuse the cup which is not, after all, so filled with gall as theirs was? Think, too, how much more severe were the trials of your Lord and Master. What are all our griefs compared with His? If we were to heap up the whole mass of human woe, it would be a molehill compared with the great Alpine peaks of His griefs and woes—

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

They say that when the Greeks marched into Persia and the soldiers grew thirsty and weary with the long march, Alexander did not ride on horseback and he did not drink. Although there was always water for the

great king, he refused to drink till his soldiers did. And when they saw him, hot and weary, marching side by side with them, every man said, "I must not complain, for the king is suffering as much as I am. I must bear it if he does." So, sufferers, behold your King! In all your afflictions He was afflicted. He was tempted in all points as you are, so be not ashamed of that cross which once your Savior's shoulders bore!

Furthermore, we may well take up the cross because *Grace will be given to us to bear it*. You say that you cannot bear the cross which is coming upon you, but you shall have more Grace when you get it on your back! God never gives His children any Grace to throw away. He gives them strengths according to their day and if their burden becomes heavier, their shoulders become stronger. In order to get more Grace, one might be quite willing to carry a heavier cross.

Remember, too, that *the cross will be blest to you*. A thousand good things come to us by the way of suffering and reproach. I think the sweetest letters which God ever sends to His children are done up in black-edged envelopes. You will find in many of those bright envelopes of His, some choice silver mercies, but if you want a great banknote of Grace, it must came to you in the mourning envelope. It is when the Lord covers the Heavens with clouds that He sends the showers of blessing upon the earth. Be glad of the clouds for the sake of the rain.

This thought, too, should help you to carry your cross—that *Jesus will be honored by it*. Yes, poor woman, I know that I am talking to you. Very seldom do you get a bright hour by yourself. Your lot is a very hard one, but if you bear it as a Christian should, Christ is honored through you. He looks down from Heaven and He says, "Look how she loves Me that, for My sake she is willing to bear all this." Yes, young man, I know you are harshly pressed but you have stood well and your Master has marked your brave conduct. He lets you go on being tried as our English king did with his son when he was fighting the French—he did not send relief to him because he did not wish to diminish the glory of his victory. So Christ often leaves His people, supported only by His Grace, to let the world see what a Christian really can do! That was a notable duel between Job and the devil. Satan said, "Only give me the opportunity to take away his riches and to kill his children, and he will curse God to His face." But after Satan had done all that, Job still said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Then the devil was permitted by God to cover poor Job with boils from the crown of his head to the heels of his feet. He who has ever had one boil of that kind knows how painful it is, but to be covered from head to foot with such boils—to have to scrape yourself with a potsherd and to have a foolish wife urging you to curse God and die—and so-called "friends" standing around you and aggravating your woe, is a very terrible trial. Yet Job survived it and I do not think that the devil ever meddled with him again! He found that he could not manage him at all, so, at last, he went away! He was probably never so beaten by anyone until he met Job's Lord and Master in the wilderness and He beat him still more effectually!

I believe that the Lord takes delight in the prowess of His suffering saints. "There," He seems to say to the Prince of darkness, "I let you have your will with Job, but what have you made of him? Is he not still a perfect and upright man, and more than a match for you?" Well, if God might so be glorified by us, you and I might be willing to be tried as Job was! The time will come, dear Friends, when you will be pleased with the cross. If God will give you sufficient Grace, you will come to be satisfied and even pleased to suffer for Christ's sake. Rutherford used to say that the cross he carried for Christ had become so sweet to him that he was sometimes afraid that he might love the cross better than he loved Christ, Himself! That shows the heights to which a gracious soul may attain.

Lastly, *in a very short time, the cross will be exchanged for the crown.* It is said that when Princess Elizabeth carried the royal crown in some procession during the reign of her sister, she complained that it was very heavy and someone said that she would find it much lighter when she had it on her own head. So, some of us are carrying a great cross, here, and we find it very heavy—but we shall be well repaid when we receive our crown!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 10:17-45.

Verses 17, 18. *And when He was going out on the road, there came one running and kneeled before Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why call you Me good? There is none good but One, that is God.* This was a hint that Christ was more than Man. If He was really worthy of the title that the enquirer gave Him, He was God as well as Man, for "there is none good but One, that is God."

19, 20. *You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor your father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* Possibly, in the ordinary sense of the words, he had observed these commandments, but Christ tested the reality of his declaration.

21, 22. *Then Jesus looking at him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.* Thus he proved that he had not kept either table of the Law perfectly, for he did not love the Lord with all his heart, nor did he love his neighbor as himself.

23-27. *And Jesus looked around and said unto His disciples, How hard it is for those that have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye*

of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. It is impossible for man, unaided by the Spirit of God, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but that which is impossible to man by Himself, is made possible by the Grace and power of God!

28. *Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed You.* He spoke as if they had done what the rich man had failed to do, and evidently he thought they should be rewarded, for, according to Matthew, he added, "What shall we *have*, therefore?"

29-31. *And Jesus answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brothers, or sisters or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.* In the final account, it shall be found that no man has been a loser through giving up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ though He has His own method of deciding who are to be first and who are to be last.

32. *And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem.* It was well known to them all that the crisis of our Savior's history was close at hand and a sort of indefinable dread was upon them all. The bravest spirit in the whole company was their blessed Lord and Master. He knew that He was going up to Jerusalem to die, so you may view Him as the Sacrifice going to the altar, or as the Hero going to the conflict in which He would die and yet conquer. They were on the road going up to Jerusalem—

32. *And Jesus went before them.* The disciples might well have been filled with holy courage as their Leader was in the van. This is true concerning the whole life of all the saints—"Jesus went before them." What if trials lie beyond and the dark river, itself, is in front of them, yet Jesus goes before them so they need not fear to follow!

32. *And they were amazed. And as they followed, they were afraid.* They did not know much about what was to happen, but a great depression was upon their spirits. They must have wondered at the cheerful bravery of their Master when all of them were ready to turn back from this mournful march.

32-34. *And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, Saying, Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again.* He thought it right that the twelve, who led the way, should be better acquainted than the rest with the sad history that was so soon to be enacted. So He tells them about it in private—and I want you to notice how He dwells in detail upon *His sufferings*. He does not describe them in general terms, but He brings out into strong relief each separate set of

infamy—"they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him and shall kill Him"—from which we learn that our Savior knew all that He had to endure, yet He went bravely forward to bear it for our sakes. For this reason we should admire His Divine courage and complete Self-sacrifice. Mere men may promise to do a certain thing without knowing what it will involve, but—

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew."

I think, too, that as our Lord thus dwells upon each point, He means us also to dwell upon the details of His redeeming griefs. We should not be strangers at the foot of the Cross, nor in Gethsemane, but should hear each one of these notes ring out its sorrowful yet joyful music—"They shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him." But what a glad note that concluding one is—"and the third day He shall rise again." Death cannot hold Him in her bands, the sepulcher cannot continue to enclose Him in her gloomy prison! This is the glory and boast of our Christianity, our hope and our joy, for—

"As the Lord our Savior rose,
So all His followers must."

35, 36. *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him saying, Master, we would that you should do for us whatever we shall desire. And He said unto them, What would you, that I should do for you?* Our Savior's question suggests to us the prudent lesson to never promise in the dark. If anyone shall say to you, "Promise that you will do whatever I ask," follow the example of Christ and first ask, "What would you, that I should do for you?" Otherwise, you may entangle yourself with your own words. These young men evidently needed to have this question put to them, for they had not themselves thoroughly considered what they were asking their Lord to do for them.

37. *They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one at Your right hand, and the other at Your left hand, in Your Glory.* There was, undoubtedly, much that was wrong about this request and you have often heard that view of the matter dwelt upon, so I will call your attention to that which was *right* about it. These disciples showed their faith that this same Jesus who was to be mocked, scourged, spit upon and killed, would yet reign! And I think it was wonderful faith that, after they had heard from His own lips, in sorrowful detail, the description of how He should die, yet nevertheless they so fully believed in His Kingdom that they asked to have a share in its honors. It is true that they were ambitious, but their ambition was to be near the Savior. It would be well if all those who ask for right hand and left hand places, wanted them at the right hand and the left hand of the Savior!

38. *But Jesus said unto them, You know not what you ask.* Has the Lord ever said to us, when we have been praying, "You know not what you ask"? I suppose that is usually true in a certain sense—we do not fully understand the compass of the most of our prayers and sometimes

we ask so unadvisedly that we prove that we know not what we are asking.

38. *Can you drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* "Can you share My drinking in Gethsemane and My sinking on Golgotha?"

39. *And they said unto Him, We can.* They knew not what they said, but they felt that such was the strength of their love that they could share anything that had to do with Christ! His Throne? Yes, they would like to sit at the right hand of it. His cup? Yes, they can drink of it. Immersion into His suffering? Yes, they can endure that baptism.

39. *And Jesus said unto them, You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized with shall you be baptized.* And so they were, for James was soon put to death and John lived, the last and longest of the Apostles, a life-long martyrdom for the Master's sake.

40, 41. *But to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.* Why were they displeased? Because they were of the same spirit as James and John! As they were displeased with James and John, it is evident that they wanted those places themselves—and many a man is thus displeased with his own faults. Did you ever see a dog bark at himself in a mirror? You and I have often done that—we have even grown very angry with what was, after all, only our own image!

42-46. *But Jesus called them to Him, and said unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.* Christ instituted bishops, that is, overseers, but never prelates! He never had any idea of setting some men in His Church over the heads of others, but He put all His servants upon an equality. They are to exercise no lordship, the one over the other, nor to seek it, for the truest honor in the Church of God is found in service. He that serves most is the greatest! He that will occupy the lowest office, he that will bear patiently to be the most put upon, he that is readiest to be despised, and to be the servant of all, shall be the chief of all! The way to rise in the Kingdom of Heaven is to descend, for even so was it with our Lord, Himself! God give to all of us the humble and lowly spirit that will make us willing to be the least of all!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—751, 658.

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ROYAL EMBLEMS FOR LOYAL SUBJECTS
NO. 2947

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1905.

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IN THE YEAR 1863.

"And He shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain."
2 Samuel 23:4.

EASTERN despots fleece their subjects to an enormous extent. Even at the present day one would hardly wish to be subjected to the demands of an Oriental governments. But in David's time, a bad king was a continual pestilence, plague, and famine—a bane to the lives of his subjects who were under his rule—and plunder of their fields, which he perpetually swept clean to enrich himself with the produce thereof. Hence, a good king was a *rara avis* in those days and could never be too highly prized. As soon as he mounted the throne, his subjects began to feel the beneficent influence of his sway. He was to them "as when the sun rises." The confusion which had existed under weak governors gave place to settled order, while the rapidity which had continually emptied the coffers of the rich, and filched the earnings of the poor, gave place to a regular system of assessment and men knew how to go about their business with some degree of certainty. It was to them "a morning without clouds." Forthwith, trade began to flourish, persons who had emigrated to avoid the exactions of the tyrant came back, fields which had fallen out of tillage because they would not pay the farmer to cultivate them began to be sown and the new ruler was to the land as "clear shining after rain," which makes the tender grass spring up out of the earth!

I fear we do not value as we should, the constitutional government which it is our privilege as Britons to enjoy. Let us look where we may—we need not say to the East only, but to the West, also—we would not wish to change the government under which we live so happily. Let us gratefully acknowledge to God His tender mercy and His goodness in sparing us alike from the refractory elements of a republic and then prodigious exactions of a despotism—and for allowing us to dwell in a quiet and peaceable kingdom, wherein we can sit, "every man under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none making him afraid." We may say, I am sure, of Her Majesty [Queen Victoria] who is set over us in the order of Providence, that she has been "as the sun when it rises, as a morning without clouds." Under her generous sway our country has been verdant. As "the earth by clear shining after rain" brings forth the green

herbs, so have our institutions fostered our trade and commerce by the goodwill and gracious Providence of God!

But it is not my objective, at present, to enlarge upon the secular benefits that have fallen to our lot, though I should not think it unworthy of the Christian ministry to pursue a theme which calls for so much gratitude to God and might foster so much good feeling among ourselves. We might make one another feel that there are vast mercies we enjoy which would be more esteemed if better known. Just as we speak of Christ's unknown sufferings, so many of the bounties that we daily enjoy have become so common that we are oblivious of them and, therefore, I might call them our unknown mercies. It well becomes us to lift up our voices and hearts to Heaven and thank God for the happy land and for the happy age in which the lines have fallen to us!

Still, I take it that David was not so much speaking of mere political rulers as of Christ Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose sway is always gracious and full of goodwill! May His kingdom come! "Surely, I come quickly," He cries from Heaven. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," respond those whose love inspires their worship! His Kingdom is "as when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds" and when it shall have been perfectly established upon the earth, all men shall know that the Son of David, whom they once rejected, is He by whom God would make all generations to be blessed forever and ever! May we who have waited and watched for His glorious advent, live when He stands in the latter day upon the earth and may we constitute a part of that glorious harvest, the fruit whereof shall shake like the cedars of Lebanon! Thus we look for the day wherein the Lord shall come in the clouds of Heaven.

I. David says of Christ, HE SHALL BE LIKE THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING, WHEN THE SUN RISES. This He is as King, already, in His Church and as the rightful Monarch in the individual heart of the Believer. Whenever Christ comes into a soul, it is "like the light of the morning when the sun rises."

The light of the morning is joyous. Then all the birds begin to sing and the earth, which is silent at night, save when its stillness is disturbed by stormy winds, or by wild beasts, or by riotous drunken people, becomes vocal with songs from many mouths. So, when Christ comes into the heart, the tuneful notes of the singing birds are heard and the voice of the dove welcomes the gladsome season! Where darkness had brooded before, the sunlight of Christ brings mirth and blessed rejoicing. Oh, what streamers there are in the town of Mansoul when Prince Emmanuel rides through! Happy day, happy day, when Jesus comes into the heart! Save the day when we shall be with Him where He is, I suppose there is no day that is comparable to the first one when we behold Christ and see Him as our Savior and our King!

The rising of the sun is joyous and, besides that, *it is comforting and consoling* to those who have been suffering from ills which night aggravates. "Would God 'twere morning!" has been the cry of many a languishing one tossing on his couch. "Would God 'twere morning!" may

be the cry of many a heart that is exceedingly troubled with the guilt of sin. Ah, let the morning come! Let the watchman say, "The morning comes!" Let the day dawn and the day-star appear in our hearts and there is "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Christ brings joy to cheer and comfort the disconsolate, for He *is* like the rising of the sun!

And *how glorious is the sun when from its pavilion it looks forth at morn!* Job describes the sunrise as being the stamping of the earth with a seal, as if, when in darkness, the earth were like a lump of clay that is changeable. Then, as it is turned to the light, it begins to receive the impression of Divine Wisdom! Mountain and vale all stream with it till impressed on its surface we begin to perceive the glorious works of God! So, when Christ rises upon the heart, what a glorious transformation is worked! Where there has been no love, no faith, no peace, no joy, none of the blessed fruits of the Spirit, no sooner does Christ come than we perceive all the Graces in blossom! Yes, they soon become fragrant and blooming, for we are made complete in Him. The advent of Christ brings to the heart celestial beauty! Faith in Him decks us with ornaments and clothes us as with royal apparel! Better garments than Dives had, though he wore scarlet and fine linen, does Christ give to His people when He comes to them! And better fare than Dives had, though he fared sumptuously every day, does Jesus bestow upon His saints when He shines into their hearts! Oh, the glory of the sunrise of the Savior on the darkness of the human soul! If a man might rise every morning of the year to look at the rising sun and yet never be tired of it because of the sublimity of the spectacle, I think a man might consider his own conversion every hour in the day and every day of his life—and yet never be wearied with the thrice-Heavenly spectacle of Christ arising over the mountains of his guilt to banish the dense darkness of his despair!

As the sunrise is thus joyous, comforting and glorious, let us remember *how unparalleled it is*—unparalleled because Divine. By no method of illumination can we manufacture such a light as the sun exhibits by its simple rising. O you priests, you come with your incantations and mysteries to make light in men's hearts—and sometimes you strike a spark that does but show the darkness—it dies too soon to be called "the Light of God." And you pile your deeds to Heaven—your cords of good works—you bring your van-load of superstitious observances and vainly try to make an illumination! But before it begins to blaze, it dies out and only a handful of ashes remains to disappoint the expectant ones! But Christ arises and with what boundless majesty He looks abroad! The joy, the peace, the comfort, the confidence, the full assurance, the blissful hope which one ray of Christ's Light gives to the heart of man cannot to be equaled! No, scarcely to be compared with anything else! It is a joy that God only gives us and, thank God, a joy which none can take away!

And, as this sunrise of Christ in our heart is Divine, so likewise *it is Irresistible*. No curtains can conceal the sun from the world when it wills to rise. No tyrant, by any law, can prevent the sun's beams from gilding

the cottage of the poor. Shine it must and will. Like a giant, he comes out of his chamber and where is he that shall wrestle with him? Where are you, O man, who can take the bridle of the sun and bid his coursers stay their race? Until they have climbed to Heaven and then gone down again to bathe their burning legs in the Western Sea, they must, they *will* pursue their onward course, for none can stay them, or say to their mighty driver, "What are you doing?" So, when Jesus comes into the heart—away, you fiend! Your time of flight is come! Away despair and doubt and anything that can prevent the soul from having joy and peace! Thus the eternal mandate runs, "Let that man go free!" Thus says Jehovah to Pharaoh, "Let My people go" and go they must and shall, for the time of their light and their liberty is come! Like the rising of the sun, when it springs forth "as a strong giant, and as a happy bridegroom," even so is Christ Jesus when He rises in the human heart!

The sunrise, moreover, is very much like the coming of Christ *because of that which it involves*. Those rays of light which first forced the darkness from the sky with golden prophecy of day, tell of flowers that shall open their cups to drink in the sunlight. They tell of streams that shall sparkle as they flow. They tell of the virgins that shall make merry and the young men that shall rejoice because the sun shines on them and the darkness of night is fled! And so, the coming of Christ into the heart is a prophecy of years of sweet enjoyment—a prophecy of God's goodness and long-suffering, let night reign elsewhere as it may—yes, and it is a prophecy of the fullness of the river of God, forever and ever, before the Throne of God in Heaven! Do you have Christ, poor Soul? Christ is to you the promise of eternal happiness! You cannot be dark again if Christ has once shone on you! No night shall follow this blessed day! It is a day that lasts forever—

"Does Jesus once upon you shine?
Then Jesus is forever thine."

Has Christ appeared to you? Do you trust Him now? Are you reposing only upon His finished work? Then the sun has risen upon you and it shall go down no more forever! The everlasting Joshua bids the sun stand still and today, and tomorrow, though the whole world revolves, that Sun of Righteousness abides to still shine on you with healing in His wings.

II. We must proceed to notice that the Psalmist uses another figure. "EVEN A MORNING WITHOUT CLOUDS."

Brothers and Sisters, there are no clouds in Christ when He arises in a sinner's heart. The clouds that mostly cover our sky come from Sinai, from the Law and from our own legal propensities, for we are always wishing to *do something* by which we may inherit eternal life—but there are none of these clouds in Christ!

There is, in Christ, *no cloud of angry rebuke for the past*. When Jesus receives the sinner, He chides not! "Neither do, I condemn you," is all that He has to say. I thought, when I came tremblingly to Him, that He would at least bring all my sins before me and chide before He sealed my pardon with the kiss of mercy. But it was not so. The Father received the prodigal without a single word of rebuke! He did but say, "Take off his

rags." He did but command them to kill the fatted calf that they might make merry—not a word did He speak of his hungry look, or his filth, or of the far country, or even of the harlots with whom he had spent his substance. Christ receives the soul without rebuke, for He is "like a morning without clouds."

And, as there is no cloud of anger, so there is *no cloud of exacting demand.* He does not ask the sinner to *be* anything, or to *do* anything. That were a cloud, indeed, if He did. A sinner by nature can do nothing and can be nothing, except as Grace shall make him be and do. If Christ did ask anything of you or me, if He did but ask repentance of us, unless He *gave us that repentance*, His salvation would be of no use to us! But He asks nothing. All He bids us do is to take Him as everything—and be nothing ourselves. So, to the empty-handed sinner, He is such a full Christ that we may well say, "He is like a morning without clouds."

And, as He is without cloud of demand, so He is *without cloud of falsehood.* I know that some say Christ may reject those who have put their trust in Him—that after they are saved, they may yet fall from Grace and perish. Surely that would not be like a morning without clouds. I should see, in the distance, the tempest gathering that might ultimately destroy my spirit. But, no, if you trust Christ, He will surely save you, even to the end. If you put your soul into His hands, there is no fear that He will be false to the sacred charge! He will undertake to be Surety for your soul. He will bring you to His father's face without hindrance when the fullness of time is come. Trouble not yourselves, O you anxious ones, concerning the future! Does faith reach only to the present? Do you trust Christ only to save you today? I pray you take a larger sweep of confidence and trust Him to save you to the end! If you do so, He will be better to you than your fears would suggest, or than your faith can conceive! To the end He will love you and in the end He will bring you to be like He and to be with Him where He is! Happy is that man who sees Christ "like a morning without clouds." They who see any clouds in Him make the clouds. The clouds are only in their vision—they are not in His Person. The spots and defects are in themselves—they are not in Him, nor in His work. If you will only trust Him fully, simply, without any admixture of your own merit or confidence, you shall find Him to be equal to the brightest description—a morning without a single cloud!

III. But now, to the last figure. Upon this we intend to dwell at somewhat greater length. David says of Christ the King, that His sway is like CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN, whereby the tender grass is made to spring out of the earth.

We all understand the metaphor. We have often seen how, after a very heavy shower of rain, and sometimes after a continued rainy season, when the sun shines, there is a delightful clearness and freshness in the air that we seldom perceive at other times. Perhaps the brightest weather is just when the wind has driven away the clouds and the rain has ceased, and the sun peers forth from its chambers to look down upon the

glad earth. Well, now, Christ is to His people just like that—exceedingly shining clear when the rain is over.

Sorrow and sadness do not last forever. After the rain there is to come the clear shining. Tried Believer, after all your afflictions there remains a rest for the people of God and if, just now, you are tried and vexed by some extraordinary trial, there is a clear shining coming to your soul when all this rain is over! Look to Christ and you shall find where that clear shining is. The quiet contemplation you shall have of Him when this time of rebuke is over shall then be to you as the earth when the tempest has sobbed itself to sleep, when the clouds have torn themselves to rags and the sun peers out, shooting forth virtue with its lustrous rays.

And while sorrows, like the floating clouds, last not forever, they do work together with the bliss, like the clear sunshine follows afterwards to produce good. It is not in the sorrow alone, perhaps, to bring forth good, any more than the rain might, by itself, bring forth the spring blade. But when the sorrow and the joy, when the affliction and the consolation come together, then the joy of the heart is indeed benign. None bring forth much fruit for God but those who have been deeply plowed with affliction and deluged with grief—but even they do not bring forth much fruit till they have had the joy of Christ's Presence after the affliction is over! Clear sinning after rain produces an atmosphere good for the herbs, and the joy of the soul in the Presence of the Lord, after a time of sorrow, makes it able to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Thus, *after times of great troubles*, Christ becomes to His people more specially and delightfully sweet than He has ever been before. I notice this in many instances. It is manifest in conversion. What happy, happy days were our first, young days in the faith! I cannot forget mine—I never shall. When talking with those who come to tell me what God has done for their souls, I notice the freshness upon their memory of every separate event on the day of their new birth. They can tell how Christ appeared to them and how they looked to Him and were lightened. "I shall never forget that, Sir, till I die," says one. "I have a very bad memory and I forget almost everything that is good—but that I shall never forget, for it was such a joyous season." I know that many of you have had good days, but they have been like pieces of money that you received when children— once very bright—but they have been passed about and worn in circulation until they have lost the image and superscription which were once so bright to your eyes. Not so the day of your new birth! It has been like a coin, as fresh as when you laid it aside—and when you take it out again, it is as fresh as the mint delivered it and you can still read it and read the image of Christ which it bears! I think there is scarcely such a day on earth to be had in Christian experience as that first day when we came to Christ and knew Him as our Savior!

The same is true also, in its measure, *after great and heavy affliction.* You have been bereaved. A wife, a husband, a child has been removed from you, or you have had a great loss in business—you were crossed in

some expectation and you were cast into the lowest depth of trouble. Friends failed you, consolation fled from you but, after a time, you felt a sweet resignation. You could say, "My soul is even as a weaned child." Your troubles, somehow or other, grew sweet as honey, though before they had been bitter as gall! You saw the finger of a loving Lord in all those engraving lines of affliction which the chisel had made upon your brow and you saw the Great Refiner sitting at the mouth of the furnace, watching your gold that it might not be destroyed—and rejoicing over your dross because it melted away in the flame. Do you remember it? Why, I can look back to some of the happiest seasons of my life and see them stand in juxtaposition with the blackest times of trial! Oh, it has been, sometimes, a glorious thing to be cast down by rebuke and slander, and then go into one's chamber and lay Rabshakeh's letter before the Lord! And then to go down and feel more glad than a king of a hundred kingdoms because we have been counted worthy to suffer reproach for Christ! At such a season there is a calm within us more deep and profound than we ever felt before.

And, mark you, if it has been so with us individually, *it has been no less so with the Church*. Remember the clear shining after rain in the Apostles' times. "Then had the churches rest and, walking in the fear of God, were multiplied." Those little seasons of hush and calm between the great persecutions have always been prolific of converts. I hope, in the midst of successive controversies which darken the sky overhead, that when the rain is over and the noise and trouble it costs some tender spirits have ceased, and the powers of Darkness have been hustled to sleep once more, we may have some clear shining after rain and brotherly fellowship once again be renewed. The day comes when the great battle of Armageddon shall be fought, when the powers of Darkness shall be roused to frenzy's highest pitch, when Hell shall be loosed and the great dragon shall be permitted to come upon the earth, trailing its chain along in the supremacy of its hour—then, when dreadful war shall come upon the earth, when nations shall reel and stagger to and fro, the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God, and there shall be clear shining after the rain! And then, when the flames shall have consumed this orb, when Judgment shall have been passed, when Death and Hell shall have been cast into the Lake of Fire, when all the powers of evil shall have been utterly destroyed before the Majesty of His coming who shall overturn them that His Kingdom may be established in Heaven, everlasting hallelujahs, "For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns," shall bear witness that there is clear shining after the rain—for so must it be in the little as the great, in the experience of the individual as in that of the multitude—there must be a rain and there must be the clear shining after it—and the two together shall bring forth a matchless harvest to the praise and glory of His Grace who works all things according to the counsel of His own will!

Do you ask, now, why it is that God gives to His people sweet seasons just after the bitter?

One reason is *to take the taste of the bitter out of their mouths*. Even as to our little children, when they take their nauseous medicine, we give some sweetmeat, so does the Lord often, when He comes to His little ones, give them such sweet honey of His Grace that they might forget their sufferings in the sweet nectar which He guarantees them.

Another reason, no doubt, is *lest they should be utterly destroyed by the terror of His Judgment*. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," but, better than that, He takes it to His bosom—and when it lies there, little does it know that but for the rain and the tempest it had not lain in His bosom and been fondled there so tenderly! He put it there lest it should perish.

Then, again, He does it *as a sweet reward of faith*. He sees you in trouble, bravely struggling with the tempest, and says, "I will reward that man." He sees you following Him in the garden, still clinging to Him amidst all the darkness and temptation and, therefore, He says, "I will give to that soul such joy, by-and-by, that it shall be well rewarded for its faithfulness to Me in the past."

Is it not also *to prepare you for the future* that, in looking back, you may say, "The last time I had trouble, there was clear shining after the rain and so I feel it will be next time"? Ah, you timid one, there is a trial coming. It looms over your head. What? And did you behave valiantly for your Master in former times and will you be a coward now? Ah, my Brother, do you think there is a time of ruin threatening you and do you say, "His mercy is clean gone forever! He will be faithful to me no more"? Oh, why do you say that? Does my Lord deserve it? Has He been with you in six troubles? Then, why should He forsake you in the seventh? He that has helped you up to now will surely help you to the end! Why has He delivered you in the tempest, if He means to let you sink at the last? By the kindness of the past, the love experienced in former days, let your faith put out its great sheet anchor and outride the storm, for there shall again be "clear shining after rain!"

And surely, these changing seasons of ours, and that constant ordinance of His ought *to make us sick of self and fond of Him*. He puts gall on the world and He puts honey on His own lips so that we may hate the one and love the other! We are so fond of this world that we must be drawn away from it—and when we are drawn away from it and enticed to Him, our foolish hearts come to know His value—and we yield ourselves, by His Grace, up to Him!

I cannot tell to whom this sermon is addressed. I am sure it has a mission to fulfill. O Brothers and Sisters, it may be that these words may be worth a mine of gold to some of you, as clear shining after rain! If they reach your case, thank my Master for it! He may yet have a harvest from your soul. Be sure that you give Him the first fruits of the harvest. When there is clear shining after the rain, honor Him more, serve Him better, give more to His cause, pray more for His people, live more in His fear, commune more with Him and walk more closely to Him. Let it be true that in your case, as in that of this round world, the rain and the clear shining after it have brought forth their abundant fruit. When you and I

shall get to Heaven, we will talk on its green and flowery mountains of all the showers through which we passed, and of the clear shining! And, in the sacred high eternal noon, which shall be our portion forever, we shall, with transporting joys, recount the labors of the past and sing of the clear shining after the rain!

How sad the thought that there is no "clear shining after rain" for some of you! There is a rain of troubles in reserve for you—that you know. There will be more troubles yet in this life. There is heavy shower coming yet in death—and then it shall rain forever and there shall be a horrible tempest—that is your portion. If you believe not that Jesus is the Christ and trust not your souls to Him, all the woe you have ever known is as nothing! It is but the first spattering of the drops on the pavement. It is nothing compared with the storm which shall beat upon your unsheltered head forever and ever! But the Refuge is before you, man! The sky is dark, the tempest lowers, but the Refuge is before you. Run! In God's name, run! The storm comes hastening on, as if God were gathering up all His black artillery that He might discharge His dreadful thunders upon you. Run! "But can I enter?" Yes, the door is open. Run! "But may I enter?" Yes, He invites you, "Come unto Me, yes, come unto Me—come this night—trust Me," He says, "and I will save your soul." "But I am unworthy." Well, see the tempest! Run! Let your unworthiness put feathers to your feet and not stop you in your haste. Jesus calls you from His Throne in Heaven! He invites you—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let Him that hears say, Come." Heaven and earth say, "Come."

Sinner, will you avoid the tempest? Will you flee and find shelter in Christ? God help you to trust Christ, now, and unto Him shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* A sort of trembling seems to have been creeping over David, so he argues thus with his own heart, "Why should I be dismayed? Am I afraid of coming darkness? 'The Lord is my light.' Do dangers surround me? 'The Lord is my salvation.' Do I expect stern labor or severe suffering? 'The Lord is the strength of my life.' Are there many enemies watching for my halting? Yet, 'of whom shall I be afraid' since He is on my side?'" Then he falls back upon his past experience.

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* "They were very fierce. Like cannibals, they meant to eat me right up. They would not have spared me. They 'came upon me' in such a fashion that I was taken at a disadvantage. I seemed to be altogether in their power, but 'they stumbled and fell.' I had not to lift a hand against them, but the

mysterious power of God entirely overthrew them! They stumbled and fell, then, so shall I be afraid of them now?"

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* "God has not changed. My enemies are not more powerful than they were and if they should become so, Omnipotence will still overmatch them. I will therefore be confident and calm, come what may."

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.* "That, wherever I am, I may be at home with God—that I may feel in every place that I am still in His house—never away from home—whether in the wilderness or in the city, still dwelling like a child at home with its parents."

4, 5. *To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* "Will not a father take care of his own children? Does not even the feeble hen cover her chickens with her wings and will not God cover me with His feathers, and cause me to rest in safety under His wings? Yes, that He will. 'In the time of trouble He shall hide me' away from it, so that it shall not hurt me. I shall be hidden right away in His pavilion, in His royal tent which is pitched in the very center of His army. Around me shall lie all the forces of Divine Providence to protect me, since I am the honored guest of the Commander-in-Chief, Himself. In the pavilion of His Sovereignty shall He hide me."

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.* That is, in the Holy of Holies, into which no man might come. "There shall God hide me—in the tabernacle of Sacrifice—behind the Atonement of Christ." Thus David had the two blessed protections of Sovereignty and Sacrifice.

5. *He shall set me up upon a rock.* "His lofty power shall lift me above the turmoil and His immutable fidelity, like a rock that never moves, shall make me to stand fast."

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me.* "They may surround me and threaten me, but they cannot hurt me, for I am living with my God, abiding like a child in my Father's house."

6, 7. *Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice.* He has not done praising before He begins to pray! We are scarcely out of one trouble before we enter into another. This is what keeps Christian people alive because, escaping from one trial, they begin to praise and, falling into another, they begin to pray. And prayer and praise make up a Christian's breath! May we abound in both!

7, 8. *Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.* "So I answered You when You did speak. Now answer me, O Lord, when I speak to You." It sometimes happens that God speaks to us and we make no reply to Him. And for that reason He refuses to hear us when we speak to Him. You must have an opened ear to God if you expect Him to have an opened ear to you. Notice how David pleads—"Hear, O Lord

when I cry. When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek."

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger.* David has a jealous fear lest he should have provoked the Lord to hide Himself from him, so he prays as one who is dependent upon his Heavenly Father's smile and cannot live without it. "Put not Your servant away in anger."

9. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* That is sweet pleading! Cannot you who are cast down, use it as David did? "You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." And then, as if to show that he does not pray this out of unbelief, but out of earnest and true faith he says—

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* "The Lord will never forsake me. Though I pray, 'Leave me not,' I know that He will not. Father and mother retain love for their child when that child has lost every earthly friend, but, Lord, if Nature should change and mothers should turn to monsters, still, 'when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD.* This is a sweetly practical prayer. Our heart often says, "Lord, let me have my own way," but when Divine Grace has done its work, it talks in another fashion, "'Teach me Your way, O Lord.' Only let me know what You would have me be and do, and feel, and I submit myself to You joyfully. But, Lord, I am so weak that, even if I am taught Your way, I fear I shall not go in it unless You shall do more than teach me."

11. *And lead me.* "Put Your finger out, as mothers do to tender infants. 'Lead me'"—

11. *In a plain path, because of my enemies.* "Do not let it be a difficult way in which I shall hardly know which is the right road, but let it be a very plain path. And, Lord, help me so to walk in my daily life that there may be no mistake about my being upright and honest before men—'Lead me in a plain path.'" Oh, there are some, even among professing Christians, who have many tricks, shifts, schemes and dodges, just like worldlings or foxes! But the sheep of Christ must take care to follow the Shepherd's plain footprints. There was no craft in Christ. In Him was no guile. And if we are Israelites, indeed, the same thing will be said of us! Oh, that we would each one cultivate a transparent character and not have to live so that our life is one perpetual apology for an attempt to hide something! Wear your heart upon your sleeve and let your soul show itself distinctly in your actions, not being afraid if all the world should see you.

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* It is their delight to be cruel, to say unkind, unjust, untruthful things which lacerate the heart. And the more some people can tear good men's reputations to pieces, the more pleased they are. I must say that it is hardly less than a miracle that any true servant of God should for any length of time escape even from the vilest slander, so base are the tongues of men.

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed.* That is the smelling bottle for a fainting soul—"I had fainted unless I had *believed*." You must do the one or the other! You must either believe or else faint, but if your faith is strong you cannot faint. O you who are of feeble faith, it is little marvel that you faint! Would God that your faith were stronger! Notice what David says, "Unless I had believed"—

13. *To see.* Some say, "Seeing is believing," but it is not—it is the very opposite of believing. Some people must see in order to believe, but the true followers of our Lord believe to see. If you will believe it, you shall see it. But if you will not believe it till you have seen it, then you shall never believe at all. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see"—

13, 14. *The goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* Why did David put that little sentence in and say, "Wait, *I say*"? It is a repetition, but not a vain one, for it is his own personal testimony, as much as if he had said, "I have waited on the Lord, and I have found that He helps me, so, wait, *I say*, on the Lord." Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we wait so much upon men, we wait so much upon ourselves! If we could get into that holy quietness in which God's voice could be heard within our souls—if the voice of man could be hushed and we were content that the Lord should speak to us—how much more blessed would our lives become! Now have you any burden at this moment? Have you any fears? Have you a knot which you cannot untie? Have you come into a labyrinth of which you cannot find the clue? "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the 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.

STEPHEN AND SAUL
NO. 2948

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1875.

"And cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."
Acts 7:58.

THE Holy Spirit does not tell us much about the deaths of saints at any time and He says very little about the deaths of the martyrs. He gives us much more about Stephen—the first of them—than about any other. A few words are made to suffice for the death of James, the brother of John. As to the deaths of Peter and Paul, they are incidentally mentioned as yet to be, but we have no account of them whatever. I suppose there was no need and the Holy Spirit never gives us superfluous information. There were hundreds of years to come in which martyrologies might be written and the Lord has taken care that there should be eye-witnesses with ready pens to record the deaths of martyrs. Hence we have many volumes and, especially in our own country, the renowned *Acts and Monuments* of John Foxe which record how, through seas of blood, the martyrs swam to their crowns! The noble army of martyrs has never been without a chronicler and there was no need that the Holy Spirit should give us the details of the deaths of the witnesses for Christ because we should have plenty in another form.

And it is noteworthy that in this one, which is the fullest we have, there is nothing said about the sufferings of Stephen. Have you not had your feelings harrowed by descriptions of the burnings in the reign of Queen Mary—how the wood was slowly lighted. How, sometimes, the martyrs actually cried out, "For pity's sake, give us more fire!" And how they writhed in agony and yet cried out, "None but Jesus"? Such details may be very proper, but I think that they minister to our sentiment rather than to our edification. The Holy Spirit takes a different line and tells of the triumph of the martyr, of the light which shone upon his face, of the vision which he beheld, which cheered his spirit, and of the blessed calm which came over him as Jesus rose up, rebuked the winds and waves that gathered around his boat, so that the martyr entered into the Port of Peace in a perfect calm. I believe that every incident which is recorded is intended for our profit—but it is not always profitable to have sensational descriptions which upsets one's feelings. There is something better than that, namely, to teach us the true *source of strength* and to guide us to a Heavenly calm, come what may.

However, in this instance, the Holy Spirit was pleased to direct the pen of Luke to record that the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. According to the Jewish Law, the witnesses were bound to be the first throwers of the stones. They were, in fact, the leading executioners, for they gave evidence against the accused and on their witness, he was condemned to death. They had to take the responsibility of his death and to throw the first stones. In order to do this, they took off their long flowing robes and, casting them down, they left them in the charge of one who would appear to have been much delighted with the death of Stephen, as he had probably given his vote against him in the Sanhedrin and was looking on to see that the dreadful murder was fully accomplished. Now, why is it recorded that these witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of the young man whose name was Saul? It was not to gratify our curiosity, but it was doubtless for some good reason—so let us try to find out why it is recorded and learn some lessons from it—God helping us.

I. And, first, does not the Holy Spirit here suggest to us A VERY NOTEWORTHY CONTRAST?

Here are two men—*Stephen and Saul*—both in Heaven now. I wonder how they felt when they first met there? What joy they must both have had—Stephen to see Saul and Saul to see Stephen! I suppose it is incompatible with the Heavenly state for Saul to have any apologies to make, but, certainly, if they could have been indulged in there, he might have made them most lovingly and tenderly. The joy of meeting there must have been exceedingly great. Look at the two men—the one about to die and the other taking care of the clothes of the executioners. Let us do them justice.

They were both sincere men. There was no hypocrisy about Stephen. You could see that the words that he spoke came warm from his heart. Neither was there any hypocrisy about Saul. He really thought that he was doing God's service in what he did. He was quite as sincere, in his own way, as was the martyr who was about to die. What is more, they were both thoroughly earnest men. It was not in the nature of Stephen to quench his convictions, or to silence his testimony. Neither was it in the nature of Saul to keep quiet when he thought that a miserable imposter ought to be crushed out of existence. He is all on fire from the first moment when we meet him to the last record we have concerning him. He had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge and, as he sat there, and took care of the executioners' garments, he felt in his conscience perfectly satisfied that what he was doing was for the glory of God. Sometimes we cannot understand how this could be, yet I do not doubt that many who have persecuted the saints of God, have done it ignorantly in unbelief and it has not struck them that they were really rebelling against the Most High and fighting against the Lord, Himself. It is very difficult to estimate the amount of darkness that may come over the human conscience and to imagine how blind a man may become, or how fully he may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—but certain it is that an unrenewed heart may become as darkened that while we are

going posthaste to Hell, we may imagine that we are making good headway towards Heaven! These two men, Stephen and Saul, were unlike one another in many respects, but they were alike in this sense—that they were both sincere and both thoroughgoing in their sincerity.

But, now observe the difference between them. *Look first at Saul, a man wrapped up in self-righteousness.* He will tell you that he has kept the Commandments from his youth up. If you gave him time, he would, perhaps, tell you that by descent he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews—that as touching the Law, he was blameless—that he belonged to the straitest sect of his religion and was a Pharisee. If you began to charge him with sin, you would see the fire flame from his eyes as he declared that concerning the righteousness which was by the Law of God, he was without fault. If any man was accepted before God, he felt that he was. And there he sat, in all the pride of self-righteousness, assisting at the murder of a truly righteous man. Had you spoken to Stephen, you would have found a man of quite another class. *The martyr's only hope was in the Crucified Christ of Calvary.* That which gladdened him was not a sight of himself, but a sight of his exalted Lord. He drew his comfort, not from what he had done, but from the finished work of Him who was, at that moment, standing at the right hand of the Father.

What a difference there was between those two men! Perhaps there may be two such persons here, sitting very near each other—the one self-righteous and self-reliant, depending only upon his own good works—the other humbly looking away from self and trusting only to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Of you two, I would sooner be you who is looking to Christ, even though you are to be executed tonight, than I would be you, Sir, wrapped up in the robes of your fancied self-righteousness, even though you are honored and respected by all mankind!

Look again at Saul and you will see *a man Ritualistic to the utmost extent—a formalist of the deepest dye*. He is a man who highly esteems everything that has to do with the Temple, the priesthood and the Law. You will find that his phylacteries are exceedingly broad and if you speak to him about the sacred roll of the Old Testament, you will find that he can debate and discuss with you upon every letter of it, for he has a great attachment to the letter. He is a man entirely taken up by the externals of religion—the shell is everything to him. But now look at Stephen and you will see *a man who has put external matters altogether on one side*. That last speech of his shows that it is so. He has not despised the Temple, but he has said of it, "However the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." He has not despised the chosen people, Israel, but he has spoken of them as "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears." He has not despised the outward forms of religion so far as they were ordained of God, but he has shown that, in themselves, they were useless because even when they were in the full tide of their glory, they did not change men's hearts, for many of them remained idolaters and murmurers in the wilderness. Stephen is the spiritual man and Saul is the formal man.

Both these classes may be represented here and I would have you see to which of them you belong because it is the *spiritual worshipper whom God seeks*. It is the spiritual worshipper who is God's friend—the formalist is no friend of the King of Heaven, though he may seem to be so! He fights for the letter of the Word but, in despising its inner meaning, he has despised the very essence of it! He fights for rites and ceremonies but, in neglecting the inward and spiritual Grace, he has neglected the vital matter and he remains as much a foe of God and of His Christ as was this young man named Saul!

The great difference between Stephen and Soul, however, lies in this—*Stephen is defending the cause of Christ at the cost of his own life and Saul is opposing him with all his might*. Even in a congregation like the present, there may not be many, yet there may be some who are opposing the Gospel. There may be some here who, although they would not stone Believers, yet would make a jest of them—perhaps they have been making merry today over those Christian Brothers [Moody and Sankey] who have of late been prominent in the matter of revivals—some foolish jest they have perpetrated about them—and done their best to lower them in the esteem of their fellows. Ah, dear Friends, beware what you are doing, for the Lord of Hosts says concerning His people, "He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." Nothing brings the color into a man's cheek sooner than any ill-treatment of his children! And if any of you want to provoke God to speedy and sudden judgment against you, you have only to join in treating, in a cruel manner, those who are really His children. May God keep all of us from such a shameful sin as that!

The contrast mentioned in our text is a very painful one and though we see it illustrated every day, it is none the less painful. We ought to look at it with weeping eyes, praying that the young man named Saul may yet be converted to God. "But," says one, "there are none of us who would be like Saul." No, you would not stone the saints, but perhaps those who do so would be permitted to lay their clothes at your feet. You do not invent the jest against the saints but, perhaps, you repeat it and laugh at it—and give approval to those who use it.

There are many persons who are keepers of the clothes of open sinners. For instance, I believe that very often a merely moral man may exert a very detrimental influence upon sinners because they will say, "Look at So-and-So! He is not a Christian, yet he is a man of good repute," and so they are led to believe that they may stay where he stays—out of Christ! O dear Friends, may there be nothing about your walk and conversation which can be used to oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ! But there will be unless you are wholly on His side, for He, Himself, said, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad." If you are not on the side of Christ you are on the side of His enemies, for this is a fight which admits of no neutrality. And if you cannot feel that you would, like Stephen, defend the cause of Christ, then I fear you only lack the opportunity and the circumstances, if not to stone Stephen, yet, at least, to let those who do the dreadful deed lay their clothes at your feet! The contrast recorded in

our text is a very vivid one. I wish I could depict the equally vivid one between unconverted persons and Christians, for there is a contrast between them, a contrast which will come to this one day—there will be a great gulf fixed between them, across which there will be no passage. At the Last Great Day, the righteous shall be upon the right hand of the Judge and the wicked on His left hand and Christ, Himself, shall stand between them, so that the division shall last as long as Christ Himself shall live!

II. Now, secondly, our text affords us A REMARKABLE INTRODUCTION OF A PERSON TO TRUE RELIGION.

Perhaps there may be someone here whom you know who has never yet come into contact with real, vital godliness, and you are very anxious that he should do so. I am equally anxious that he should and I think it ought to be your earnest endeavor that not only he, but all who are like he should, somewhere or other, come into contact with real religion. Now, as far as we see in the Bible, this is Saul's first introduction to anything like real Christianity. We have not his name, before this verse, in the Acts of the Apostles, so here, for the first time, he steps forward into the arena of conflict—"a young man, whose name was Saul." Was he favorably impressed at once with Christ and His people? Certainly not, but quite the reverse! The impression made upon him was that of intense hatred and enmity towards Jesus of Nazareth and all His followers.

But perhaps he saw a bad specimen of Christianity. Perhaps he listened to a very poor sermon that misrepresented the Gospel. Perhaps he never saw any sign of the working of the Spirit. On the contrary, Saul's introduction to Christianity, in the person of Stephen, was of the most favorable kind. His own heart, however, was so desperately prejudiced against Christ that we find him no sooner brought into contact with Christianity than he becomes the keeper of the clothes of those who stoned the servant of the Lord!

Notice, then, what his introduction was. *He saw a Christian of the noblest type*—a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. And he saw him at his best, for his face shone like the face of an angel. I wish that when men of the world look upon us, they could see such Christians with shining faces. Perhaps, dear Friend, the person about whom you are concerned, may have taken a prejudice against true religion through the faults of Believers, but that was not the case with Saul. I suppose that all the Christians that he had ever met with in Jerusalem—for it was the golden age of Christianity—were of the very best type, as Stephen was. And yet, though he looked into that face which was burning with the light of Grace and glory, he hated that face and gnashed his teeth against the man whose glorious, calm demeanor ought at once to have won him.

And then *he listened to a noble discourse*. It was a discourse specially fitted to the Jews. They always liked to hear the history of their nation—their national pride was gratified by it. In later days, when Paul had to address them, he gave them a summary of their history very similar to this of Stephen, and wisely so. It was the best and most suitable

discourse that could be given, yet the only result produced upon Saul and others was that they ran upon the preacher to stone him and put him to death! Now, dear Friends, if you have brought some relative or friend to listen to the minister and the sermon seems to you to be most suitable and admirable, do not be surprised if, instead of seeing any good result come from it, you find, on the contrary, the provocation of the whole nature of the casual hearer and a stirring up of rebellion in his heart! Think it no new thing and no strange trial, for this was the case with the young man named Saul when he was introduced to a Christian with a shining countenance, and to a ministry which was in all points admirable! Yet, for all that, he was the more *hardened* in his enmity against the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the young man named Saul saw something else. *He saw a Christian die a triumphant death* and many have been converted by such a spectacle as that! There have been some who could ridicule the life and ministry of a Christian, but the dying speech—the bright and lustrous glance of the closing eyes—the triumphant hymn of the departing saint—these have been irresistible arguments and they have been compelled to yield to them. But it was not so with Saul, for we read after Stephen was put to death of, "Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Even that spectacle which might have convinced an infidel, convinced not this young man whose name was Saul! And our first introduction of the Gospel to our friends may not at first end as hopefully as we could have wished and expected, yet we ought not to be discouraged, for Saul did become a Christian after all. It was no proof that he never would be converted that, at first, he grew more hardened. It was no evidence that the Gospel would not conquer his heart that at first, his heart shut all its gates against Jesus Christ. We have a proverb which reminds us that, "Rome was not built in a day," and we cannot always expect the new Jerusalem to be built in men's hearts in a single hour! There are some who are struck down at once, as Saul was afterwards, but there are others, against whose strong fortress the battering ram of the Truth of God must come with all its might year after year—and it is only when God strikes the effectual blow of Divine Grace that, at last, they yield, subdued by Almighty Love!

At any rate, whether they yield or not, your duty is clear. Bring them to Christ! Bring them under the sound of the Gospel! Do all that you can for their salvation, so that, if they perish, when the funeral knell startles your ears, you will be able to say to yourself, "Whether he is lost or saved, I am not responsible. I am clear of his blood, for I told him the way of salvation, I pleaded with him for God and I pleaded with God for him. I persuaded him to go with me and listen to the preaching of the Word—and if he has rejected it, and trampled it underfoot, I cannot help it, though I would have helped it if I could. I must leave his fate in the hands of God." I think this case of Saul is a very encouraging one to any of you who are seeking to win sinners to the Savior. Did a man swear at you when you spoke to him about his soul? Well, there is sometimes more hope for a man who has enough grit in him to denounce us, than of

one who seems to agree with all that we say! He says, "Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Very good, Sir." And then he passes it all off. Perhaps it shows that there is a bigger soul in the man even when he becomes a persecutor than when he simply waves his hand and says, "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for you." A downright opposition may only prove that there is good soil where we may sow the good Seed of the Kingdom of God.

III. In the third place, I think our text is AN INSTANCE OF THE SECURITY OF THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

Do not be frightened at that expression! I am not a believer in that Apostolic succession which is supposed to come by the laying of human hands upon human heads, but I believe that there has always been, in the Church of God, a succession of faithful men so that when one has died, another has been called to take his place. And I believe that it will always be so until Christ Himself shall come. *What a dreadful thing it was for the Church to lose Stephen!* She had many useful men in her ranks, but Stephen seemed, just then, to come to the front—he had made a stir all over Jerusalem. Though especially appointed to look after the poor, there never was a deacon who was more thoroughly in the front rank of the Church. He was worthy—I was going to say—to be an Apostle, for his holiness and daring. He convinced many of the Truth of the Gospel of Christ. If he had been ill, his Brothers and Sisters would have prayed that his life might be preserved and if they had known that he was going to be put to death, they would have said, "It is better that we should die than that Stephen should. We cannot afford to lose him." It is a calamity for the Church of Christ when her best men, whether ministers or deacons, are called Home, yet dear Friends, it often is the case that God takes His servants Home just when they are most useful. When would you have Him take them Home? When they are least useful? When they are little or no good, here, would you let the Lord have them? That is not very generous on your part! The Lord is entitled to the very best. Some are getting ripe for Glory, so it is but natural that the Master should take the ripest of them. You need not be astonished, therefore, when the most useful people are taken to Heaven.

But now, look, Stephen is going Home. Who will take Stephen's place? Do you not see him? The witnesses have laid their clothes at his feet and no doubt Stephen's mantle was among them! So, as surely as Elijah left his mantle to Elisha, *the mantle of Stephen was lying at the feet of Saul.* He did not put it on at once, but he did put it on afterwards. And oftentimes, when men ask, "What shall we do when Mr. So-and-So has gone?" The Lord will send a man who does just as well as Mr. So-and-So has done! I have often been asked, "What is to be done with the Tabernacle, and the College, and the Orphanage when you are gone?" Dear me, the Lord got on very well before I was born and I am sure He will when I am dead. That question never troubles me. Did you ever sit down and think, "What will my wife do when I am gone?" You do not like to think of it? Then do not think of it, for it is no business of yours! The

successor of any man whom God makes useful will be found in due course. He may be at present among the haters of the Gospel! He may be among those who are railing at the Cross of Christ! Where was the great successor of John Huss found? Why, he is over there in a German monastery. What? A monk? Yes, a monk who goes crawling up the stairs of the *Santa Scala* at Rome, trying to get merit enough to save his father, mother and himself—and wishing he could always be there accumulating merit! Yes, Martin Luther was the man to follow Huss and God raised him up in due time!

The saints in Jerusalem did not know where Stephen's successor was, but God saw him among Stephen's enemies and He brought him out and Saul was a mightier Apostle than Stephen could ever have been! The Church lost Stephen, but she gained Saul—and that was a very good exchange for, though nothing may be said that would be derogatory to such a high-souled man as Stephen was, yet the Church of Christ has never had a servant who, taking him for all in all, has been so useful to her as the famous Apostle Paul who was once that young man named Saul! How much we owe, through Divine Grace, to his Epistles for their clear teaching of spiritual Doctrines! No other Apostle, though each one was excellent in his own way, ever had so clear a Revelation of, or so clearly taught, those grand Doctrines of Grace which are the very backbone of the Gospel of Jesus! And who else ever labored as he did? He says himself—and he was always modest—"I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me." When Stephen was taken away, it was a great mercy that he was succeeded by one who even surpassed himself!

And, my dear Friends, at this very time, we need not be asking, "What shall we do without So-and-So?" God has enough servants somewhere or other, so we need not say, "Would that He would raise up more evangelists!" He has already spied a man out in Chicago and, without going so far as that, He could find one in any part of London, or in any hamlet or village in the country, wherever He chose to look for him! The Lord is never short of men to serve Him—

"Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere"—

and out of the ranks of Satan's army He can take the boldest champion of evil, arrest him by Almighty Grace and lay upon him the charge to become a leader to the hosts of the living God! Never despair, and never doubt, nor let even a desponding thought concerning Christ's cause flit across your mind! They tell us that dark days are coming—that is quite true, but the Sun of Righteousness will never be eclipsed! They tell us that the powers of evil will grow stronger and stronger. Suppose they do—the Almighty will never grow weak. We will fall back upon the Omnipotence and All-Sufficiency of Jehovah and then we shall know what it is not to feel any distrust or fear concerning the present or the future of the Church of the living God!

So you see, in the case of Stephen and Saul, we have a clear instance of the certainty of true Apostolic succession.

IV. Now, next, and briefly, our text seems to me to be A GRACIOUS MEMORIAL OF REPENTED SIN.

Saul became Paul and there is a great deal of good recorded of him under the name of Paul. But the Holy Spirit has caused this fact to be remembered, "The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." Then does God write down the sins of His people before they are converted? Yes, He does, and in this case He writes it down in the Book of books, so that, wherever the Bible goes, there goes the information that Saul of Tarsus was once a persecutor! When we read of Rahab, we are told that she was "the harlot." Why is this memorial kept of Saul's sins before conversion? It was meant to keep Paul humble—and it always did that. You notice how very sorrowfully he always speaks about this matter. He say that he was not meet to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the Church of God. Once, in speaking to the Lord, he said, "And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I, also, was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." He never forgot that and it always made him walk humbly before God. He wrote to Timothy, "I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy."

Do not try, Beloved, to forget your old sins. Let them always be before you to keep you humble. I have heard of a certain high ecclesiastic who had been a fisherman. And while he was rising in the world he used to hang up his net that he might be reminded that he had once been a fisherman. At last, the Pope made him a cardinal and no one ever saw his net after that. They said that he had caught what he had fished for, so he put his net away. You and I had better always keep our nets in sight to remind us of what we once were. Look at the pit from where you were dug, and when God gives you any special mercy, say to yourself, "What a miracle of Grace is this, for I was among the most undeserving of all."

This sin of Paul's was always on his mind and so it continually increased his love. He was like the woman who loved much because she had had much forgiven—like the debtor who, although he owed the most, was most grateful because his lord had freely forgiven him all. Who was as zealous as Paul? He counted all things but loss for the Glory of God and surely that was because he felt himself to be a debtor beyond all others to the Grace which had washed away the scarlet sin of murder from his guilty soul!

And, again, dear Friends, this sin of Paul's was recorded in the Bible and retained in his memory because it kept him to the Doctrines of Grace. I have generally noticed that those professors who were always so very good, and had nothing very marked about their conversion, have gone off to that form of doctrine which I do not find in the Scriptures. But those of us who know how base we were before our conversion feel that there is only one kind of Doctrine in which we can believe, and that is the Doctrine of Sovereign Grace. It would take a great deal to grind me

down into a belief in free will because it is contrary to my whole experience. I know this, if the Lord had not first loved me, I never would have loved Him. And if there is any good thing in men whatever, it must have been implanted there by the Holy Spirit. If salvation is of works, then I can never have it—and if it is the reward of natural goodness, then I shall never have it. I feel that it must be of Grace, and of Grace alone. No doubt, the recollection of his sin helped to make Paul what he was—the grand Evangelical preacher—the man who brought out the glorious Doctrine of God's electing love—the man who, beyond all others, proclaimed the Doctrine that salvation is of Grace and Grace alone, and that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have companion on whom He will have compassion. It would have been incompatible with the experience of the Apostle to preach anything else and, therefore, was the remembrance of his sin kept before him that he might always make known those precious Truths of God!

And, perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, this sin of Paul is recorded that we might always be hopeful about other people. You know, from the moment he was converted to the moment he died, he was always a persecuted man. His life was divided into two periods—first he was persecutor and then he was persecuted. When he had been driven from city to city and many times stoned, how he must have thought of Stephen and the stones that fell on him! When he had been hated of all men for Christ's sake, he might well have despaired of the Gospel ever spreading had he not said, "Ah, but as it converted me, it can convert others. Did I not take care of the clothes of those who stoned Stephen—those rebels who took the pearls that fell from his lips and trod them underfoot like swine?" This would encourage him to stand before the cruel Nero and to tell him the Gospel of Jesus, for He who could convert a Saul could convert a Nero if He willed to do it. You never find Paul drawing back or flinching, but he went preaching almost to the ends of the earth, feeling himself to be a debtor both to Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free because, he said, "I obtained mercy, that in me, first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." Oh, yes! it is good for you to remember what you used to be, for you will have hope for other people when you remember that!

V. Our text, in the fifth place, is AN INSTANCE OF THE OVERRULING OF GOD.

If you look very carefully at it and look long enough, it will appear not altogether a bad thing that Saul should be there taking care of the clothes of the murderers of Stephen. Possibly you cannot, at first, see how any good can come out of it, but there was never a bad thing out of which God could not bring good. Even the death of Christ, which was the culmination of human sin, was the crowning point of Divine Love. *If Saul had not been there, Stephen would not have prayed for him.* Augustine says, in a sentence which is always quoted in every commentary on the Acts that I have seen, "If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had never preached." But Stephen's prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,"

was such a comprehensive plea for his murderers that I can well conceive of his fixing his tearful gaze upon that young man named Saul and in his thoughts including him in that petition and beseeching the Lord not to lay it to his charge! And the Lord did not lay it to his charge "because," Paul said, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

I believe it was a good thing for Saul to be there and I have sometimes thought, when I have heard a man swear in the street, "That is an awful thing, but if he had not done it, I would probably not have prayed for him." I always make it a rule to pray for a man when I hear him swear, so, in that way God may bring good out of evil. Take care, all of you who love the Lord, whenever you hear or see anybody doing that which is wrong, to always pray—for this is the way we are to be "the salt of the earth." The salt is always to be put where the rottenness begins. This is the way in which we are to be "the light of the world." The candles are to be brought when the darkness comes out—you do not need them till the sun has gone and the darkness has come. So, when you perceive the darkness, light your candles! When you perceive the putrefaction, scatter the salt by bringing the sinner before God in prayer!

But there is also something more than this. *If Saul had not been there, he would have missed the benefit of Stephen's discourse.* And Stephen's sermon is the text from which Paul preached all his life. If you examine it carefully, you will find that Stephen's speech is the root out of which, through the blessing of the Spirit of God, Paul's theology grows. Stephen gives him the clue of all that argument in the Epistle to the Romans about Sarah and Hagar. And all that discussion about father Abraham being justified by faith is there in Stephen's speech. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is another plant that grows out of the seed which Stephen sowed in Saul's mind. There are several phrases which are identical. I think that the reason why we have the speech of Stephen recorded so fully is that Paul traveled with Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul told Luke what Stephen had said, for it seems to have gone right into his soul and to have stuck there! It must have been so, for it molded all his Epistles and you can trace the influence of Stephen in every parchment upon which Paul put his pen. It may sometimes happen that men who are opposed to the Word of God may actually be influenced by a man at whom they sneered. That may be the very man at whose feet they humble themselves. Perhaps, after he is dead and gone, that man's piety may color the whole life of a young man who now hates him. You cannot tell, but this I know—that out of many an evil thing God has often brought great good—as He did in this case, both through the prayer and through the preaching of holy Stephen!

Whenever you think that an unconverted man has formed some plot to allure you into sin, have so much of the Holy Spirit about you that instead of his overcoming you, you will overcome him! Have you never heard of the soldier who reported that he had taken a prisoner? The officer said, "Bring him along, then." He said, "I cannot." "Why not?" "Because he is dragging me the other way," replied the soldier. He had

not taken a prisoner—he had become a prisoner himself! And many a Christian, instead of doing good to the world, is being led away captive by the world. Let it not be so with you. Make them turn to you, but do not turn to them. It is well, in the firmness of faith, to draw them towards the Savior, but may it never happen that their evil example shall master your good and their revelry shall overcome your piety. God fill us with the Holy Spirit and with faith so that we may, like Stephen, be the means of transforming Saul, the persecutor, into Paul, the Apostle!

I leave this subject with you, only asking you to pray for any whom you see to be distinguished for sin, or infidelity, or heresy. Pray God to save them! The more mischief they are doing, the more earnestly you ought to pray for them, for it is very likely that if they were converted, the more good would they do. I read a strange speech of John Bunyan's once, with which I did not wholly agree, though there was some truth in it. He said that he had great hope for the next generation because the young men that he met with were so intensely wicked and he thought that if God, by His Grace, changed them, they would make grand saints. So, when you meet with intensely wicked men, pray God to make grand saints of them! They are the raw material, ready to His hands for Him to work upon. The very obstinacy and rebellion of their nature shows that when Divine Grace comes into them, they will make the most outspoken Christians. Therefore, pray for such and may God hear your prayer, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

OUR LORD'S POSTURE IN ASCENSION
NO. 2949

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 20, 1875.

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Luke 24:50-53.

[This sermon was originally titled "Our Lord's Attitude in Ascension."]

OUR Lord Jesus, having spoiled the grave and so proved His power over things that are under the earth, tarried for 40 days among men and so claimed His power over the earth, itself, and then ascended through the air to show that the dominion of the Prince of the power of the air was broken and, finally, entered into the Heaven of Heavens to claim sovereignty there, so that, from the lowest depths up to the extreme heights, He might take possession of His vast domains. I like to think of Him as traversing His dominions from end to end, like a conqueror looking over the provinces which have been subdued by his might. Our Lord did not make a rapid passage through the world. He might have gone, on the Resurrection morning, straight from the grave, as soon as it was opened, into His Glory but He had reasons for tarrying a while, and of those reasons I will briefly speak before I come to the main theme of my discourse—our Lord's posture in Ascension.

His Ascension occurred 40 days after He had risen from the dead. You know what a significant period 40 days has always been in Scripture and you know that in our Lord's own case, He was 40 days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, so that it was seemly for Him to tarry here for 40 days of triumph on the scene of His first great battle and victory. Whatever instruction there may be in these 40 days, I will not attempt to give any fanciful exposition of the meaning of them, but it is quite clear that they were sufficient for certain excellent purposes.

They were sufficient to prove to all mankind that He had truly risen from the dead, not as a phantom, but in real flesh and blood. He made many appearance to His disciples in different ways and in divers places. It was not possible that 500 brethren at once could all be deceived! And if that could be imagined, it is not likely that when, by twos and threes,

and even as separate *individuals*, they had the most intimate communion with Him, they could have been mistaken! It was essential, in the highest degree, that the fact of His Resurrection should be certified beyond all question—and it now remains the best ascertained fact in all history. We may doubt a great many things that are recorded by historians, but we cannot doubt the fact of Christ's appearance after His Resurrection because it was not done in a corner, it was not done merely on one occasion, but before so many witnesses and in so many different places! The 40 days was a sufficient period for our Savior to be here to make it clear to all ages that He had really risen from the dead!

Besides that, I have no doubt He timed His sojourn on earth so that He might remove every lingering doubt from the minds of His disciples. Thomas had to be talked to and to be told to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into his Lord's side. And there were others beside Thomas who had many doubts. In fact, these was not one of the disciples without some doubt or other, so their Master had to act and speak in such a way that every one of them would be thoroughly assured as to His identity and as to the nature of His risen body. Thus He said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Besides that, the instructions which Christ had previously given to His disciples needed a few finishing touches. Before His death, He had said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." But after He had risen from the dead, they could bear much more and there is no doubt that He made disclosures to them, then, which let further light into their souls. We read more than once of how He opened their understandings to receive the Scriptures and opened the Scriptures so that their understandings might grasp them!

But, chief of all, our Lord tarried here for 40 days that He might issue His commissions to His disciples. He said to one of them, "Feed My sheep" and, "Feed My lambs." And He said to all of them, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He would not take His final departure until His last orders were issued—till He had, as it were, marshaled His battalions, set them in their ranks, given them His commands and bid them march forward to battle and to victory. There was an Infinite Wisdom in the delay between the Resurrection and the Ascension and the more we think of it, the more we shall see that it was so. Thus much concerning the time of our Lord's sojourn here after He rose from the dead.

Further, the spot from which the Ascension took place is very instructive. Luke tells us, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." But, in the Acts of the Apostles, he informs us that this memorable scene took place upon "the mountain called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." The two statements are not at all inconsistent

with one another. I suppose that our Lord was upon that part of the Mount of Olives from which He could look down upon Bethany. To my mind, it is a very beautiful remark which is made by Van Oosterzee upon this incident. He says that when we stand in the place of our Lord's Ascension, we have three things—the Heaven above us opened, for Christ passed through the golden gates. We have a happy home below, close at our feet, for there was Bethany, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus had their happy abode and none are so happy as those who are joined to the risen Christ! And then we have here a pathway, often trod by Christ's blessed feet, and along that pathway the disciples were to go back to Jerusalem—the very Jerusalem out of which He had led them for His Ascension. So that His Ascension from this position gives us three beautiful things—an opened Heaven, a happy home and a pathway consecrated and smoothed by His blessed feet.

The most significant circumstance, perhaps, about the place of His Ascension was that He went back to Heaven from the place where He had often communed with His disciples. He had opened up many mysteries to them there. It was there that they had sat and looked over at Jerusalem and He had spoken to them about the ultimate destruction of the guilty city. It was a place which was very dear to them and which must have brought many memories to our Savior's mind. There, just under the brow of the hill, were the olive trees of Gethsemane, and His eyes may have looked upon the spot where He wrestled for our sakes with all the powers of death and Hell. It is sweet to think that He ascended to His Glory from the place of His agony and bloody sweat. And, my Brothers and Sisters, we shall do the same in our measure. From the bed whereon we die we shall ascend into Glory and there we shall be transfigured and made like unto our Lord! And from the grave of death—our Gethsemane—our bodies shall leap at the coming of the Lord and the sounding of the great trumpet into all the resurrection beauty and life! Yes, where we fight, we shall conquer! Where we suffer, there we shall reign! I like to think of the last spot of earth that Jesus touched being a mountain—for mountains have often been the places where the grandest transactions of men with God have been performed—and to find Him going as near Heaven as He could upon His feet because He would not work a miracle as long as anything could be done by ordinary means. And then gently, as it were, pushing the earth downwards and Himself ascending into the Glory where He now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father!

Think over the time and the place of our Lord's Ascension and you will have some subjects worthy of your deepest meditation.

Then think of the scene itself. There are Christ's disciples gathered around Him— certainly the Apostles and, perhaps some more of His followers. They have come out to Bethany and Olivet from Jerusalem. I cannot tell whether they walked through the streets at mid-day, but I think it is very likely and if so, many must have stared wonderingly at

the Nazarene, whom they had seen nailed to the Cross on Calvary, now alive again and passing through their streets. Whether it was so or not, I cannot tell. They crossed the Kedron, that gruesome brook in which the defilements of the Temple were taken away, and then they passed by Gethsemane, by the winding path till they came to the brow of Olivet where Jesus could look down, on the one side, on Jerusalem and, on the other side, on Bethany. And He began to talk with His disciples—what if I say that He began to sing His dying song? No, I must not say that, for He did not again die, but He sang His parting hymn and gave His farewell message.

And then He began to rise. How astonished His disciples must have been! How they must have shrunk back as the majesty flamed forth from Him! He began to rise and up He went—slowly, majestically rising and the disciples looking on till He must have grown smaller and smaller to their astonished vision! And when He was about to vanish from their sight, they saw a cloud float between Himself and them and He was gone—gone to His Throne! I like to think of our Lord's Ascension in this simple but sublime manner. I might have been terrified if I had been Elisha walking with Elijah when the horses of fire and the chariots of fire came to take him away, but there was nothing terrible about this Ascension of Christ. He was not a Prophet of fire—He was gentle, meek, lowly and there was nothing to inspire terror in the way He ascended to Heaven. It is, to my mind, very beautiful to think of there being no medium employed in connection with His Ascension—no angels wings to bear Him upward—no visible arm of Omnipotence to lift Him gently from the earth—no eagle of Jupiter to steal away this choice and chosen One. No, but He rises by His own power and majesty! He needs no help.

Glad would the angels have been to came once more to earth as they had come at His birth, as they had come to the wilderness, as they had come to His tomb—gladly would they have ministered to Him! But He needed not their ministry, at least, in the beginning of His journey. He proved the innate power of His Deity by which He could depart out of the world just when He willed, breaking the law of gravity and suspending the laws usually governing matter. Well could He do this, for He made those laws and could alter or control them as He pleased. "A cloud received Him out of their sight," for I suppose they had then seen all that they ought to see and, perhaps, behind that cloud there were scenes of Glory which it was not possible for human eyes to gaze upon—and words which it was not lawful for human beings to hear. I do not know about that. I like the thought of our hymn writer concerning the angels, after the cloud had hidden Him from mortal view—

"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne—
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
'The glorious work is done!'"

There does seem to be some guide to us in that matchless 24th Psalm—"Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." It does read as if the warders at the top of the gate enquired, "Who is this King of Glory?" and that the attending angels replied, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Of these things we speak with bated breath, for we know not all that happened, then, but we do know that "a cloud received Him out of their sight."

The point upon which I want especially to dwell is this—what was the posture in which Christ was last seen by His disciples? I will read the words. "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven," so that the last posture in which Christ was seen was this—His hands were uplifted in the act of blessing His disciples! I am going to keep to that one thing—Jesus Christ's hands uplifted in blessing as He took His departure from this world. There is sometimes a good deal in the posture which one assumes. The actor, the orator and the preacher all know that there should be appropriate action in whatever we do. When Raphael represents Paul as standing with uplifted hands at Athens, preaching, he did it with good purpose. Perhaps the artist's skill has not always been observed, for what was Paul saying when he lifted up his hands—"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands"—and up went his hands at once! And I can very well understand Paul lifting up his hands before Agrippa when he said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds*"—and the manacles rattled appropriately on his wrists!

We are not told much about the action with which our Lord Jesus Christ accompanied His speech. There is one thing recorded of Him in which it would be a great blessing if all ministers would imitate Him—"*He opened His mouth* and taught them, saying." We do not always know how He stood, but, on the occasion of His Ascension we know exactly what His posture was—"He lifted up His hands, and blessed them."

I. Observe, first, that HIS HANDS WERE UPLIFTED TO BLESS.

This blessing was no unusual thing, for His hands were blessed hands and nothing but blessing had ever come from them! What blessings thousands had received from those dear hands of His! Those hands had multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed the hungry thousands. Those hands had touched blind eyes and opened them. Those hands had been laid upon the leper and he was made whole. Those hands had touched the bier whereon the dead young man lay and he had been made to live again! Those blessed hands! Jesus continually went about doing good and His hands were always strewing blessings around Him—full as both

of them were with rich treasure out of the storehouse of His heart of love. So, as He blessed His disciples as He was leaving them, He was only continuing to do what He had done ever since they had known Him! The richest blessing that you ever get from Christ is no new thing—it is just a continuation of His old habits and practices and if He were, at this moment, to lift His hands and give us some special blessing—as I pray that He may—it would only be another link in a long chain of which every link is more precious than the most valuable diamond in the world! He lifted His hands to bless His disciples because He had always been blessing them! And He will continue to bless us, Brothers and Sisters, because He has blessed us in the past and He changes not!

Christ blessed His disciples this time, however, in a different way, for *He blessed them with a new authority*. You know that the high priest came out after the Day of Atonement was over and all the sacrifices had been offered, and took off the white robes which he had worn in the early part of the day as a common priest. Those robes must have been all stained with blood, for the whole day he was occupied with the shedding and the sprinkling of the blood. And then the high priest put on his robe of glory and beauty, the garment of blue, and scarlet, and fine linen with its bells of sweetest sound, and its pomegranates and a glittering breastplate on his breast, and a miter on his head. And then he came out and gave to the people the blessing which could only be given when the Atonement was completed. And so, today, Jesus Christ blesses His people, not as the priest who is offering sacrifice, but as the One who has offered it! It is all finished and now, with authority, not as a pleader, but as One who has power to give, He blesses His people. He had *invoked* blessings upon them before—now He *pronounces* blessings upon them! He had looked up to Heaven for the blessing, but now, as it were, He looks down from Heaven and He, Himself, bestows the blessing, for He has it now in His own hands—

"All His work and warfare done"—

He is now going up to His Heaven and He proves His right to reign by beginning now the reign of benediction among the sons of men! If I may so say, He had before blessed His disciples as the preacher pronounces the benediction at the close of the service, but He blessed them now as He never had blessed them before—and in that sense it was the beginning of that golden discourse from yonder consecrated pulpit at the right hand of God which He still continues to preach to us from this text, "Because I live, you shall live also."

Our Lord Jesus Christ's blessing, on that occasion, was, no doubt, *a very full one.* We are not told what He said. I am quite content not to know. I like to think that, possibly, He did not utter any words at all, but that He *looked* a blessing and, above all, *bestowed* a blessing with those blessed hands of His—not going up with His hands closed, as though they were full of something for Himself alone, but spread out, as if He would empty out of His hands the countless blessings which He had

gasped for our sakes! "Look, My children," He says, "look! I am keeping nothing for Myself. All I have is for you. Hear, My disciples, hear! Whatever the Father has made known unto Me, I have made known unto you. Look, My children! Look, My Brethren! Behold, I have given you all that I have—My Manhood and My Godhead, My life, My death, My Resurrection and My Glory." And so, with those blessed hands uplifted, He seems to bestow the fullest conceivable blessing, for He gives us all that God can give! He gives us all that He has, to be ours forever and ever! Can you not picture Him doing this? He is before my mind's eye now. My imagination seems to help my faith and I bless His dear name that the last time His disciples saw Him, they saw Him with His hands emptied out upon them in blessing!

Note, also, that *this blessing was for His disciples*. May I not lay the emphasis there? "He lifted up His hands, and blessed *them*." Yes, there are common blessings in which all men have a share, but there are special blessings for His chosen ones! He is universally benevolent, but He is especially generous to His own elect! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He has redeemed His people by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation. There was a specialty about Christ's benediction even as there was about His intercession. He said to His Father concerning His disciples, "I pray for *them.* I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me" and now that He had risen from the dead, He blessed *them*. May I hope that I am among *the them*, for on those disciples the blessing came that it might come on the whole Church of Christ of which they were the representatives? Has that blessing come on you, Beloved? Has God "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world"? Have we had the blessing of forgiveness, the blessing of justification, the blessing of adoption? Have we, today, the blessing of fellowship, the blessing of power to conquer sin? All these things the Lord gives to His own who know Him—to His sheep that hear His voice and that follow Him—and to whom He is, indeed, the Good Shepherd!

Then let me whisper in your ear—if He has blessed you, you shall be blessed, for there is no power in Heaven, or earth, or Hell that can reverse the blessing which He gives! If Jesus says it, you are indeed blessed! And He will say it again in the last tremendous day, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Notwithstanding all your trials and your troubles, your weaknesses and your infirmities, you are blessed—"blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth"—and you shall be blessed forever and ever, for He who has gone up on high, has left you the legacy of His blessing which shall never be taken away from you.

I look upon this blessing of the disciples by their ascending Lord as *a fitting finish to the Savior's life*—as if the Savior would say to them,

"There, that is a summary of the whole of My life—I have lived to bless you. That is the sum total of My teaching, that is the grand end of My ministry, that is the sure result of My death—that I might bless you." That Resurrection blessing is the culmination of our Savior's life—that is the last stone put upon the pyramid of His mighty work! That blessing is the last and highest and best thing of all! Let us glory and rejoice in it. Who shall add anything to what Christ has finished? Luke closes his Gospel most appropriately with an, "Amen," and Amen it is. Verily, it shall be so. There are no curses to follow the Divine blessing. There shall be no terrors of wrath to follow that benediction of love. He has said it and it stands fast! Though Heaven and earth pass away, blessed shall His people be!

That is my first point, the posture of our ascending Lord. His hands were uplifted to bless.

II. Now, secondly, THOSE HANDS WERE PIERCED HANDS.

Look! He is rising from the Mount of Olives. He has not gone high enough yet for us to have quite lost sight of Him—my imagination is trying to picture the scene and I look, and say, "Yes, I know Him! I can still see the nail prints." As long as He is in sight, holding up His hands, you can see the distinguishing marks of the Lord Jesus—the emblems and tokens of the Crucified. You cannot mistake Him! Those are the hands that were nailed to the cruel wood of the Cross.

Those pierced hands, as we look up at them, are useful and comforting because, first, *they let us know that they are really Christ's hands.* 'Tis He that blesses us! By faith we are receiving blessing from Jesus Christ—not from someone else. But those hands do far more than that for us. *They show us the price of the blessing which He has given to us.* He is blessing us, but oh, how much those blessings cost Him! Unnumbered mercies flow down to us—

"Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown"—

but He would not have us forget the griefs with which He bought our joys—

"There's never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan."

You are blessed, Brothers and Sisters, by the Lord Jesus Christ, but *the blessing is given to you by Christ's pierced hands.* Had He never suffered, you could never have been saved. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." The disciples saw not merely that it was a blessing from their Lord, and a blessing that cost Him the nail prints, but that it was a blessing which came by the way of His pierced hands. We get everything good through Christ and especially through His atoning Sacrifice. We cannot have His righteousness apart from His suffering. We cannot get power to conquer sin and Satan apart from the hands that were pierced—

"When wounded sore the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a pierced hand,

Can salve the sinner's wound."

You may try all the royal hands in the world, but they cannot cure the true "King's evil"—the terrible evil of sin—till the pierced hand of Jesus is laid upon the poor sufferer. And then straightway the fever of despair ceases and the desperate love of sin is sucked out. The wounds of Jesus alone can cure the wounds of our sick humanity! What a blessing it is to know that the way to God's heart is through the wounds of Christ! You cannot get anything from God except through those wounds. This is that ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. This is that gate of Paradise through which the righteous must enter. This is the refuge of those poor souls that are hunted by the roaring lion of Hell—they must speed away like frightened fawns to Jesus' wounds and find protection there! You know how our hymn puts it—

"Him and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

It is a blessing even to look at those pierced hands—not with these mortal eyes, for they might have gazed upon them and yet we might not have believed on Him. But it is a great blessing to look, with the eye of faith, at the pierced hands of Jesus—to look at Him whom we have pierced and so to be caused to mourn over the sin that pierced Him. It is a great blessing to have a broken heart mourning because of sin and to look at Jesus Christ and to know that He has carried my sins right away with those dear pierced hands of His—that is a still greater blessing! I pray the Lord to enable some of you to look at the pierced hands of Jesus. There is life in a look at Him! Turn now your eyes, though dimmed with tears, almost blinded with unbelief, with a cataract of despair forming over it and look as best you can to Him—

"Who bore, that you might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

In those pierced hands alone you can find salvation, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to those hands, and therefore is it that we preach the Gospel to you! Jesus is able, with a touch, to bestow salvation upon the very chief of sinners! So the blessing comes by the hands that were pierced.

I think that *this action of Christ is an epitome of the Gospel*, the substance of the whole matter—pierced hands distributing benedictions! There is Jesus, going up to Heaven from the earth, out of which He has risen from the grave where He was buried after He had died as the Substitute for sinners. And as He goes up, He is blessing men with His pierced hands. To a sinner I would say, "This is the way the blessing must come—from the pierced hands of the Christ who rose from the dead. Look up to Him and live."

III. I must not linger longer, though the theme is enticing, but must close with a third reflection. I have reminded you that the hands of Christ were uplifted to bless and that those hands were pierced hands. Now, thirdly, I have to show you that THOSE HANDS SWAY THE

SCEPTER. We look back to Calvary and Olivet and remember that the hands that blessed us were the hands that bled for us. Now look forward and see that the hands that blessed us are the hands that rule the world!

At this very moment, *the scepter of Providence is held in the hand that was pierced*—the hand of the Man of Love, the Crucified, for, "all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." There is not an angel in Heaven who does not delight to do His bidding—and the time shall come when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Further, *those hands which blessed us, are the hands that rule the Church of God*. At this moment Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks, bearing blessings to the divers branches of His Church, everywhere ruling in all things, for He is "the Head over all things to the Church."

And *those are the hands which we shall see on the morning of the Resurrection* when the trumpet shall sound and that Great White Throne which, like a mirror, shall reflect every man's inmost self and shall fill the center of the wondrous assembly of all men of all nations and ages! The hand of the Judge shall be the hand of our Redeemer! The spouse in the Song of Songs says of the Bridegroom, "His hands are like gold rings set with beryl." Whatever that charming imagery may mean, I am sure it cannot be good enough to express the beauty of Christ's hands to us. The brightest gem that monarch ever wore could not be compared, for a single second, to the beauty of those wounds of His—

"Now resplendent shine His nail prints,
Every eye shall see His wounds.
They who pierced Him
Shall at His appearance wail"—

but we shall not, for we shall say, "Those are the very hands that blessed us! The last time they were seen of mortal men, they were extended in blessing His disciples, so they cannot be the hands to smite us, for He does not first bless and then curse." It shall never be said of Him, "Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing" to His people. No, He says, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." And in those nail prints Jesus reads the names of all His people. For love of them He bore all that He endured for their sakes. Jacob's hands, no doubt, bore the marks of his 14 years of toil for Rachel. And if he ever showed them to her, they must have appeared fair in her sight because they were tokens of his long-tried love. But, oh, what blessed tokens of love will Christ's nail prints be to us and what blessed assurances will they be to us that, having loved us so much, He will never curse us—that having bought us with His blood, He cannot cast us away! "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" You cannot separate the nail prints from the hands, nor can you separate those who were redeemed by the blood of

Jesus from the heart of Him who redeemed them! In His flesh He bears the tokens of His eternal union with us and that nail print is like the marriage ring—the token that He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and one with us forever. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Paul truly wrote, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

What is to come out of all this? Have you seen Christ in any measure tonight? Has the Holy Spirit made use of my tongue, as a truth, to paint a picture? Have you, by faith, seen Christ rising with uplifted hands, the pierced hands, the hands that are to sway the scepter of universal Sovereignty? Then do just what His disciples did. First, "they worshipped Him." Let us render to Jesus now, in our minds, a distinct act of worship. Let not the day close till, in addition to all those devotions which we are accustomed to render to Him, we adore Him! A cloud is between us and Him, but the comfort is that it is *only* a cloud and the sun soon breaks through a cloud. It is a cloud that is raining blessings on us, for it was expedient for us that Christ should go away and the descent of the Spirit is one of the results of His Ascension to Heaven! He can shine through that cloud and shine through it gloriously, too! Let us worship Him now. "Blessed be Your name, O Eternal God, Immanuel, God With Us!" Adore Him, Brothers and Sisters, in the silence of your soul.

Then, next, like the disciples, let us be filled with joy, for we are told that "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Yes, you must go back to your Jerusalem. You must go home. You must go among ungodly men and women to serve your Lord. But go, as the disciples did, "with great joy"—go with this jubilant note on your lips—

"Our Lord is risen from the dead!
Our Jesus is gone up on high!
The powers of Hell are captive led—
Dragged to the portals of the sky."

I have known that one thought of our Lord's exaltation lifts me up from the borders of despair. In a dread hour, long since past, when reason almost reeled after great calamities had overtaken me, I recovered my balance and my peace of mind in a single moment by the recollection of that one text, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." I felt, after the tragedy in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, like the soldier who was mortally wounded and lying in a ditch, but I seemed to hear the shout, "God has highly exalted HIM," so I did not care what became of me as long as my Lord was exalted. It is said that one of the great Napoleon's soldiers lay wounded and bleeding to death, but he saw the Emperor ride by and his eyes flashed fire again! And he said, "Never mind what becomes of me, for the Emperor is safe." That was how I felt, in a far higher sense, concerning my exalted Lord. And I said to myself, "So long as He lives and reigns, all is well! Men may rave at me as they will, but what does it

matter so long as He is exalted? "I want you, dear Friends, to feel like that concerning your ascended Lord. Go home and worship Him and be filled with great joy!

Then there was another thing that the disciples did. They "were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." Let your joy have adequate expression. Jesus is risen, so begin to praise Him and, having once begun, keep on praising Him and never leave off as long as there is cause for praising Him—and that will be forever and ever! Jesus has gone up to Heaven and cleared an open way for us right up to the Throne of God! So send your praises up to Him! Let your heart mount from the earth right up to the heart of God! I can urge you to do this, but only the Holy Spirit can *enable* you to do it—and I pray that He may do this for all the Lord's people now.

If outsiders are asking, "What have we to do with this Jesus who has gone up into Heaven?" let me remind you of another purpose of His exaltation. Peter said to the high priest, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel"—that is, to the very chief of sinners—"to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And it is through faith in Him that this forgiveness may be given to you. If you trust in Him who has risen from the dead and gone into His Glory, you shall be saved, for, "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." That is what He is doing now, so trust Him with your case, trust Him now, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

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

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TRUE AND NOT TRUE
NO. 2950

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1905.

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"Now we know that God hears not sinners."
John 9:31.

I HAVE taken my text out of its context for a certain purpose. Part of the purpose will be answered immediately if I say how wrong it is to take any passage of Scripture away from that which comes before it, and that which follows after it—for you may, if you are so inclined, prove anything you like from the Bible if you wrench a line from its context and hold it up by itself. You can, indeed, act in the same way with any other book. You may take an expression from any human being's writings, as some people do from these Divine writings, and make the author say what he never meant. That is how many treat the Word of God. For instance, a man may say that he can prove from Scripture that God has forsaken and forgotten His people. By turning to *Isaiah 49:14*, we find that Zion, in an unbelieving fainting fit said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." It was not true, but was one of the lies of unbelief. If you take from their context the words in Psalm 14:1, "There is no God," you will have the opposite of what David wrote, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." If you pick out a sentence from the New Testament, without the context, you may say that Scripture declares that our Lord Jesus Christ was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber because His enemies falsely said so. And you may declare that it is your duty to worship the devil, because Matthew records that he said to Christ, "Fall down and worship me." You see at once the absurdity and wickedness of wresting the Scriptures in that fashion.

Now take the words that I have chosen for my text, "We know that God hears not sinners." Who said that? A man who was born blind, to whom Christ had given sight! And who believed it? A set of still blinder Pharisees! He was arguing with them and he wished to convince them, so he used an argument which was especially suitable to *them*. It was their Pharisaic belief that God would not hear sinners. "Very well," he said, "but God has heard Christ and, therefore, according to your own belief, Jesus Christ, who has opened my eyes, cannot be a sinner." It was a capital *argumentum ad hominen*, as we say—an argument to the men themselves. But we are not going to accept everything that this man said. We are not bound to do so, for he did not speak under any sort of Inspiration. The Evangelist was Inspired to record what the man said, but we would be very foolish if we believed all that he said, shrewd as he proved himself to be.

Is it true that "God hears not sinners"? *It is true and it is not true.* It is true, most true as this man meant it, but it is utterly false in the sense in which some persons have understood it. So I am going to speak, first, upon *how it is true that God hears not sinners.* And, secondly, upon *how it is not true.*

I. First, then, IT IS TRUE THAT GOD HEARS NOT SINNERS IN THE SENSE IN WHICH THIS MAN USED THE EXPRESSION, namely, that *if Christ had been an impostor, it is not possible to conceive that God would have listened to His prayer* and given Him the power to open the blind man's eyes—for that would have been, for God, the Just and the True—to set His seal to a lie, and that cannot be. The man was quite accurate in arguing, "If this Jesus of Nazareth is a deceiver, how is it that" (as the man supposed) "He has asked God to open the eyes of one born blind, and God has done it, thereby as good as saying that this Deceiver was true?" It is not supposable that the Most High could have done anything of the kind! It can never be believed that God will listen to the prayers of men who ask Him to support their lies and assist them in the propagation of that which is contrary to His own Kingdom. That was the primary sense in which, I have no doubt, the man meant his statement—and in that sense it is true. God will back up the right and the true, and stand by the Christ whom He, Himself, has sent—but He will not support imposture and falsehood!

In another sense it is true that "God hears not sinners," that is to say, *He will hear none of us*—no sinner among us, (and who among us is not a sinner?) *in and of ourselves*. If heard, it must be through the interposition of the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, for up to the immediate Presence of the thrice-holy God the guilty sinner cannot come by himself. The fire of the Divine Holiness would burst forth and utterly destroy the presumptuous rebel who might attempt such an intrusion! But Jesus meets us just where we are—we give our prayers into His hands and He perfumes them and cleanses us with His own most precious blood—and then He presents both ourselves and our prayers before His Father's face. God could not hear those prayers of ours, neither could He have respect unto us or to our offering, apart from the mediation of Christ! He must—to use the language of one of our hymn-writers—"look through Jesus' wounds" on us and then, *but not till then*—can He regard us favorably. As a matter of absolute justice, irrespective of the Mediator, God could not and would not hear any prayer from any sinful being in the universe!

Our text is also quite true if we read it as meaning that *God hears not wicked prayers*. Perhaps someone asks, "What are wicked prayers?" There are many sorts, but I will only mention one or two kinds. Those are wicked prayers which men offer formally—I mean such as we often hear when solemn sounds are evidently uttered by thoughtless tongues—when men bow their heads in the posture of devotion, but their hearts are gadding abroad after vanity—when they bend the knee, morning and night, and repeat a *form*, but there is no heart in it. All that is an insult and a mockery to the Most High. What would we think if somebody presented a petition to us and asked us to listen to it, yet did not mean

it, but merely mocked us with empty sounds? Unless your heart is in your prayer, it is a wicked one, and God will not answer it! He must hear it, but it will be only in indignation and He will say to you, "What have I done that you should thus provoke Me to My face and bring to Me mere empty shells when the kernel of the heart is altogether absent?"

That is also a wicked prayer which a man offers simply because it is the custom to offer it and there is something to be gained by it. All attendance upon religious ordinances, for the sake of thereby getting pecuniary profit or social position, must be abominable in the sight of God—yet there are many who have a keen eye for the loaves and fishes that Christ or His Apostles have to distribute—and they say a prayer for what they can get. And they would swear an oath for twice as much, or perhaps for half as much, equally satisfied whichever they might do as long as the wages were pretty sure and liberal! It is detestable that religion should ever be a hobbyhorse for gain or for position. We know that God hears not such prayers as those. Sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal must be more musical in the ears than the mere chattering of formalists, or the pretended prayers of those who hope to gain thereby. He hears not prayers in which men sin as they pray and insult Him when they appear to be devout.

It is quite certain, as you will see from various passages of Scripture which I will presently quote to you, that God does not and will not hear the prayers of those who continue in their sins even while they pray. There are thousands of persons who would very much like to go to Heaven and they are dreadfully afraid of going to Hell—but then if they do go to Heaven, they would like to take their sins with them—at least most of the way. They would cut their acquaintance just a few yards before the brink of the River of Death, but they feel that they must keep those sweet sins of theirs! And yet they hope to go to Heaven! If this is what any of you are doing, be you sure of this, that God will not hear your prayers! He will hear your supplications if you repent of and forsake your sins—but if you come before Him arm in arm with your sinful lusts, He will drive you from His Presence! A man prays for forgiveness, yet continues to drink to excess—can God answer a prayer of that kind? It cannot be! He will never pander to our base passions by allowing us to indulge in sin and yet to hope for mercy. I believe that there are many persons who do pray, after a fashion, for Divine Grace, Christ and Heaven—they have never yet obtained an answer and they never will as long as they continue to dally with their beloved sins! These must be given up! Even if they are like their right arms, they must be cut off, or like their right eyes, they must be plucked out, for it is utterly impossible to keep sin and yet go to Heaven! In this sense, "God hears not sinners."

Do you wish to be saved from sin? Do you pray to be saved from intemperance, from dishonesty, from lying, from unchastity? Do you ask to be saved from everything that makes you unlike your God? Then He will hear such prayers as those, but to pray for pardon, yet continue to rebel—to pray for forgiveness, yet still go on to provoke Him—such a prayer as that must be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High! You will

find, in Isaiah's first chapter, 15th verse, that the Lord says, "When you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." There is a similar passage in Jeremiah 14:12, where the Lord says concerning the people who would not turn from their evil ways, "When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence." "Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will now remember their iniquity and visit their sins."

Another true meaning may be attached to this passage, "God hears not sinners," that is to say, *God does not hear hypocrites.* Job knew this and so did his friends. It hardly needs a Revelation of God to make us know that is true! If a man tries to play fast and loose with God—if he pretends to be the Lord's servant and, all the while he is the servant of sin—God will not grant the request that is made by his double tongue. Listen to these words of Job—"What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" No. Hypocrites will not always call upon God and God will not always hear them when they do call upon Him! I may truly say that He will *never* hear them, for He abhors the sacrifice that is presented to Him without the devout heart of the offerer.

We have further proof that our text has much truth in it if we think of *another class of sinners that God will not hear, namely, the unforgiving.* When we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," we expressly ask that God will not forgive us till we have forgiven our fellow men. You may kneel till your knees grow to be part of the very floor—you may weep till you make your bed to swim—but no answer of peace shall ever come from God to you as long as you retain one black malicious thought against your fellow man, however much he may have offended you! Perhaps this explains why some of you who have been awakened of late, have not been able to find peace with God. If it is so with you, my Friend, you must first take your hands from the throat of your brother who owes you that little debt and then may you hope that God will allow you to find mercy at His hands concerning your far greater debt to Him! Bring not your sacrifice unto the Lord, pollute not His altar with it—no—dishonor not the floor of God's House by treading upon it while you cherish an unforgiving spirit! Go to your brother and say to him, "I freely forgive you for the wrong you have done me. Let this quarrel be ended, for I cannot meet my God till I can first meet you, for, "He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

I may here remark, by the way, that *God will not hear even His own people when they are living in known sin.* You must have noticed that remarkable declaration in Psalm 66:18—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Have you not found it so, my Brothers and Sisters who have been favored with the Presence of God? When you have backslidden, when you have grieved the Spirit of God, have not your prayers returned empty to you? You used to ask and receive! When you

kept up constant, familiar communion with the Most High, you had but to express your desire and it was granted to you. But you grew cold, worldly, careless—and now, when you pray, it is like speaking into a bronze cauldron—your words reverberate, they resound in your own ears! But they do not reach the ears of God. You go to the Mercy Seat and groan, but you bring your requests away with you. They are not supplied and so, groaning, and groaning, and groaning yet again, prayer has become a toilsome task with you, for no answer follows your supplication! Ask the Lord to cleanse your heart, my Brother, then your power in prayer will come back to you. If you walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to you—and your power in prayer will fail you when you in any way give place to sin. I do not think that the blind man who had been cured by Christ meant that, but it is true, and it is necessary that I should mention it.

There is another class of sinners whom God will not hear. In Proverbs 28:9 we read, "He that turns away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination." That is to say, *if a man will not hear God, God will not hear him*. You have a Bible, but you will not read it. Then, when you pray, you must not expect God to give you audience. You will not attend the means of Grace when you might do so. If anybody tries to explain the Gospel to you, you tell him to hold his tongue, for you are determined not to know anything about the way to Heaven. Well then, Friend, you may say what you like about praying, but while God's Gospel is treated by you with such disrespect as this, you cannot expect that God will grant your requests. Shut your ear to God and He will shut His ears to you! But incline your ear and come to Him and, sinner as you are, your soul shall live, for God will hear you!

Further, *God will not hear those who continue to harden their hearts against Him*. There are some people who have often been impressed—and they have had great difficulty in throwing off those impressions. The battering-ram of the Gospel has been hammering at the doors of some of your hearts and it has given such tremendous blows that you have thought that the door must be wrenched from its hinges, and the posts must be torn from their sockets! But you have managed to strengthen your inside defenses and to keep up the barrier. Soul, let me solemnly warn you that you may do that once too often—you may put one bolt too many on that door and, one of these days the Lord will turn away from you and say—"Because I have called and you refused. I have stretched out My hands and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes." The Lord will not always strive with men! He waits long in matchless patience, but He will not always wait—the day shall come when the refusers shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," but He will say, "Depart from Me! I never knew you." And they will hear the fatal sentence, "Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now." We know that God hears not sinners when once they depart out of this life. Once driven by death beyond the verge of mercy, once shut up in Hell,

this man's words will be most emphatically true concerning them, "We know that God hears not sinners."

II. Having thus shown you that there are some senses in which this declaration is true, I am going onto the other side of the question and shall show you that THERE ARE SENSES IN WHICH THIS TEXT IS NOT TRUE, but the very reverse of true.

First, it is not true that God hears not those who have been, and still are, in a measure, sinful because, my Brothers and Sisters, *if He did not hear sinners, He would not hear any human being,* for, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Solomon truly said, "There is no man that sins not." And David wrote, under the Inspiration of the Spirit, "There is none that does good, no, not one." We have all erred and gone astray from the right road. And when we approach God in prayer, we must feel this and confess it. It is not true, therefore, that the Lord does not hear those who have sinned—those who still call themselves sinners though they are saved by Sovereign Grace. Look at the long line of His people and note how He has heard their prayers. Many beside David have said, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Even after His people have gone astray from Him, He has heard them when they have repented and returned unto Him. The 51st Psalm is a sinner's prayer, is it not? Yet how graciously the Lord listened to it and restored His penitent servant to His favor! If I thought that God did not hear sinners, that is to say, those who have any sin—then would it be of no use for me to open my lips in prayer, or to lift my eyes to Heaven! But, blessed be His name, not only has He heard some of us, sinners though we are, but He has washed us from our sins, clothed us with the righteousness of Christ and we are "accepted in the Beloved!" And now when we plead with Him, we prevail! We delight ourselves in Him and He gives us the desire of our heart. We still dare not say that we are not sinners, for though we strive after perfection and shall never be satisfied with anything short of it—and believe that we shall assuredly have it through Jesus Christ our Lord—yet we have not at present obtained it. We labor after it, not as though we had attained it, or were already perfect, for we still confess that there is iniquity about our holy things, unholiness in our holiness, unbelief in our faith and something to be repented of in our repentance. Yet the Lord graciously hears us, blessed be His name, so that it is not absolutely true that God hears not sinners.

Neither is it true that God does not sometimes hear and answer the prayers of unregenerate men. I am going to speak upon a subject as to which there may be a difference of opinion, but I cannot help that—I am merely relating what I regard as facts. While I was but a child and knew not the Lord in a saving sense, I was taught by my parents that God heard prayer and I distinctly remember, as a boy, offering a prayer upon a very unimportant matter. If I were to tell you what it was, it would make you smile, but to me, as a child, it was a very great matter and I prayed to God many times about it. I know that I was not then born-again, neither had I true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—but I did devoutly believe that God would hear me, in that matter, and I asked

Him again and again—and He gave me my desire. The result upon my mind was wonderfully beneficial, for it confirmed my belief in the existence of God and helped to arm me against any doubts of the infidel kind that might afterwards assail me, for the first and what was to me a very remarkable answer to my prayers, always anchored me fast!

On one occasion, in my early ministry, I mentioned this circumstance when I was addressing some Sunday school children in a chapel where the Brethren were of the "very sound" sort—they believed in Calvinistic Doctrine, not as I do, reckoning sixteen ounces to the pound, but allowing eighteen or nineteen ounces—and these extra ounces were not good for the people to feed upon! While I was speaking to the children, upstairs in the gallery were some of these divines and this remark of mine quite shocked them. They considered me to be as bad as Andrew Fuller, and to them he was, doctrinally, about the most horrible person that could be! So, outside the Chapel gate, I was assailed with questions about God hearing the prayers of unregenerate people. I was very young at the time and was rather bothered by those old fellows, but I found a very valiant defender. A poor woman, wearing a red cloak, pushed her way into the throng and addressed the old men thus, "Fools, and slow of heart to believe what the Holy Spirit has written in the Word." I looked in astonishment at her, wondering what she was going to say. "Did you never read," she said, "that God feeds the young ravens which cry? Are they regenerate? Do they pray spiritual prayers? Is it not the most natural prayer in the world that comes from a hungry young raven? And if God hears them and satisfies their desires, do you not think that He will hear a man who is made in His own image, even though he is unregenerate?" The woman won the day for me and I went away rejoicing!

I know that God hears the sincere and earnest prayers even of unregenerate persons concerning common things. I read, yesterday, a story of Mr. Samuel Medley, of whose hymns we have many in our hymn books, especially that one about God's loving-kindness. Mr. Medley, in his younger days, was an officer on board one of his majesty's men-of-war. There was a very sharp fight in which a number of French vessels were destroyed and young Medley was busy taking the minutes upon the quarter deck. One of the officers, passing by the place where he was sitting, said, "Mr. Medley, you are wounded." He had not perceived it, but the blood was streaming down his leg and he had to be taken down to the hospital. After the surgeon had examined him, he said to him, "You will have to lose your leg. I am afraid you cannot live unless amputation takes place." Now Mr. Medley had a godly mother and father, and other gracious people in his family, but he was a godless, Christless sinner—as wild as he could be. Yet he turned his face to the wall of his little bedroom and sought the Lord to spare him that leg. When the doctor came to him the next morning, he said, "I never saw such a case as this before. There has been more healing done in the last twelve hours than I ever knew to take place in a leg in my life! I think you will not need to have it off, after all." That remarkable answer to prayer made a deep

impression on young Medley's heart and I believe that biographies will show that, in many cases, God has heard the prayers of unregenerate persons because He meant to eventually save them—and hearing their prayers led them to believe in Him and helped them to exercise that real spiritual faith which brought salvation to their souls.

Let me say, however, that *God sometimes hears the prayers of intensely wicked men out of no love to them.* You remember how He heard the cry of the children of Israel when they said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" The Lord sent them quails in great abundance but, "while the flesh was yet between their teeth before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." Again and again, the Lord granted the requests of Pharaoh, cruel Pharaoh, hard-hearted, proud Pharaoh who was afterwards destroyed in the Red Sea! Jehovah removed one plague after another from him, thus giving him (oh, dreadful thought!) an opportunity to exhibit the hardness of his heart and to increase it by sinning against the answered prayer! I beseech any man or woman here who, though not yet converted, has asked God for something and has received an answer to that petition, not to abuse that answer! I pray you to follow it up! It may be that there are designs of matchless love in store for you and that loving you with an amazing love, even while you are dead in sin, God has given you a token that it is even so! But if, after having presented your request to the Lord and had it granted, you continue to be His enemy and even grow worse, it may be that the next communication from God to you will be the fatal sentence out of the lips of Infinite Justice, "You did pray to Me, but you never sought anything but temporal things. And now, since you have rejected Me and have not sought the treasures of My Grace, and have sinned against light and knowledge, I will depart from you and leave you to that final hardness of heart which will irrevocably seal your doom."

Finally—and here I want to throw the whole force of my message—*it is not true that God will not hear sinners when they pray to Him for mercy, confessing their sins and believing in Jesus Christ His Son.* I have known three or four persons, quite recently, who have been perplexed with this idea. They have said, "It is no use for us to pray, for God hears not sinners." My dear Friend, how can you, in the teeth of God's Word, believe that statement, understanding it in the sense you give to it? For, if it were so, we would be under the Law, not under the Gospel! And then it would be necessary for us to be righteous before we could ask God for anything—that is the teaching of Sinai, not of Calvary! It is the glory of the Gospel that God *does* hear sinners and that He does grant their requests! For you to say that He will not hear a sinner when he confesses his sin and forsakes it—and cries to Him for mercy—is to contradict the Gospel! Remember the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not sent to the righteous, but to sinners! It is not meant for the good, but for the bad—for those who are unrighteous, ungodly—in fact, "sinners."

Look, for instance, at Manasseh who, "made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen." The Lord rebuked him, yet he would not listen. But when he was carried

away to Babylon, in his affliction, "He sought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom." Look also at the dying thief upon the cross and let not the thought that God hears not sinners ever enter into your heads! There was a sinner dying as a malefactor, yet he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Never say that God hears not sinners! Have you not read the parable of the publican who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"? God did hear him, but He did not hear the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men were!

Do you say that God hears not sinners? Read again the familiar story of the prodigal son. Here he comes, fresh from the swine-trough, filthy without and within, ragged, disgraced. But he has scarcely had time to say, "Father, I have sinned," before he is heard even more fully than he has prayed and the kiss of acceptance is on his lips and the best robe has covered him! It is a lie, concocted in the bottomless Pit, to say that "God hears not sinners." If they do but cry, "O God, forgive us for Jesus' sake," He *must* hear them—it would be contrary to His Nature to turn away from them! Why, Sirs, to deny this is to fly in the face of all the invitations and promises of the Word of God! Take this one, for instance, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." What does that mean but that God invites sinners to pray to Him and bids them come to Him, plainly implying that He will not reject them? Then there is that gracious invitation, "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." Does that mean that God will not hear sinners? Why, my Lord Jesus came into the world on purpose to hear sinners—He came here to seek and to save sinners!

Last Friday night I was speaking at Moody and Sankey's meeting at Bow Road Hall and I used an illustration which I will use now. I said that if somebody were to ring my doorbell at one or two o'clock in the morning, and I put my head out the window and asked, "What do you want?" and the answer came, "My wife is very ill, and I have come to ask you to take her case into your hands," I would say, "Bless you, good man! I am not a doctor. Why have you come to me?" The man would not be welcome at all, for it is not my business to prescribe for the sick! But there is another house, not very far from mine, where there is a red lamp over the door—for there is a doctor living there. If the man will ring the bell at *that* house and say what he wants, he will be welcome and the doctor will say, "I will be there directly, for it is my business to try to heal the sick."

Now, my Lord Jesus Christ has, as it were, a red lamp over His door. He is the Physician for sin-sick souls! It is His business to cure them. A doctor who never had any patients would be a poor doctor, would he not? And Jesus Christ (I say this with the utmost reverence), could not be a great Savior if there were no great sinners! And He could not be a great Savior if there were not a great many sinners to be saved! Anybody who is not a sinner cannot help Christ in this business. A man who is not ill would have to say to a doctor, "I do not need your skill, for there is nothing the matter with me." But the man who is ill is the one the doctor wants—and the more ill he is, the more does he add to the fame of the physician if a cure is worked upon him. As for you who think yourselves very good people, Christ does not want you! You do not want Him and He does not want you. But you sinful people, you who know that you are sinners, you who, when I read my text, said, "Ah, that is a death-blow to all our hopes," you are the very people whom Jesus Christ wants! He came into the world to save sinners—just the sort of people that you are! So let the news be published over the whole earth that whoever believes on Him is not condemned! He has shed His precious blood for those who are condemned through sin, that the condemnation might pass away from them through their believing on Him!

It is gloriously true that God hears sinners, all sinners who come unto Him through Jesus Christ, His Son! Let the blind man say what he likes, we have tried it, and proved it for ourselves—and I hope that hundreds of you will prove, at this very moment, that He *does* hear sinners because He has heard *you*!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:*
LUKE 24:49-53; ACTS 1:1-12.

Luke 24:49. *And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.* The promise of the Father was, as you know, the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this gift, our Lord's rising again into Glory was celebrated. The Holy Spirit was the Heavenly largess of the great King by which He did honor to the return of His Son to His ancient Throne. The Apostles and the other disciples were to wait for this gift. They might have to wait for some days, but it is better to wait for Divine equipment than to go out to holy service in our own strength! All that you do will have to be undone unless it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit. "But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Has that command ever struck some people who profess to be serving the Lord? Are there not men who preach whom God never sent to preach? The best advice we could give them would be, "Tarry." Are there not some who teach and some who take office in the church whom God has never endued with gifts or Graces for such work? Powerless workers stand in the way of true workers—they block up the path of those whom God sends to serve Him.

50. *And He led them out as far as to Bethany.* The ruling passion was strong in the hour of His departure. Well did He know that place,

Bethany—the place of love where He had received a welcome such as He had experienced nowhere else on earth—where lived Mary, Martha and Lazarus—there did He bid "Good-bye" to His disciples!

50. *And He lifted up His hands and blessed them.* He never had lifted up His hands to strike them, or to invoke curses upon them. Those hands were filled with blessings and the last thing that was seen of Jesus by human eyes was His hands uplifted in the act of blessing!

51, 52. *And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him.* Then they were not Unitarians—"They worshipped Him"—and there were angels present at the time who would have been sure to have rebuked them if it had been a wrong thing for them to worship Him. Indeed, they themselves, both as Jews and as Christians, would have felt in their inmost soul that they could not worship anyone but God—and Christ is God—so they did well to worship Him.

52. *And returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* Back to the place of His murder—back to the place where they were likely to be murdered themselves.

53. *And were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.* So bold were they that the very central spot for the worship of Jehovah we made the place where Christ's Divine Sovereignty was proclaimed!

Acts 1:1-3. *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up, after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments unto the Apostles whom He had chosen: to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* The Resurrection of Christ, as we have often said, is the best attested of all historical facts. There is not half as much reason to be sure that Napoleon Bonaparte was ever taken to St. Helena as to believe that Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father. If the Resurrection of Christ is not credible, there remains nothing credible in history! I go further than that, and say that the news of yesterday, which you read in this morning's paper, you had no right to believe if you do not believe in Christ's Resurrection, for the evidence in its favor is not half as strong as the evidence concerning the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Remember that this feat was attested by men who could not be deceived concerning it and who sealed with their blood, as well as with their unfaltering testimony, their solemn belief that they had touched Him, that they had spoken to Him, that they had listened to Him, that they had eaten with Him and had seen Him eat of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb after He rose from the grave. We know that Christ has risen from the dead! That is one of the great cornerstones of the Christian faith. Fall back on that in every time of doubt and your fears will speedily disappear.

4-6. *And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the*

Father, which, said He, you have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, LORD, will You at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? They had not got rid of their old ideas concerning a kingdom visible among men! They still clung to the idea of a temporal kingdom for Israel. There was a Kingdom already established by Christ, but in the sense in which they understood the word, they were sadly in error.

7-8. *And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power. But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* As indeed they were, for they went everywhere testifying to what they had seen and heard—and very many were the conversions that followed. We need the same power to rest upon us, now, that rested upon them when the Holy Spirit came upon them!

9-10. *And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.* Luke wrote before concerning the two men in shining garments who said to the women at the sepulcher, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." These two men in white apparel now ask an equally appropriate question—"Why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?"

11-12. *Which also said, You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven. Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.*

*[This Exposition belongs to last week's Sermon [#2949, Volume 51—OUR LORD'S POSTURE IN ASCENSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] but there was no space available for its insertion there, and no Exposition appears to have been given before the preceding discourse.]

HYMNS FROM "OUR HYMN BOOK"—313, 319.

—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.

WITH OR WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD
NO. 2951

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 30, 1875.

"Without shedding of blood is no remission."
Hebrews 9:22.

WEEK after week, standing before this congregation to preach the things concerning the Kingdom of Christ, I sometimes say to myself, "I wonder how much longer I shall have to point out to some of these people the way of salvation before they will walk in it—I wonder how many times I shall have to preach to them the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in the Crucified Christ of Calvary and how often I shall have to urge them to an immediate decision for Christ, the renunciation of their self-confidence and the forsaking of their sins?" It seems to me that after I have done this, the right thing for me to do is to keep on asking you, "Have you given due attention to these Truth of God? Do you know them in your soul?" For, "if you know these things, happy are you if you do them," but the very opposite of happy are you if you leave them undone!

I am going to try to enlist the attention of any earnest, thoughtful persons who are here, any of those who are still unconverted, but who have begun to consider their ways and to turn unto the Lord. To you, dear Friends, I mean to preach nothing but the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ—and not to preach it as though I were addressing the settlers in Australia or the pundits of Hindustan—but to preach it distinctly to *you* and to urge you to accept it here and now. If you have not accepted it by the time the sermon is done, it shall be through no fault of mine—the blame must lie at your own door, that you have been directed to the way of salvation, but have not walked in it—or that, having heard the Gospel and taken some interest in it, you have willfully rejected it.

The subject of my discourse is to be the remission—the putting away and getting rid of sin—and that concerns every one of us, from the youngest child to the oldest man or woman, for we are all sinners. It is very common for people to say, "Oh, yes, we are all sinners!" But I do not use that expression as they do. I mean that you have done wrong and that I have done wrong and that we have, all of us, done wrong! "We have done the things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone the things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." We have chosen the wrong instead of the right. We have chosen to please ourselves rather than to please God. We have even lived as if there were no God! If there had really been no God, our conduct might not have been materially affected. We have all sinned in some way or other—

"Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road."

And, dear Friends, we all of us need to be cleansed from this sin. There is not one among us who can afford to live in sin, or who can afford to die in sin. We may find a temporary pleasure in it, but it must end in eternal loss to us unless there comes a time when God's Grace saves us from it—we cannot be truly happy while we are out of gear with God. And since we are immortal beings and our soul will not die, but will live on forever, there will come a time in which the sin which is unforgiven will be a sore plague to us. So it is vitally important that we should enquire whether, being sinners, we have been forgiven or not!

I hope I shall be able to reach the conscience of each person here while I try to talk to you about two contrasts. First we have, in our text, *sin unremitted and sin remitted.* And then, secondly, we have *without shedding of blood and with shedding of blood.*

I. So, first, we will consider these two things which are so opposite to each other—SIN UNREMITTED AND SIN REMITTED.

The Apostle says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." I do not like the sound of those words, "*no remission.*" They seem to me like a funeral knell—"no remission." That might have been the sound in the ears of every sinner from the time of Adam until now—"no remission." It would have made this world a dreadful prison if everywhere, when we sat down to think of our sin, there stared us in the face the words, "no remission." This is, indeed, one of the inscriptions across the vault of Hell—"no remission," "no remission." I say that I cannot bear the sound of those words, yet they must be sounded aloud, for there are still some persons to whom they apply. I trust that the sounding of those words in their ears may be the means of their awakening!

What does it mean when we say that a man has sinned and that there is no remission for him? It means, first, that *he is the object of the daily anger of God.* God has a benevolent regard for him as one of His creatures and is not willing that he should perish. God would infinitely prefer that the sinner should turn to Him and live, but, viewing him as an impenitent sinner, we read that "God is angry with the wicked every day." I have learned not to take much notice of other people's opinions, yet I do not like to make anybody angry if I can help it. If I have ever done so—and sometimes it has happened unintentionally—I have had no pleasure in reflecting that someone was angry with me. And if it was somebody who would not be angry without a cause, it has been a very painful thing to live under a consciousness of his displeasure. *I want you whose sins are unforgiven, to reflect that God is angry with you every day.* When He looks upon you, He cannot regard you as a father regards a dear child who has done everything he can to please him, but He must look upon you as a rebel—as one who has revolted against Him and defied Him to His face. When He looks upon your sin, His anger must flame forth. A man who is not angry with sin must be a guilty man and, in proportion to the holiness of God must be his abhorrence of evil.

Reflect, then, upon what a sad condition you are in. If God should never smite you in His righteous wrath—if He should continue to give you the mercies of this life every day just as He has done, I think, dear Friend, that it ought to trouble you all the more that you are still provoking Him by your continued sin. If you really are of the noble spirit that I hope you are, you will not be so ungenerous as merely to regret your faults because of the suffering it will bring to yourself, but you will lament it because it offends so loving, so good, so tender, so gracious a Being as the God of the whole earth! Were He vindictive—had He no heart of compassion—if He had made no proclamation of mercy and no terms of Grace—I could understand how you could brazen your forehead and defy Him. But how can you live in enmity against the God who has been so gracious to you? Let the thought of the mercy of God make your unremitted sin such a burden upon your conscience that you will not rest until you have repented of it and been forgiven!

Remember, dear Friends, that, in addition to being the object of the daily anger of God, you are *in constant peril of suffering that anger to the fullest*. A single step may cause you to fall—and that fall may lead to the grave. Who among us can tell all the perils of this mortal life? I remember reading a work in which there were collected together numerous instances of the simple means by which men have died, such as the swallowing of a fruit stone, or the sticking of a small bone in the throat, the breathing of some invisible noxious gas, or the failure of some almost imperceptible organ in the body to perform its usual functions. How suddenly death often comes! A friend said to me, this morning, "Do you know that So-and-So is dead?" He was a dear fellow servant of Christ, an eminent preacher of the Gospel. I had no idea, when I saw him a little while ago in robust health, that he and I should never speak to each other again in this world! You, also, must often have heard of the death of friends—and someday people will tell the survivors that you, too, are gone. With unremitted sin upon you, you know where you will go, do you not? I need not tell you where they are driven whose sin has never been forgiven—*and whose sin never will be forgiven*—as they have passed out of this world unwashed in the precious blood of Jesus!

May I very earnestly put to all of you who are still unsaved, this question—"How will you be able to die with unremitted sin upon you?" There are some of us who believe that there is a spot on this earth where our mortal remains are to lie—and it is possible that the tree of which the planks will form our coffin has already been cut down. We expect to die unless the Lord shall soon come and that will amount to much the same thing. And, expecting to die, we would like to be ready to die and to have our house in order. I like to meet a sensible man who insures his life so as not to leave his wife and family in poverty, or who, when he has means at his disposal, lays by for a rainy day that should he be out of work, he will not need to go and beg. Now, if such provision as this is commendable—and who will say that it is not—is it not much more commendable with regard to eternal things? Are we to be careful about

lesser matters and yet to make no preparation for that last moment in which we must pass out of this world to undergo the solemn testing in the scales of unerring Justice? If unremitted sin is upon you—and it is to be fearful that it is upon very many of you—I pray you to consider what you will do in that dread hour when the immortal tenant of your house of clay makes her fatal leap without a wing to buoy her up—and sinks into despair and into yet deeper despair in the bottomless abyss! God grant that none of our spirits may ever know what it is to be found disembodied with unforgiven sin and afterwards to hear the trumpet of the great Day of Judgment ring out—and to go back into our risen bodies with sin unforgiven—and to be cast, body and soul, into the lake that burns forever and ever!

This is, surely, enough for me to say upon that sorrowful theme, so let us now think upon the brighter theme of *remission*. Our text seems to me to be musical with hope—"Without shedding of blood is no remission." Then it is clearly implied that, *with* shedding of blood, there *is* remission! In the Gospel we always have glad news to tell. Unconverted Sinner with your unremitted sin, we have glad news to tell you! And this is it—your sin may be remitted! There is no sin of which you can repent, which may not be forgiven you! There lives not a mortal man who, if he repents of his sin, shall not find mercy! There is a sin which is unto death, but those who commit it never ask for mercy, or desire it. They are dead even while they live, their conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and they rush to Hell willingly. But never has a man sincerely anxious for salvation committed that sin! Let no penitent man despair, for there *is* remission for every sin of which any man truly repents and for which he exercises faith in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The remission of sin which God gives to His people is complete. That is to say, it wipes out all his sins, whatever they may have been. Now look, Believer, there is the list of your sins, it is a huge roll! If I were to unroll it, how long would it be? Would it not belt the globe and reach from the earth to the sun and back again? Can you see all the sin that is recorded there? Yet the moment that the blood of Jesus is applied to that roll, the whole record is blotted out and there shall never be any more sin inscribed there, for Jesus Christ never yet divided a man's sins, forgiving some, and leaving others unforgiven! He deals with sin in the mass, takes it all up and flings it into the sea, or buries it in His own sepulcher! And never shall it have a resurrection, for, says the Lord, "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." In the Epistle from which our text is taken, the Lord says, "I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." King Hezekiah said to the Lord, "You have cast all my sins behind Your back." And King David wrote, "As far as the east is from the west"—and that is an infinite distance—"so far has He removed our transgressions from us." So you see that God completely sweeps away our sins when He remits them!

Further, the man who gets remission of sin, gets *a clearance from all danger of any penalty resulting from sin*, so that he can sing—

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside!
The Law gave sin its damning power,
But Christ, my Ransom, died."

In dying, Christ bought my pardon so that I have no cause to fear the punishment of my sin! What a blessing it is that the sin is gone and the penalty is gone too! When a man's sin is remitted, he comes to the position which would have been his if he had never sinned. We fell, federally, in Adam, and we fell, *actually*, by our own sin. But Christ has put us back where Adam was in his state of innocence. No, He has done more than that for us, for man was but man before he fell, but now man is linked to the Eternal in the Person of the God-Man, Christ Jesus, so we are nearer to God than Adam was before he fell! I said, Sinner, that God was angry with you, but if your sin is remitted, His anger is gone! What does a forgiven sinner say to God? "Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me." "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Jeremiah wrote, "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." It is sin that separates us from God—when that is put away, there is no longer any separation—but we are one in blessed amity, sacred relationship, holy concord and near and dear communion!

Do all of you, dear Friends, know what this remission of sin is? There are some of us who could boast of this—not that we could boast of anything that we *are*, but we could boast and glory in the great *goodness of the Lord* to us, the very chief of sinners! There are many here who could join with me in this declaration, "We were guilty and Hell-deserving, but, having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that our sins, which were many, are all forgiven. We are 'clothed in the righteousness of Christ and are accepted in the Beloved!' And we *know* it and there is, therefore, now no condemnation to us who are in Christ Jesus. And we are not afraid of any, for, 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' The peace we have, through believing in Jesus, is so full, so rich, so deep, that it cannot be broken! Death itself will only deepen it. We are not afraid to die—why should we be? With the robe of His righteousness upon us, we shall stand boldly even in the great Day of Judgment—and with the name of Jesus upon us, He will welcome us and say to us, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

I wish with all my heart and soul that every one of you had received the remission of your sin! I bless God that there are many in this place who are humbly resting on the great atoning Sacrifice. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, do not question the remission of your sins, for, to question that is to question the Word of God itself! God Himself declares that every believer in Christ is justified and saved. But many of you who

have heard the Gospel, have not believed it. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." This is your greatest sin—that you have not believed on Jesus Christ, whom God has sent! Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would convince you of the sin of unbelief and enable you to repent of it and to lay hold on Jesus Christ by a act of childlike faith, that you might live through Him!

II. This brings me to the second point of my discourse, which divides itself into two parts—WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD—AND WITH SHEDDING OF BLOOD.

"Without shedding of blood," says the Apostle—*wherever that is the case, there is no remission*. It is not possible that any sin should ever be forgiven to any man without shedding of blood. This has been known from the very first. As soon as man had sinned, God taught him that he needed a sacrifice. Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, tried to clothe themselves with fig leaves, but that was not a sufficient covering. God must kill some animals, shedding their blood and, in their skins our first parents must be clothed. When Cain and Abel had grown up, the only sacrifice that God would accept was the slain lamb. To Cain and his sacrifice of the fruits of the earth, God had no respect. Job is, perhaps, the earliest of the Patriarchs, but he offered sacrifices for his children lest they should have offended God while they were feasting. He did not think nor did any of those ancient men who feared God think of finding acceptance with Him and remission of sin—without shedding of blood.

This belief has been almost universally held. There is scarcely to be found a tribe of men who have not believed in this. Wherever explorers go, they find that wherever there is any conception of God, there is a sacrifice in some form or other. Many people have thought it necessary to make very great sacrifices and some have even imagined that they could only expiate their guilt by offering up their own children, so deeply-seated is the thought in our humanity that there must be a sacrifice for sin! I scarcely know of any religion, except Socinianism, without a sacrifice. Humanity craves for it and cannot do without it. If anyone should proclaim a religion without a sacrifice, you would soon see how quickly this building would be emptied, or any other place of worship! There are always more spiders than people where the Atonement is left out. Men must have a sacrifice—in their inmost hearts they know their absolute need of it when they seek to approach the Lord.

The old Mosaic Law revealed this need of a sacrifice for sin. The most prominent thing about it—that which must have stuck everybody—was *the blood*. I do not know whether you have ever realized that the Tabernacle, which was praised for its beauty, must have looked like a veritable shambles and the gorgeous Temple, itself, must have needed abundant arrangements for its cleansing because of the continual sacrifices offered there—because so much of the service consisted in the shedding and sprinkling of blood. The most prominent idea that a worshipper would get would be that there was something for which an atonement was needed and that this involved the presentation of life

before God. And that is just the thought that God would have us still retain in our minds, for, "without shedding of blood is no remission."

Do not quarrel with this Truth of God, dear Friends, for you cannot alter it. It is not for me to stand here to justify the ways of God to men, or to propound any theories of atonement. I have no theory. I simply say what the Apostle says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." And there is no remission otherwise. You may stand and weep for sin till you become a very Niobe, or be transformed into a dripping well, or waste away in one continual shower of penitential lamentation, but no sin will ever be washed away so! To repent of sin is a part of your natural duty. And attention to one part of duty cannot atone for the neglect of another part.

"Oh, but!" you say, "in addition to this weeping and lamentation, I mean to amend." Well, suppose you do? If, from this time forth, you never sin again—if a wrong thought, or word, or act should never again stain your character, you will have done no more than it was your duty to do! And the fulfillment of your duty will be no atonement for the faults of the *past*—all your tears and all your efforts cannot put away the guilt of the past, for "without shedding of blood is no remission." And repentance and good works are not shedding of blood!

Suppose you add to these things what you call religiousness? Very well. Do so. Attend the House of Prayer, join in the petitions of the saints as far as you can, sing with them, but, all the while mind what you are doing, for you may be adding to your sin instead of decreasing it, by relying upon such things as those! I repeat the declaration that you have only done what you ought to have done and that cannot make amends for your previous misdeeds and neglects, so that there, too, you rest upon a broken reed.

Are you so foolish as to hope that sin can be put away by some sleight of hand that may be practiced by so-called "priests"? A plague upon them! They swarm on the face of this earth—these men who say that they are endued with some strange power by which they can remit human guilt by the muttering of certain words and by passing you through certain performances which are generally attended with the transference of some part of your substance to the pockets of the so-called "priests!" O Sirs, be not deceived by them! Open your eyes and see for yourselves what there can be in one of your fellow men just because there have been laid upon his head the hands of a man wearing lawn sleeves, that he should have the power to put away your sins! If this folly is to be believed, do not let us hear any more about "the enlightened 19th Century." It would be a disgrace to the people of *any* century to believe in such a transparent lie as that! Go to the living God for pardon, for He alone can give it! Make your confessions at His feet— only there they will be valid! And when you have confessed your sin to God, do not in any degree rely on sacramental efficacy, or on priestly power, but trust wholly to the shedding of blood! There is your hope! But without shedding of

blood, priest or no priest, sacrament or no sacrament, you will be lost as surely as you are a human being and a sinner!

My last point is to be *with the shedding of blood there is remission.* That is a much more delightful topic. If God had not provided the Sacrifice for sin, my text would have sounded the death-knell of all our hopes. "Without shedding of blood—no remission," would have been like the flaming sword of the cherubim keeping us back from the Tree of Life. "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering," was the sweet assurance of Abraham to Isaac. But to us there is a still sweeter assurance—God *has* provided *the* Lamb for a burnt offering! Listen to this, you who would have remission! God Himself came into this world. He who was offended by man's sin, condescended to become the Sacrifice to put away that sin! And coming here, He took upon Himself a human body, spotless and without taint of original sin. And here He lived as Man, perfect Man, yet just as truly very God of very God. When He had reached the appointed time, He offered Himself upon the altar as the one Sacrifice for human sin and, by the shedding of His blood, there is remission for sin! Think of this great Truth of God! Here was an innocent Sufferer, the value of whose life was worth more than an innumerable number of ours. It did more for the honor of God's Law for Christ to die than if we had *all* died, for all created beings will see how just God is when He will not let His own Son escape even when guilt is only imputed to Him.

Jesus Christ has died. The Son of God has offered Himself as a Sacrifice for sin! So now, whoever believes on Him shall have immediate remission of sin. It hardly matters how I tell you this great Truth so long as I make it clear to you. If I spoke it ungrammatically, if I uttered it so that you had to lean forward and strain your ears to catch the message, it would not matter as long as you were able to understand it. You are bound to lay hold of this Truth of God, for it is your life! If you do not grasp it, whose fault will it be? If I stood in the midst of a company of criminals condemned to die and told them that a free pardon could be obtained in a certain way, there would not be one of them who would criticize my voice or my manner because, if they really wanted pardon, they would all be taken up with the thought of getting it! It does not matter to me what criticism you may happen to make about me. I shall sleep just as well, I daresay, for all that—and live as long!

But I beseech you not to let any remarks or thoughts about me, or the place, or anything else drive any of you from this conviction—that you must either be saved or lost! That you must have your sins forgiven or else you will be ruined forever! That the only way of getting them forgiven is through the shedding of blood and that the only way of availing yourselves of the efficacy of the shedding of blood of Christ is by simple confidence in Him! Does anybody misunderstand that expression? Then I put it thus—give yourself up deliberately into the hands of Christ to save you from the consequences of your sin. As one who is falling, drops because he must, but drops cheerfully because another stands with outstretched arms to catch him, so drop into the Savior's arms! We are

all prone to sin, but if we give ourselves up to Christ, He will change our natures and make us love holiness. He will renew our hearts so that we shall seek after that which is good, pure, lovely and excellent in the sight of God. Salvation from the propensity to sin, as well as from the guilt of sin, will be given at once to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ!

"But I do not feel right," one says. Feeling right is not the all-important matter. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

"I will go home and pray," says another. That is not what I urge you to do first. First, believe, and *then* pray. To put prayer in the place of faith is to suggest to God that He should change the plan of salvation, which is, as I just reminded another Friend, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "What am I to do, then? Am I to believe that Jesus Christ died for me in particular?" I did not say that. You are to trust Jesus Christ whether you have any particular interest in Him or not. You will find out your particular interest in Christ in due time. Just now, look at Christ upon the Cross. That is a spectacle that is well worthy of your careful observation! There He hangs, He who made all worlds! With hands and feet fastened to the accursed tree, He hangs there to die the death of a slave—the death that the Romans would scarcely inflict upon slaves unless they had committed some extraordinary crimes. He whom the angels worship, hangs there to die, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Can you not trust your soul with Him? Will you not believe that God, for Christ's sake, can forgive you? Will you not now rush into His arms and confess your sins, yet look up and say, "I know that You can forgive, for Christ has died, and I do rest my soul on His atoning Sacrifice"?

I remember—though it was many years ago—when first I really understood that I was simply to look to Jesus Christ and that, doing so, I would be saved. I felt in my heart that I wished I had known it long before, for I had been for years seeking rest and finding none—I only needed to be told that there was nothing for me to do but simply look to Christ! Oh, how I did leap at that message! It was the best sermon I ever heard, yet it was, in itself, a very poor one. But it had in it that which was the means of saving my soul. I trusted Christ then with my soul and now I have nothing else to rest on. I have preached some thousands of times since that day and God has given me many souls, but I have not found any improvement as to the way of salvation. I trusted wholly in Christ, then, and well I might, for I had nothing else to trust to! And I trust in nothing but Jesus Christ, now, and well I may, for I *still* have nothing else to trust to!

If there is a poor sinner here who sees the lifeboat of faith come close up to him and he is afraid to step in, if it is any comfort to you, Sinner, let me tell you that if you step into that lifeboat and are lost, I must be lost, too, for I do not know of any other way of escape! If there is anyone who trusts in Jesus Christ and is damned, I must be damned with him—I am perfectly willing to go with him to prison and to death. If my Lord

Jesus Christ is not able to save a sinner just as he is, then He is not able to save me. And if the blood of Jesus Christ cannot wash out sin, then mine will never be washed out, for I have nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ to trust to, and I say to Him—

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

O Sinner, you can hang where I can hang and where all God's people are hanging! "Ah," you say, "you do not know what a great sinner I am." No, and you do not know what a great Savior He is! "Ah, but I have such a hard heart!" But His heart was broken and He can break yours! "Yes, but it will be an amazing thing if He ever saves me." Ah, there you are right, and so it is when He saves *anybody*—and He delights to work wonders of Grace! I wonder which will be the biggest wonder in Heaven—you or I—or someone else here or elsewhere? Well, we shall see when we get there, but mind that you get there! God bless you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 9:18-28; 10:1-25.

Hebrews 9:18-22. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.* Under the Law of God, some things were purified by fire or by water, but, "almost all things" were "purged with blood" and there was, and still is, no remission of sin "without shedding of blood."

23-26. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the Heavens should be purified with these, but the Heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the Holy Place made with hands which are the figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the Holy Place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* In every respect, our great High Priest was superior to the high priests under the Law, though, in some points, they resembled Him and were types of Him.

27, 28. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* His one offering so fully met all the claims of Divine Justice on behalf of all His people that there was no need of another offering for sin,

and no room for it, so His Second Coming will be "without a sin offering unto salvation," as the passage may be rendered.

Hebrews 10:1. *For the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.* This refers to the old Ceremonial Law, under which the Jews lived so long. They always had to go, year after year, offering the same kind of sacrifices because the work of atonement was never perfectly done—men were not cleansed or saved by it—so the process had to be continually repeated.

2. *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.* There would have been no need to bring another lamb to be offered if the one which was presented had put away sin! There would have been no need of another Day of Atonement if the sacrifice on the one day had really made atonement for sin.

3, 4. *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* Their blood was only a picture, an emblem, a type of far more precious blood—the shadow of the real Atonement which was afterwards to be offered.

5. *Therefore, when He comes into the world.* That is, the true Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, our Redeemer—"When He comes into the world"—

5. *He says.* According to Psalm 40:6-8—

5-9. *Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me), to do Your will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin You would not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the Law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first, that He may establish the second.* He takes away the type because the great Antitype has come! He abolishes the offering of bull, goats and lambs because HE has come whom they all foreshadowed!

10. *By which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all.* Or, "once." It can never be offered again. The pretence of offering up the body and the blood of Christ in the "mass" is sheer profanity! It has been done once and there is no need of a repetition. To suppose that it could be repeated is to imply that it was incomplete on the first occasion! But it was not, for by it we are already sanctified!

11, 12. *And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.* It was done, wholly done, and done forever! Nothing

was to be added to it and, therefore, Jesus "sat down" in the place of honor and power "at the right hand of God"—

13, 14. *From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.* Or, "set apart." He has fully saved all those for whom He died. His one Sacrifice was so effectual that, by it, He has forever put away the sin of the whole multitude of those that believe in Him.

15. *Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us.* And what more veritable Witness can we have? That to which the Holy Spirit bears testimony must never be questioned by us.

15-17. *For after He had said before, This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sin and iniquities will I remember no more.* What a wonderful Covenant that is—not that He will bless you if you keep the Law, but that you shall be *enabled* to keep it and that He will lead you to do so by putting His Law, not on tablets of stone where your eyes can see it, but on the fleshy tablets of your heart where your soul shall feel its force and power so that you shall be obedient to it! Meditate on those glorious words—"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

18. *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.* If the sins themselves have gone and God will remember them no more, no further sacrifice is required for them! What need have you of cleansing if you are so clean that God, Himself, sees no sin in you? O glorious purgation by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ! Rejoice in it and praise the Lord for it forever and ever!

19-25. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.* Notice the practical teaching of this great Truth of God! If you have been thus washed, do not defile yourselves again. If, by God's rich mercy, you have been delivered from the transgressions of the past, let gratitude move you to holy living and endeavor not only to grow in Grace, yourselves, but to help others in the same direction, so that the abounding mercy of God may have abundant praise from us. God grant it 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.

THE CHURCH—THE WORLD'S HOPE
NO. 2952

A SERMON
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"Lo, God has given you all them that sail with you."
Acts 27:24.

THE Apostle Paul had given some very good advice to the mariners of this ship. They had thought fit to reject it. What then? Now some of us are of such short temper that if our advice should be rejected, we would be in a huff and never offer any more—and we should feel some sort of pleasure in seeing those persons get into mischief who were so foolish as not to take our sage counsel! Not so the Apostle Paul. After he had prudently abstained for some time from saying anything—for there is a time to be silent—he at length gave proof of his unabated affection in them by the good advice which he offered. Let us take a lesson from him and let us forgive our brethren even to 70 times seven and, if, after having done our very best, we still find our advice rejected, let us persevere in our work of love.

One other remark. Note the comfort that was given to the Apostle. He had been long out at sea and, with the rest, had suffered much. The comfort given him was, "Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar." No very great comfort, you will say. It seems no more comfort than if the angel had said, "You can't be drowned, for you are to be devoured by a lion." Some such comfort Bishop Ridley took to himself when, being rowed up the river to the burning, a little storm coming on and the watermen being much afraid, he said, "Fear not, boatmen, the bishop that is doomed to be burned cannot be drowned." Yet there was real comfort in the words of the angel, for it was the Apostle's intense desire to preach Christ before Nero. He wished to proclaim the Gospel at Rome—he had had great trouble of heart for those who had not seen his face in the flesh and, therefore, whether Nero was a lion or not, he was but too glad to face him for Christ's sake!

And when a man has no self remaining, but has given himself up as a living sacrifice for Christ, that which would be a terror to another man becomes a comfort to him. "I am now ready to be offered," said the Apostle. And it was given to him even as a comfort that he must be offered up by some cruel death and not escape by the milder method of a passage to Heaven by sea—and he found comfort in the fact that those with him would be preserved. It had been the subject of his prayer, so

that he was cheered not only with the prospect of himself prophesying at Rome, but with the hope of seeing all his comrades safe on shore.

I have two or three things to talk of, so let me proceed with them at once.

I. The first practical observation founded upon my text is this—A GODLY MAN MAY OFTEN BE THROWN INTO AN ILL POSITION FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS.

Paul was put into a ship—into a ship among thieves and other criminals. He was put into a ship among sailors and soldiers, who were none of the best in those days, but he was put there *for their good*. This, then, I would lay down as a general theory—there are multitudes of Christians who are in places very uncomfortable and, perhaps, very unsuitable for them, but who are put there for the good of others.

If they were not so placed, they would not be like their Lord. Why was Christ on earth at all but for the good of sinners? Why does He sit there at a publican's table? Why eats He bread with a harlot? Why does He permit an unclean woman to come and wash His feet? As for Himself, 'tis pain to Him, pain to His holy Nature to come into contact with evil. But our Lord was the Great Physician and where should a physician be but among the sick? Now, as you and I are to be made like our Lord, we must not marvel if sometimes we are thrown, as He was, into company which we would not choose for its own sake, but into which Providence puts us that we may do good.

Moreover, *is not this the reason why the saints of God are on earth at all?* Why does He not send an express chariot to take them at once to Heaven? There is no necessity for saints being on earth that I know of, except for the good of their fellow men. Sanctification might be completed in a moment. As for all the rest, it is already done. God "has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Why do we stay here, then, at all, but that we may be salt in the midst of putrefaction—light in the midst of darkness—life in the midst of death? The Church is the world's hope! As Christ is the hope of the Church, so the Church is the hope of the world! The saints become, under Christ, the world's saviors. Then we must not marvel, being here for this very purpose, if Christ does throw us like a handful of salt, just where the putrefaction is the worst! Or if He should cast us, as He has often done with His saints before, where our influence is most needed.

And remember, dear Friends, that *there have been special cases in Scripture where the putting of a person into an unpleasant condition has been a great gift to his fellow men.* There is Joseph in the dungeon. Why is he there? Why, with his haggard look and shaggy beard, is he sitting down in the round dungeon tower of the chief of the jailers? He is put there that he may relieve his fellow prisoners in their distress. And yet, more fully, that he may provide food for his ungrateful brothers who had sold him for a slave! The salvation of Israel's offspring depended upon Joseph being put into prison. Look at a more majestic case. There, upon the ruins of a once glorious temple, sits a grand old man, weeping as

though he had been a masculine Niobe. Tears flow down both his cheeks, and these are the words he utters, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" It is old Jeremy. Why is he there? Why is he not in Babylon? Why is he not in some place where he could be comfortably cared for? Because Israel needs him. The women that flock around him like stricken deer need his comfort. And the sinners in Zion that hide their faces from his weeping eyes need him to pour out those burning syllables which make their consciences start, seared though they are!

If you should say that these are two instances which are above your head, let me ask you why was that little maid taken prisoner by the Syrians and carried away from her own country? It was not a pleasant thing for a child to be torn away from her family and become a slave, even in the house of the kind Naaman. Why was she there? Naaman the leper must be healed—the Syrian king must know that the Lord of Israel can work wonders—and, therefore, that little maid must be carried away and she must be where otherwise she would not wish to be placed!

I need not give any more proofs that such has been often the case. Instead of that, let me give instances. There is a young man here—he is hardly a man yet—whose father, in binding him an apprentice, made a mistake. Parents should be very careful whom they choose to be instructors of their sons. They should not wantonly put a youth who has been trained under pious influences, under subjection to an ungodly man, however business-like he may be. Well, evidently your parents made a mistake and now you are in a family where religion is lightly spoken of. You get out on the Sabbath. You don't get out at other times, but if you mention religion, you are either met with a sneer or, perhaps, with something worse! Well, young Believer, this is a hard trial for you. We do not generally send our lads to battle, but our Master knows how to sometimes do the greatest feats by the feeblest instrumentality! What if God should intend to bless your master's family through you? What if He has ordained to send you to that house that in the garb of an apprentice, you may be a missionary of the Cross? It may be so. Opportunities will occur to you—there will be fitting occasions for the use of them—and you will see God's wisdom even in your father's mistake!

Another of you happens to be one of a family, not by mistake, but in the common course of Providence. Electing love has fixed on you and left an ungodly parent behind—and brothers and sisters run the downward road. Do not be too sad over this. I do not know whether this may not be a cause for joy to you. God has this day lighted a lamp in your father's house which will never go out! Inasmuch as you are converted, salvation has come to your house. Oh, watch for your brother's soul! Pray for your sister's conversion! Take your parents in the arms of faith before God and who can tell but that it shall prove to be the best thing in your life, that you were thus placed in a family where Christ was not feared? Or you are a workman—I know a great many such instances—and you have

come up from the country for the sake of better work. It may be that in the country you worked in some little shop where there was a godly man with you and now you have come into one of our large shops in London and got work. There is a deal of swearing on both sides of you and if you are known to go to a House of Prayer, the other men mark you out and call you some odd name or other. I know you say, "I wish I could get into another place. I will quit this work and go somewhere else." Don't do it! It is very likely that God has sent you there just as He sent Paul into that ship! Instead of leaving, gird up your loins like a man and cry to God to give you all them that sail with you, that they may yet be saved! Your advent into that workshop may be as if an angel had come straight from Heaven and gone down to the vilest place to make it ring with the songs of joy!

Possibly, dear Friends, to multiply instances, some of you may happen to live in a very low locality. In such a crowded place as London and especially now that the railways make the houses of artisans so scarce, you may have to live where you do not like to live. On both sides of you, you know, the houses are not what you would wish them to be. And down in the court on Sunday what a scene there is! You went home this morning and you saw people in their shirt-sleeves lolling about and waiting at the corner till the bars opened that they might go in and drink. And you will go home tonight and see what you do not like to see. Now, I do not know that you should be in a hurry to get out of that place. It is just possible that you are put there for some end or design! Who can tell the benefit your good example may be? And if you are bold enough to speak a word for Christ, there may be a neighbor in that court, or in that alley who, though he never did go up to the House of God before, will go with you. It may have been written in the book of God's Predestination that you must pass through that Samaria, so that you might find that fallen woman and that she might be brought to Christ—who knows?

And there are some of you going to emigrate. Some dear friends who have been among us for years find it best to cross the seas. I would not weep, my Brothers and Sisters—I would not sorrow at your departure, for who knows, unpleasant though it is to tear oneself from one's connections and to leave one's native land, you may go forth to carry Seed that shall be wafted over a continent and bring forth fruit in years to come! Let a Christian be where he may, however unpleasant to himself, he cannot be out of place if Providence puts him there. Yes, and if what some of you dread so much should come to pass—if, in your old age, the workhouse should be the only place that is to receive you—ah, it is not pleasant to look forward to that! But I can conceive of a Christian pauper doing more good for God in the house of poverty than many a peer has been able to do in Parliament! I can imagine you shedding a light and luster along the walls which shall rebuke the harshness of those that are masters, and kindle light, and love, and hope in some bosoms that had grown strangers to all those Heavenly things! Good Master, if You shall cast us into a ship, we will ask You to give us all that

sail with us! And if you put us anywhere, by Your Grace we will look about us to see what we can do there to honor You!

I must not leave this point, even though time flies, until I have made one or two more remarks rapidly.

Do not get into these places of your own choice. "Put your finger in the fire," said one to a martyr, "and see whether you can burn." "No," he said, "I don't see the use of that. If I put my own finger into the fire, I have no promise from God about it. But if He calls me to burn for His sake, I have no doubt He will give me strength to do it." You have no business to pick bad places to live in—you have no right to expose yourself to danger. That is a foolish thing. *But if God shall do it*—take this for my next remark—*do not be in a hurry to undo it.* You may leap out of the frying pan into the fire. You may go from bad to worse. It is just possible that if the present place has one set of temptations, the next may have another set. For my part, I do not like changing temptations. I know my old temptations—not as well as I would like to know them, but still, if the devil could change the whole set of my temptations, I do not know what would become of me! I think it is better keep the old ones. You have been tried in one point—you have got used to it and are growing stronger in that point.

You have no need to run after a fresh ordeal, but if God has placed you there, be like Paul—*be very prudent.* Do not talk very much. There is wisdom in holding your tongue. Paul gave his advice, but he abstained a long time before he gave it again. He timed himself and there is nothing like watching opportunities. You young persons, especially, if you live in families and want to do them good, take care that you are willing to do good in temporal things. Lend a hand when they need your help. Paul and Luke helped to throw the tackling into the sea—so the chapter tells us—yes, and the sailors liked them all the better for it. They said, "There is Luke, a passenger, and here is Paul, a prisoner—they are, neither of them, bound to work, but they have buckled to and helped us! We will listen to them, for they are very handy fellows." Young man, try and make the best use of yourself. If you are placed in a family that is irreligious, make them value you—show them that you will do anything you can to serve them. They will not believe in the reality of your spiritual affection unless you show a temporal affection, too. And when the time comes, do not hesitate to speak, but let your speaking be mainly by your actions!

The best sermon Paul preached was when he took bread and gave thanks. He did not do that for show. It was just in the daily course of his habitual godliness that the man of God came forth boldly before their eyes. Do not conceal your godliness from those around you! Though at first they may laugh at you and despise you, who can tell but that, like Paul, you may gain influence till they will do anything you tell them? And like Paul, by means of that influence, you may save all that are in the house and so the text may come true of you, "God has given you all them that sail with you."

II. A second lesson suggested to us is this. WHEREVER WE ARE CAST, WE SHOULD ANXIOUSLY ASK OF GOD ALL THE SOULS THAT SAIL WITH US.

God says He gave to Paul all that sailed with him and, therefore, I conclude that Paul had asked Him to do so. How many were they? Some 270 and yet He gave them all to Paul! Father, some seven or eight make up your family, or, if it is of larger dimensions, at least you have not, in all your kinsfolk, I should think, so many as the two hundred and seventy! Do not, in your prayers, therefore, leave out one child, or one connection, or one friend. Pray to God for them all!

They will be of all sorts. Let me describe those that sailed with Paul. There was one good one—that was Luke. Well, Luke was saved. You have one pious son, or one converted daughter. Continue in your prayer till you see that child safely landed with you in Heaven. Perhaps you have one courteous passenger with you in the ship, like Julius, the centurion, of whom we read in the third verse of the chapter, that he courteously entreated Paul. Be very earnest in prayer for those who are willing to hear the Word! O how good it is if we have in our families brothers and sisters, or servants, or masters, who treat the Word of God with deference and respect! Let not these be omitted from your supplications—anxiously pray for them.

Perhaps you have among your connections some knowing ones. Paul had. There was the master of the ship—he knew better than Paul, or, at least, he preferred his own conceit to Paul's counsel. Do not give up the self-conceited, the suspicious, the quibbling, the skeptical—pray for them till you have all in the ship! Possibly, no, *certainly*, you have some worldly friends. You have a son, perhaps, who is exceedingly careful about this world, but careless about the next—do not give him up. There was the owner of the ship on board. All he cared about was getting his corn to Rome in time to catch the next market. He did not care what became of the sailors, or what became of Paul. So, pray for your worldly relatives—do not leave any of them out.

And then it may be that you have on board, or in connection with you, some who are very careless and some who even add to this carelessness, cruelty and a lack of gratitude—such were the soldiers. They counseled to kill the prisoners, including Paul—Paul who had preserved them, but, nevertheless, Paul prayed for the soldiers. Do not, I pray you, leave out the most unkind, the most flinty-hearted of your friends and neighbors! Or it may be that you have a cunning and selfish friend. Do not forget him. Such were the sailors. Under pretense of casting anchors out of the ship, they were attempting to get into a boat and escape—and leave the ship and its hundreds of passengers to perish in the storm! Paul prayed for the sailors. Do the same. There were many on board who could not swim, but he prayed that those who could not swim might be saved. And there were some who could swim, and he prayed for them quite as much as for those who could not. So you have some that are converted and

some that are not—you have some that are moral and some that are not—yet plead with the Lord for all them that sail with you!

I want you to notice, especially you who are parents—something that the Apostle did *not* pray for. I do not read that he ever prayed, "Lord, save the ship." Now, the ship is like your family name, like your family dignity. Do not pray about that, but cry, "Lord, give me my children's souls and let my name be blotted out, if You will, as long as their souls are saved." And I do not find that the Apostle ever prayed about the cargo. He let them fling the wheat out and never troubled about that. So, you need not pray about your wealth. Put that into God's hands and say, "Lord, do as You will with my sons and daughters, only save their souls. I don't ask fortunes for them, I ask Grace. I would, if it were Your will, that they might always have food and never need bread, but still, Lord, I would rather see their souls saved and see them in poverty than see them rich and their souls lost."

Moreover, I do not find that Paul made any conditions in his prayer. He did not tell the Lord *when* he wanted these people saved. And so you are not to expect that God will save your children just when you please. You may never live to see it—it may be when you are dead and gone—but still plead earnestly that God will give you all of them. And Paul did not make a stipulation as to *how* it should be done. I remember my mother saying to me, "I prayed that you might be a Christian, but I never prayed that you might be a Baptist." But, nevertheless, I became a Baptist, for, as I reminded her, the Lord was able to do for her exceedingly above what she asked or thought—and He did it! She expected, of course, that I should be an Independent. Well, as long as your children are saved, you need not put any conditions as to the mode. Sooner see your son and daughter go to the Established Church, saved, than see them go to your own place of worship and be lost. We like to see them go with us to our place of worship. I think it is right that they should. And it is a great joy to a Christian's heart to see all his children walking with him to the same sanctuary. But that is a mere trifle compared with the solemn matter of seeing them saved!

And, once more, though Paul did get them all saved, yet he did not ask God to save them without means. Nor did it please God to do so, either, for though the means were contemptible, yet, they were means—"Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they all escaped safely to land." We must try to put the "boards and broken pieces of the ship" in the way of those we wish to see saved. We must try to give them a plank to float on to share on in our earnest instructions and our indefatigable exertions to bring them to know the Lord.

Now, dear Friends, having pointed the arrow, I will try to shoot it. Surely you who love the Lord will take up this matter from this time forth and ask the Lord to give you all them that sail with you!

III. As we should ask for all, so WE SHOULD LABOR FOR THE CONVERSION OF ALL THAT SAIL WITH US.

There were two Athenians who were to be employed by the republic in some great work. The first one had great gifts of speech. He stood up before the Athenian populace and addressed them, describing the style in which the work should be done and depicting his own qualifications and the congratulations with which they would receive him when they saw how beautifully he had finished all their designs. The next workman had no power of speech, so, standing up before the Athenian assembly, he said, "I cannot speak, but all that So-and-So has said, I will do." They chose him—wisely chose him—believing he would be a man of deeds, while the other would probably be a man of words. Now, if you are men of deeds, you will be the best men! He that only prays for a thing, but does not work for it, is like the workman that could talk well. He that works as well as prays is the best workman to be employed in the Master's service!

It may be that you will say, "But what am I to do? How can I be the means of saving all them that sail with me?" Well, the first thing you can do is to *begin early with good advice*. Paul gave his advice before the storm came. As soon as ever your children can understand anything, let them know about Christ! Begin early. A certain minister called, some time ago, to see a mother, having heard that a child about 12 years old was dead. The mother was in very deep distress and the pastor was not at all surprised at that. He talked to her about the Lord's giving and the Lord's taking away, when she suddenly stopped him and said, 'Yes, Sir, I know the consolations which may be offered to a mother who has lost her child, and I appreciate them all. But I have a sting in my conscience that you cannot remove. There is a venom in my grief that you cannot cure." He asked her what that was, and she said, "I have had it on my conscience to speak to my boy solemnly and privately about his soul for this last year past, but my deceitful heart has always said, 'Do it tomorrow.' And I thought"—(here she burst into tears and the pastor had to wait awhile till she could resume her story), "I thought that as his mind was opening and he was 12 years of age, I would now do it. Yesterday morning I meant to do it—the very morning he took ill I thought I would do it! And when I heard him say that he had a headache, I was glad of it, thinking that while I was soothing him, he would be more ready to hear a mother's words. But, oh, Sir, before I had an opportunity of speaking to him, he was much worse and I had to take him to bed. And when he was in bed, he fell asleep. I sent for the physician, but my child had soon fallen into unconsciousness and he was shortly after removed from me—he has gone before God and I never solemnly and privately talked to him about his soul. That is a grief you cannot remove." O mothers and fathers, never have that sting! Your children may die—begin with them now—that they may not die before you have had an opportunity of telling them the way of salvation!

But after having given this early advice, *you must not think the work is done*. Your boy may forget it. He may turn out a wild youth and run away from you, but continue in prayer. And let me say to you, continue in

family prayer. I think if we were to look into those cases where the sons and daughters of Christian people turn out badly, it would be found to be usually the parents own fault. I think you would find that they neglected to pray with their children. O dear Friends, there can be no ordinance more likely to be blest than that Heavenly institution of family prayer, when you can go there together and, in the presence of the child, pray for his soul and mother and father can unite their hearts in the desire that their offspring may live before God! Paul continued to pray. Follow Paul's example and you may hope to see God give you all them that sail with you.

And then remember, dear Friends, *if you would have your children saved, there is something you must not do*. If Paul had prayed for these people and then had gone down below into the hold with an auger and had begun boring holes in the ship, you would have said, "Oh, it is no use that scoundrel praying, for look, he is scuttling the ship! He is praying to God to save them and then going straight down and doing the mischief." You parents who are inconsistent—you mothers who do not keep your promises—you fathers who talk as you ought not to talk—you careless, prayerless parents, I do not ask you to pray for your children! Pray for yourselves, first. It would be an awful mockery for you to talk about wishing your children to go to Heaven. You are dragging them to Hell! You may think that your son will not swear. Why should he not swear if his father does? Do you think the young cubs will not roar if the old lion sets the example? Of course they will! You will see your children multiplied images of your own iniquity! Let our conduct be consistent. Let our everyday life be pure and holy and so shall we hope to see our children and our connections saved.

And I do think, dear Friends, as the Apostle Paul was very anxious to point out to them the way in which they might be saved, telling them that the sailors must stay in the ship and they must do this and that, so *we should be very careful to explain to our children, neighbors and connections, the way of salvation.* And I think we ought to do this, as much as possible, in private ways. I will tell you an anecdote—A good bishop of the Methodist Church, Bishop Arsbury, in travelling on horseback through South Carolina about a 100 years ago, saw a Negro sitting quite close to the edge of a forest, fishing with a line. This Negro was an old man called, Punch, well known for his dissolute conduct and filthy speech. The bishop, as soon as he saw him, proceeded deliberately to dismount, tied his horse to a tree and went and sat down by the bank, letting his feet hang over the edge, like Punch's. Finding that the Negro was willing to talk, and pleased with his affability, he began to talk to him about his soul's concern. He told him about the ruin of the Fall, about the result of sin, about the Redeemer, about faith and about the sweet invitations of Christ to the sinner to come to him and live.

Punch had never heard anything like it. And when the bishop had done, he said, "Now I will sing you a song." Punch was mighty fond of songs and the bishop sang to him that hymn beginning—

"Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,
We wretched sinners lay,
Without one cheerful beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.
With pitying eyes, the Prince of Grace
Beheld our helpless grief,
He saw—and, oh, amazing love!—
He ran to our relief.
Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead.
He spoiled the powers of darkness thus,
And broke our iron chains—
Jesus has freed our captive souls
From everlasting pains."

When he had sung through the hymn, he mounted his horse and resumed his journey as a bishop should do when he has done his work. The Negro went home and masticated and digested what he had heard—and if you had been on the plantation, some months later, you would have seen the old hut where the Negro lived crowded with the poor neglected sons of Africa—and who was preaching? Why, the Negro who was fishing by the rivers' bank had now become a fisher of souls! Months went on—the holy flame had begun to spread, the overseer was alarmed and went down to Punch's cabin to put a stop to it. Punch was preaching. He stopped outside to listen to what was said—conviction pierced his heart. He went in, fell on his knees and joined in prayer—and throughout that province the Gospel mightily spread and prevailed!

Oh, what you might do, dear Friends, if you would talk like this! You men and women do not need to be preachers in order to do good! I don't know—but I can guess why the devil ever invented pulpit gowns and bibs and all that sort of distinction between clergymen and laymen. I am no clergyman—there is no such distinction in the New Testament. We are all Christians if we are converted—and there is no other distinction. We are either Brothers and Sisters in Christ, or else, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." It is sometimes asked, "Ought laymen to preach? "Nonsense! Any man may preach if he has the ability. I do not believe, in my soul, that there is authority for saying, "*These* men are to preach and these people are to talk of Christ—and all the rest of you are to hold your tongues and listen." No, no, no! Let every man of you preach! Let every woman among you, in her own sphere, talk and tell of what the Lord has done for her soul. I do believe it is the invention of Satan to lift up some few men above the rest and say, "Only some of you are to fight the Lord's battles." "Up guards and at them!"—not your colonels only, but every man in the ranks—not here and there, a lieutenant, but EVERY man! "England expects every man"—not merely the captains, but every man—"to do his duty." And Christ expects every man—not here and there one that is paid for doing it—the minister—but

every man to tell what God has done for his soul. Do this and who can tell what good may come of it?

Still—and here I shall conclude—*never be satisfied without clinching the whole work with prayer*. Paul, You see, did not get those that were in the ship by his works—God gave them to Him. Everything is of Grace. Paul may pray and Paul may preach, but Paul does not purchase! That is Christ's work. God gives—gives freely—and if you see friends and connections saved, it must be the gift of God's Grace to you. Just as much as your own salvation was God's gift to you, so the salvation of friends and dependents must be a gift from God to you. What then? Be much in prayer for them! I wish some of you mothers would meet together, sometimes, and pray for your children. I think it would be a noble thing for a dozen of you, perhaps, to come together only for prayer if any of you have unconverted children. And you fathers, sometimes, when you meet, if you have children who have not yielded to Divine Grace, could not you say, "Come, friend So-and-So, you and I have the same burden, let us bear it together at the Throne of Grace"? Just at the back of that hoarding there, while this place was being built, there was a prayer breathed one night by two souls, that God would bless this place. There were only two and nobody knew that that supplication went up to Heaven and I, for one, have felt strengthened by their prayer ever since. It was but a "chance" meeting, as we say. It was night and they both looked in at the same time and met each other. "Ah, friend So-and-So," said one, "let us go up yonder, in a quiet nook, and pray, 'God bless the Tabernacle.'" And God has blessed it and will bless it still! Now, you may all of you do something like that.

I was walking down the Old Kent Road one day and I was met by an excellent clergyman, not now in this neighborhood. He said to me, "Our places are close to one another, but we do not often meet. Come in and pray." We entered his house, walked across the hall into the library and there the two ministers knelt down. One prayed and then the other prayed. We then rose, shook hands and parted. It took us but ten minutes, but it was worth I know not how much to us both! We went to our work refreshed, for we had been with God! When we meet for this purpose, God will be with us, and He will give us all that are in the ship if we will but ask Him—for it is by prayer, prayer, prayer that we shall prevail! Let us wrestle and agonize until He gives us our desire.

There may be some of you who are praying for yourselves, but have not got the answer yet. There was a mother who went to hear George Whitefield preach—that mighty man of God. After the sermon was over, the mother was convicted of sin. In deep anguish of spirit, she went home. Her husband was dead and she had only a little girl and, having no one else to talk to, she told the child about her convictions. The little girl—you will think it strange, perhaps—under the recital was made to feel the same. Mother and child wept together under the same sense of sin. Upstairs they went and prayed. They neither of them found peace for some months, but, it pleased God, at last, to give mother and child, who

had prayed together, peace at the same time. While the mother was rejoicing, the child, just like a babe in Grace, said, "Mother, oh, what a joyful thing it is to be pardoned! What a blessed thing it is to be saved! I would like to run and tell our neighbors." "No," said the mother, "that would not be wise, child, they don't care about these things. They would not understand—they would laugh at you—and we must not cast pearls before swine. We will do it by-and-by." "But, Mother," said the child, "I can't leave it. I do feel so happy, Mother, I must tell somebody, so I will just run across the street to the shoemaker and tell him." The shoemaker was at work with his lap stone and the little one began by saying, "Do you know that you are a sinner? I am a sinner, but I am a pardoned sinner. I have been seeking Christ and I have found Him." She then set forth the tale, with tears in her eyes, till the shoemaker laid down his hammer to listen and stopped his work awhile. He became converted and the story was told abroad—and through the conversion of that man the work spread, a meeting was established and the means of Grace were soon set up—and there arose a flourishing church in that town, where not a believer in Christ had been known to live before!

Ah, you young converts, you may tell the tale! And even you who are under conviction of sin may tell it to your children. Do not hesitate to let the Light of God shine! I pray you—any of you, but I do bid you, by the blood and by the wounds of Him who was crucified for our sins—by Him that lived and cried for us, never cease praying till God gives you all them that sail with you! O my dear Friends, pray for the congregations that come to the Tabernacle! Make this to be the burden of your never-ceasing cry, "Give us all them that sail with us!" The Lord hear our players and add His blessing on our labors, 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.

SPIRITUAL SIGHT AND ETERNAL LIFE
NO. 2953

A SERMON
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"Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more, but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also."
John 14:19.

IT is very noticeable in this verse and in many other parts of the New Testament, what a sharp line of demarcation the Lord draws between His people and the world—"*The world* sees Me no more, but *you* see Me." We have the same Truth of God taught in John's first Epistle. "We know that *we* are of God, and the *whole world* lies in the Wicked One." It is quite evident that our Lord kept prominent in His teaching the distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate—the converted and the unconverted—those who have been quickened by the Holy Spirit and those who have remained dead in trespasses and sins. This distinction which our Lord kept up so strikingly, should always be made clear in every ministry. I feel that much evil comes of a mode of address which is adopted by some of my ministerial brothers in which they speak to the entire congregation as though all who were present were Christians. That is a false theory to go upon because it is not at all likely that any congregation ever gathered together will consist wholly of Christians. The mere coming together for public worship, nowadays, does not at all prove people to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they met in the Catacombs or in the caves of the earth and every worshipper had to carry his life in his hands, there might have been some excuse for addressing the whole assembly as Christians. In these days we know right well that there are unconverted persons in the audience and it is proper, therefore, to have one message to the saints and another message to the sinners—and to let it be seen, all through the sermon, that the preacher is aware that the Lord has made a distinction between Israel and Egypt—between them that fear Him and them that fear Him not.

The same rule ought, I think, to be observed in prayer. It is a radical mistake to have forms of prayer which take it for granted that the whole congregation is saved. In this way, many persons are comforted who ought to be awakened to a sense of their true spiritual condition. At the grave, especially, things are said of men who have lived and died in sin, which are calculated to make unsaved survivors think lightly of their own lost state. There should be one prayer for the saint and another prayer for the sinner—and all through the supplication, as well as the preaching, there should be such a distinction as Christ drew, in this

verse, between His disciples and "the world"—between those who continue to see Jesus and those who will never behold His face with joy—either in this world or in that which is to come.

If you look carefully at our text you will notice in it, first, a fact which should solemnize the mind of every unconverted person here, namely, that *the religious privileges enjoyed by the world will, sooner or later, be taken away*—"Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more." Secondly, the text very clearly tells us that *the Holy Spirit has given to Believers a sight of Christ*—"but you see Me." And, thirdly, *this sight is accompanied by a life which is linked with the life of Christ*—"because I live, you shall live also."

I. So the first lesson to be learned from our text is that THE PRESENT PRIVILEGES ENJOYED BY THE WORLD WILL BE TAKEN AWAY—"Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more."

For a comparatively long time Jesus was seen here among the sons of men. I call His life a long time, for every moment of it must have been painful to Him, since, for His pure spirit to have dwelt in the midst of impurity such as pervades this world must always have been painful. Yet He tarried here and worked innumerable miracles of blessing. Sometimes He fed the thousands who crowded around Him. He was constantly healing the sick and doing everything that He could for man's good—the summary of His life was that "He went about doing good." He is gone, now, and the world sees Him no more. How shamefully the men of the world treated Him! It would not be right for Him to come back to another persecution and a second Crucifixion. They said, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill Him and let us seize on His inheritance." They did kill Him, but He will never come here to be killed again! When He comes the next time, it will be in a very different fashion and for a very different purpose. The world will never again see Him as it saw Him then—

"A lowly Man before His foes,
A humble Man, and full of woes."

No, Earth, you have lost your Miracle-Worker. You sick ones, you have lost your Great Physician. You hungry ones, you have lost Him whose blessed hands fed you! Never again will the weeping Mary and Martha see their brother raised to life. Never again will sorrowing widows have their dead sons restored to them from the grave's mouth. No, Jesus has gone and all the blessings which He was known to bestow have ceased to be given, for the world sees Him no more. It will see Him again, certainly, but in a very different fashion—it will not see Him as Savior, a Friend and Physician—it will only see Him with the rod of iron in His hand, passing sentence upon those who said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us"!

Now, what has taken place as to the physical sight of Christ by the sons of men will take place with all of you as to your mental sight of Christ unless you receive from the Gospel an inner and spiritual sight of Him. *All of you have, in a certain sense, seen Jesus Christ.* I mean that when the Sabbath bells ring out, you are accustomed to go where you hear concerning Christ and His great salvation. There you sit and Jesus Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you—and blessed are your

eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear what Prophets and kings in vain desired to see and hear concerning Christ in days of yore. You go to your houses and there is that precious Book, the Bible, which contains the image of your Savior's face almost on every page. Your family altar brings Jesus very near even to some of you unconverted ones! The Kingdom of God has, indeed, come near to you. Nowadays Jesus Christ is preached in almost every street. A man need not go far, especially on the Sabbath, if he wants to hear about Jesus Christ. So far as the hearing with the ears is concerned, He may be heard of almost everywhere! But it will not always be so. Some of you will soon go where the Sabbath bell is never heard. You will go where Sabbaths, themselves, are all unknown, except as dreadful memories of shamefully neglected privileges. You will go where no minister will tell you of Grace, and mercy, and pardon bought with blood. You will go where you will never hear the music of—

"Those charming bells, Free Grace and dying love."

The very opposite sound to that will forever grate upon your ears! There will be no godly teacher there to urge you to seek the Lord in your youth and to give Him your heart while you are yet young. There will be no loving parents there, with tears, sighs and pious examples striving to lead you to Jesus. There will be no faithful preacher there, earnestly endeavoring, in simple language, to tell you the old, old story and to point you to Christ upon the Cross! Only a little while and there shall be no Bible for you to read, no Mercy Seat to which you can go, no promise which you can plead, no blood of Jesus in which you can ask to be washed—for you will be beyond the line of hope and beyond the reach of mercy. You will be in Hell.

I am sure that if I had to come to you and say that I had received a Revelation from Heaven telling me that never again would some of you be permitted to attend a place of worship, never again to read your Bible, never again to kneel in prayer—but that you were forever to be denied all these eternal privileges—you would feel unhappy, indeed. I wish you felt something of that kind of unhappiness now, because to have these privileges and yet to neglect them is as bad as—in some respects, it is even worse than—it would be to have the privileges taken away! Godly Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, was preaching on one occasion about the Scriptures and their value, and endeavoring to impress upon the people the duty of prizing the Word and being obedient to it. And, to bring the Truth of God home very clearly to their consciences, he asked them to imagine that he was commissioned to take away the Bible from them. He took it up from the pulpit and turned round with it in his hand. "There," he said, "you are never to have it again. It has been a dreary Book to many of you—you have not cared for it and you have neglected the reading of it, so I must take it away and you shall never hear another sermon from it, or hear anything more read from it." Then he pictured them all weeping and begging that the Book might be brought back to them again. And I would that, even though the Lord should not take these privileges away from you while you are in this life, you might

nevertheless prize them, for this life will soon be ended—and then these privileges will be gone forever!

Notice also that our Savior said, "Yet *a little while*, and the world sees Me no more." Oh, it is *such* a little while even if we live the longest life that is possible to men! But human lives are often cut short, suddenly and unexpectedly. Useful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ are taken away in the very midst of their usefulness and the Home-call to them is a message to us, saying, "Be you, also, ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes." Some of you young people are reckoning that it will be a long while before you need come to a decision, but, I pray you, think how short your lifetime may be! Certainly, if you do ever reach that period in which the voice of mercy shall cease to have a syllable to address you, you will then realize what a little time it has been. Why, even if a man could live as long as Methuselah, yet, if he once found himself shut up in Hell, a life of a thousand years would seem to be but as a pin's point compared with the endless eternity—and he would grieve and lament bitterly that he had wasted in sin those winged hours upon which his destiny throughout eternity had hung! A little while, Sinner, and you will never have another invitation to come to Christ! A little while and there will be no outstretched arms of Him who died upon the Cross, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." A little while—and *such* a little while—and you will see Jesus no more as a Savior, but you will see Him as your Judge and hear Him say, not, "Come, you blessed," but, "Depart, you cursed." Those who have outward privileges and yet neglect them, shall have them taken from them—and then how will they dare to appear before God?

II. Let us now turn to the second point, which is far more sweet to our souls. Let us think upon HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN SIGHT TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD—"The world sees Me no more, but you see Me."

In the deepest meaning of the word, *no one ever truly sees Christ until the Holy Spirit opens his eyes*. There are some persons who have very strange notions of what it means to see Christ. I occasionally have to talk with poor, ignorant people—who do not, however, think themselves ignorant—who tell me that they have seen Christ. But I soon discover that they mean that they fancy they have seen Him with their natural eyes! I tell them that it is impossible and then they tell me of some dream in which they think they saw Him. Now, my dear Friend, even supposing you had a vision and that you did see Christ in it—do not place any reliance upon that. There is many a man who has had a vision of the devil, yet has gone to Heaven—and there is many a man who has had a vision of Christ yet has gone to Hell! There is nothing in that. Did not great multitudes who lived in the days of Christ upon the earth, see Him with their natural eyes? Yet they were not saved! Many even stood around the Cross and saw Him die in that dread culmination of His life-work, when He was paying the price of His people's redemption. They stood and gazed at Him, but their hearts were not softened even by that matchless sight, for they jeered and jested while He was in His death-throes! That which can be seen with these eyes is of little consequence!

The true sight of Christ—that sight which alone can save—is a *spiritual* sight, the sight of the inward soul!

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "You see Me." Let us notice the ways in which Believers see Him in a *spiritual* sense. We see Him, first, with that earliest glance which continues throughout our whole lives—*the life-look at the Lord Jesus Christ.* You remember when you first saw Him thus. Could any other word describe your experience? You did not see anything with your natural eyes, but you perceived, in your soul, that Jesus Christ stood as the one Substitute for sinners and that, trusting in Him, your sin would be forever removed from you. And you trusted in Him. You looked unto Him and were lightened, and your face was not ashamed. Possibly before that you had been a diligent student of the Scriptures and you may have been a tolerably intelligent theologian. But you knew more of Christ in a single moment, when you had looked to Him with that saving glance, than you had ever learned from any book, or heard from any ministry! Then you could say, "I have heard of You with the hearing of the ears, but now my eyes see You." Then you knew what was meant by pardon through His precious blood and justification by His righteousness, for you had looked for yourself and had seen that Christ is able to save, for He had saved you! From that moment you began to see Christ with the opened eyes of your spiritual understanding. Just as Christ's disciples were made to know that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him, so you began to know that Jesus of Nazareth was in you and that you were in Him! You began to understand the eternal relationship between Christ and the Father, and between the Father and yourself. You began to perceive the offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. You began to study Him—the different points of His Character, the different stages of His life, the different gleams of Glory that shone even amid the darkness of His death—and so you saw Him.

O dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *since that happy day we have had many precious sights of Christ* and we have been constantly led to see more and more of Him! The Holy Spirit has lit up Christ to us by degrees, just as I have sometimes seen the lighting up of an illumination in which some one word was to be spelt out in letters of light. They have brought it out, letter by letter, with bright lamps and, at last, you could see the whole word. I am afraid that we have not yet learned to spell the whole of Jesus Christ's name, but what we do know, we would not give up for twice ten thousand worlds! We do not yet see Him so clearly as we shall see Him, by-and-by, but still, our spiritual understanding does perceive far more of Him than it once did and we expect, in due time, to "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge."

If you follow the run of the chapter from which our text is taken, you will be helped further to perceive how it is that we see Christ. According to the 12th verse, *we see Christ by participating in His power.* "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he also do; and greater works

than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." A preacher who has never seen Christ in the way I have been describing, delivers sermons which are without spiritual power. But if anyone—even the feeblest among us—will teach others the Truths of God which he has received from the Holy Spirit, feeling that all power in Heaven and earth is given to Christ and that, therefore, He has sent His servants to preach His Gospel to all nations—such a man, I say, will have the Presence of Christ and shall realize it by the power which will rest upon him and by the results which will follow his testimony! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, Christ is still with His people! The power of Christ is not only up there in Heaven, but it is given to Him on earth as well, and He clothes with His Spirit those who preach His Gospel simply and humbly! And that Spirit breaks men's hearts and binds them up again—slays men *spiritually* and makes them alive again—and does great marvels so that the power of Jesus Christ is truly seen in the midst of the assembly! Out of His mouth proceeds that two-edged sword with which the battles of Divine Grace are fought and won. I wonder how many of you who are here have ever seen Christ in this sense—that His power has rested upon you in all forms of Christian service that are done as unto the Lord?

If you have seen Christ thus, you have also seen Him in the sense described in the 13th and 14th verses, *pleading through you and with you in prayer*—"Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Have you ever prayed in that way, as though Christ had said to you, "Go to My Father and tell Him I sent you. Use My name with Him, for My name has authority in the courts of Heaven"? It is, indeed, blessed, when you are pleading with God, to feel that Christ is pleading through you—to see Him, as it were, as the great High Priest of our profession, standing before God with outstretched hands, pleading the merit of His blood that we may prevail! It is powerful pleading when you have Christ praying by your side and know that you have Him there—and when you feel that your prayer is not the petition of a suppliant who is pleading alone, but the utterance of one who is covered up and lost sight of in the Person of the greater Pleader—the Lord Jesus Christ. This is, indeed, seeing Christ. "You see Me," said Christ to His disciples, and we do see Him when we realize His power with us in the hour of prayer!

We see Christ, again, *when we are obedient to His commands*, for the 15th verse tells us that He said to His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." A real Christian does what Christ bids him do, whether he is observed of men or not, because he realizes that he is in the Presence of Christ. The very best check upon sinful passions and the most Divine incentive to spiritual earnestness is the Presence of Christ. O Brothers and Sisters, I cannot tell you what a delight it is to feel sure that Christ is near you and observing you—to feel as if His hands were upon your shoulder and His shadow resting upon you, like that of a father leaning over his child and guiding the child's hand as he writes his copy—while you are trying to serve Him and yielding yourself up completely to Him, saying, "Tell me, my Lord, what You have for me to do

and, by Your Grace, I will do it, for I live in Your sight and to please You is the one desire of my soul."

Sinners never see Christ in this way. In fact, they do not care anything about Him. The children of God constantly see Jesus Christ before them so that if they are tempted to sin, they cry, "How can we do this great wickedness and sin against God?" If they are tempted to slumber when they ought to be actively engaged in His service, they can hear Christ knocking at their door and saying to them, "Open to Me." And they rise from their beds and open the door to Him and go forth with Him to do His will! You can, each one of you judge, Beloved, whether in this sense Christ can say to you, "You see Me."

Christ is also to be seen by Believers *in the efficacy of His Spirit*. Read what He says in the 17th verse—"Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you and shall be in you." Have you ever felt the Presence and power of the Spirit of God working within you? Does He ever comfort you when you are depressed? Does He ever guide you when you are in perplexity? Has He ever come upon you to calm you when you have been getting excited with worldly joy? Have you ever known the Spirit of God illuminate a Truth which before you could not understand? Have you not known Him to point out to you a way of answering your accuser or adversary which you had not thought of, giving you in the same hour the very words that you should speak? Some of us know what it is to be more swayed by the Spirit of God than by our own spirit—and it should be so with every Christian. He should yield himself up absolutely to that Divine Spirit who will bear him wherever He pleases, upward or downward, to ecstatic joy or to holy sorrow, but always onward in that which glorifies God! Those who feel this power of the Holy Spirit really see Jesus Christ and so hear Him say to them as He said to His disciples, "You see Me."

And, Beloved, I must add here what some of you know right well—I would that we all knew it more and more—that *Jesus Christ is to be seen by that near, and dear, and intimate communion which He permits His children to have with Him.* They are to be daily walking with God, but as the sea, though always full, is not always at flood-tide, so the Believer, who lives nearest to God, will not always experience precisely the same delights. There are high days and holidays for us—have you not had them? We hardly like to talk about them, for the love-dealings of Christ with our souls are such sacred secrets between Himself and us that we can scarcely speak of them to others. We have known such joy in fellowship with Christ that we have felt almost as the Apostle did when he said that "He was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Indeed, we cannot utter them, for human language can never express the bliss which sometimes fills our spirit when Jesus Christ reveals Himself to us! It is vain for infidels to tell me that there is no Christ for I have seen Him! When men tell us that there is no Heaven, we say, as Bunyan's pilgrims did, "What? No Mount Zion? Did we not see from the Delectable Mountains, the gate

of the city?" Do they tell us that the love of Christ is a myth? We reply that it has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and that, therefore, we can never doubt its reality and power!

There is an individual who is accustomed to go down the sewers and who has no sense of smell—"He has got no nose," a man told me once. Suppose that this man comes into a place which has been recently perfumed with perfume of roses or lavender water and, while we are all saying, "What a delicious perfume!" He says, "I do not believe there is any perfume here." But we are sure that there is. He says that he cannot see it, he cannot hear it, he cannot taste it, he cannot feel it and he cannot smell it, so he does not believe it is there. No, poor man, he has lost one of his senses, so he cannot perceive it. And the world has lost its *spiritual sense*—that delicate nostril which can perceive the sweet perfume of the Rose of Sharon and detect His Presence wherever He may be! But we, Beloved, are not to be argued out of an undoubted fact of our spiritual experience! It is useless to try to pervert a genuine Christian from the faith because he knows it, for he has tasted and handled it, and felt it! It is not a matter of opinion to him, but a matter of fact. The heathen philosophers said of the early Christians, that they were the most obstinate men and women that they ever met. They said that the plainest arguments were lost upon them, for they clung to certain things which they asserted to be facts and no one could, by any logic whatever, induce them to deny those facts! If we are genuine Christians, we are of the same stamp as those early saints. We might change our opinions, but we cannot give up our knowledge of the great facts of our spiritual experience—and we do know that Jesus Christ has revealed Himself unto us as He does not unto the world—and we dare not deny that it is so!

He has given us such sweet fellowship with Himself that only in Heaven, itself, can we ever be happier! Sometimes we have seemed to sit on the very doorstep of Heaven and have heard the music inside—and we have wondered whether they could be happier, there, than we were outside. We have felt that they must have larger capacity for joy than we had if they had more joy than we possessed, for we were as full of joy as we could be! Well, this being the case with us, we cannot be made to deny the faith by anything that may be said to us by those who are strangers to our joy. "You see Me," said Christ to His disciples and, oftentimes we have felt that He might also say to us, "You see Me," for, in the highest sense, it is true.

Beloved Friends, I must leave this point, but I wish, first, to ask everyone here, "Have *you* thus seen Jesus Christ? Do you see Him at this moment?" Remember that you must *spiritually* see Him with the eyes of your soul or else, when He comes to Judgment, you will in vain call upon the rocks to hide you from His face! Recollect, also, that you cannot see Christ till the Spirit of God opens your eyes. You are spiritually blind. You are dead! And only the Spirit of God can make you live and give you sight. Oh, that the prayer might ascend from every unsaved soul here, "Blessed Spirit, breathe into me the breath of life that my dead soul may be quickened and that my darkened mind may be enlightened that I may

truly see You." May the Lord first give you that prayer—and then may He graciously answer it in your happy experience this very hour!

III. My last point is this—THE HOLY SPIRIT NOT ONLY GIVES US LIGHT, BUT HE ALSO GIVES US LIFE. Jesus said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live also."

Every soul that has seen Christ in the ways I have described is a living soul, and such a living soul that as long as Christ lives, and because Christ lives, that soul shall also live! What a precious promise this is! One needs to have a whole sermon upon it—"Because I live, you shall live also."

That is to say, *we first get spiritual life from Christ*. We are dead in trespasses and sins, but a glance from His eyes through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, creates the first spark of life within us and then we look to Him—and so we live! We find in Jesus Christ and in context and in communion with Him, all that our souls need, so that we not only derive from Him spiritual life, but also the sustenance of that life.

Then, *we get the life of Christ reproduced in us by living in fellowship with Him*—a life which is to bloom and come to perfection in the eternal life with Christ in Glory. All the life that any Believer ever had on the face of the earth, he must have derived from the Lord Jesus Christ for he had none of his own. And when the Holy Spirit had given him this life from Jesus Christ, he could not keep it alive by his own power. He had to remain in union with Jesus if he was to continue to live, as Christ reminded His disciples, "Without Me, (severed from Me), you can do nothing." Let us recognize this fact, Beloved, that we who have seen Christ have a new life within us which we did not create and which we could not nourish and sustain, but which Jesus keeps, feeds and preserves through the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit! And thus we live as the world does not live—it is dead in sin, but we are alive unto God by Jesus Christ!

This life, being Christ's life, is an everlasting life. "I give unto them eternal life," says Christ concerning His sheep. Somebody once said, "Ah, but they may lose it!" What nonsense! How can they lose eternal life! How can that be eternal which comes to an end? "Eternal life" means a life that never ends! Language can only be meant to conceal men's thoughts if it does not mean that! But God uses language, not for the sake of concealing His Truth, but in order to reveal it! And when the Lord Jesus Christ puts everlasting life into a Believer, he has everlasting life and he will live forever! And for this reason he will live forever because Christ will live forever. "Because I live, you shall live also." When Christ can die, then can the Believer perish. When it shall be possible for Christ to be cast out of Heaven—for His power and Glory to be taken from Him, yes, for His very Deity to wax old and grow effete with age—then may the Believer's life be quenched, but not till then!

What strange notions some people seem to have about this matter! The Doctrine of Final Perseverance, or the Eternal Preservation of Believers, seems to me to be written as with a beam of sunlight

throughout the whole of Scripture! If that is not true, there is nothing at all in the Bible that is true, for that Truth of God is there if anything is! It is impossible to understand the Bible at all if it is not so. But it is so, glory be to God! What do the objectors say concerning the mystical body of Christ? Do they suppose that Christ's body keeps losing its members, as lobsters lose their claws, and grow fresh ones? Is that their strange simile—that the blessed mystical body of Christ goes on changing its members and getting new ones? To suggest such a monstrosity is approaching blasphemy! The members of Christ's body must be safe forever, for they are one with Him. Shall Christ be mutilated? Shall He be cut in pieces and His beauty marred? That is impossible—

"Once in Christ in Christ forever!
Nothing from His love can sever."

He never did and He never can lose one of those who are in Him!

Put your trust in Jesus, dear Friends, and this passage shall be true concerning you, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"—"being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away; but the Word of the Lord endures forever." Blessed is the man who has this Word of the Lord sown in His heart as a living seed which cannot die or be destroyed! The Lord grant this blessing to each one of you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:15-31.

Verses 15-17. *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, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* "I am going away from you. You will not have My personal Presence much longer, but I will send you One who will never go away from you, for whom there is no death and no departure—'another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth'—who knows the Truths of God, who can teach the Truths of God and who applies the Truth to the hearts and consciences of men—'whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him.'" Let us not imagine that the world will ever receive the Spirit of God. It is supposed, by some, that the world gets more enlightened from age to age, but that is a supposition for which there is not the slightest foundation! The death of human nature never develops into life! The darkness brought by the Fall never becomes the Light of God without the operation of a supernatural power. It is the Spirit of God that works this change in God's own children—"but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you." He was with them in a certain sense even while Christ was here, otherwise they would have learned

nothing. And He was more fully in them when Christ had gone back to Heaven—hence they learned, after Pentecost, more of the meaning of the Gospel than they had ever gathered from the teaching of their Master.

18, 19. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* There is a continuous sight of Christ even as there is a continuous life in Christ. They who have not received the life of Christ cannot see Christ. How can there be eyes without life? And how can there be the spiritual sight of Christ without the spiritual life in you?

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* This is a wonderful trinity of unities, each one a mystery, but each one to be known by the Believer when he is instructed of the Spirit of God—Christ in the Father, the saints in Christ, and Christ in them. He that experimentally knows what it is to be in Christ knows more than all the secular philosophers who have ever lived!

21. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.* Oh, what privileges are enjoyed by those who love the Lord Jesus Christ! We cannot help loving Him and, by that love we are assured that the Father, Himself, loves us and we have the promise that Christ will yet more and more manifest Himself to us!

22. *Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?* "Why are we the subjects of this election, this selection, this gracious manifestation?"

23. *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.* Just as the angels came to believing Abraham and sojourned for a little while with him, so will Jesus and the Father, strangers in this world, become sojourners with us. Jesus says of the man who loves Him, "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." This is not a mere call, it is residence—"We will make Our abode with him." God, whom the Heavens cannot contain, yet comes and dwells in a lowly heart and abides with a loving spirit—"We will come unto him and make our abode with him." There is an aroma about these words which I cannot convey to you. But if you have the spiritual nostrils, you will perceive their fragrance for yourselves.

24. *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.* You see that the Lord Jesus Christ does not profess to be a great original thinker, but He speaks as the Messenger sent by the Father. And unless we, also, are commissioned and taught by the Father, of what value will our poor feeble thoughts be? Our only power lies in the fact that we do not utter our own thoughts, but the Truths of God which have been taught to us by the Holy Spirit! To some, this may look like weakness, but it is real strength.

25-27. *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. When men in the East met one another, they usually gave the salutation, "Peace be unto you," "Peace be to this house." But Christ says—

27. *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.* "I do not say, 'Peace, Peace,' where there is no peace. It is not a mere formal salutation, but there is a real, true peace communicated to you when I thus speak."

28. *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.* Love makes us rejoice in the prosperity of the one we love. The Lord Jesus Christ, in coming to this earth, had taken upon Himself a subordinate position—He had become the stepping-stone between man and God. But now that He was returning to His Glory—returning to His Father—it was the duty of those who loved Him to rejoice—and we should do the same now. He has left behind Him the humiliation, the scorn, the spitting, the Crucifixion—and who among us, who truly loves Him, would wish to bring Him back to this poor earth as He same at first? Ah, no! It is well that all that is over! There is sweetest music to our ears in our Lord's declaration, "It is finished," and our soul swims in a sea of light as we think of the ineffable Glory with the father to which He has returned forever!

29-31. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is comes 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. 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.* "Let us go to Gethsemane and to the Passion! Let us go fulfill the Father's will!" It was a sure proof of Christ's love when He went forward from speaking to *suffering* that He might save His own forever!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—785, 451, 841.

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

THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN
NO. 2954

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1875.

"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."
John 6:37.

A COUNTRY gentleman is expecting a number of persons to come and dine with him. He has as little side swing-gate at the entrance to the park through which people generally come, but, on the day when he expects company, he says to one of his men, "John, be sure that you set the big gates wide open, for we are expecting several people to come in." And that is the order which I have received from my Master—He is expecting company! The evangelistic services in the South of London will, I trust, bring large numbers of people to feast with my Lord at His banqueting table and I believe it is His will that I should set the big gates wide open so that some sinners who might be passing by, would take that act as an invitation to them to come in! I feel sure that they will come in, for God is going to bring them in! He is about to stretch forth His almighty arm and to compel them to come in, that His House may be filled! So my objective in this discourse is to proclaim the fullness and freeness of the Grace of God—in the hope that some may be led to come to Christ and so to obtain eternal life!

But, first, our text sets before us a rather knotty point, yet it reveals to us an excellent way of untying the knot. This is the knotty point. It would seem from the text that the Father has given some souls to Christ and not only from this text, but also from a great many other passages of Scripture it is clear that God has a people whom He has chosen unto eternal life—and that Christ has redeemed a people from among men. It is no use trying to shut your eyes to this Truth of God, as some do, for it is there. And unless we really wish to twist the plain meaning of words and to make something out of Scripture which Scripture does not naturally teach, we shall never be able to escape from the Doctrine of Divine Predestination—the Doctrine that God has foreordained certain people unto eternal life!

Now, if you like you can make any number of difficulties out of that Truth of God. If you wish to do so, here is a whole forest before you and you can easily find wood enough to make a gallows to hang yourself! It is true that if you wish to wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction, you will have to use very bad reasoning in order to do it—but it will be no

worse reasoning than many other people have used before you. It is true that *everything* is predestinated and that *everything* that happens is ordered according to the unfailing purpose and will of God—yet you will go to bed tonight and get up tomorrow morning and go about your business, never thinking of that predestination, but, acting like people of common sense, guided by the ordinary rules of sound judgment. That is to say, you will do that in ordinary matters, but there are some of you who will not act in the same sensible way in *spiritual* things—you will twist this Doctrine around and look at it in all manner of strange ways till you are dizzy with gazing at it and trying to make some excuse out of it for not coming to Jesus Christ!

My text, however, cuts the ground from under your feet, if you seek to act thus, for it tells you this, which is all you need to know, that all who are God's chosen ones may be known by this mark—*that they come to Christ*. Just as He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." So that those who come to Christ are *God's chosen people* and those who live and die without coming to Christ are not God's people. If you come to Christ and trust in Him, you are one of those whom the Father gave to His Son. If you refuse to come to Christ—it matters not what excuse you may make—your blood will be upon your own head. You will perish if you do not come to Christ! And if you do not come to Him, it will be because you were not one of His sheep and neither did the Father give you to Christ. Rowland Hill, when he was asked to preach only to the elect, said that he would do so if somebody would chalk them on the back. That cannot be done. But God does, in process of time, mark them all—not on the back, but on the heart! He that believes on the Son has everlasting life and his faith proves that he was chosen of God to that life! But he that believes not on the Son, if he persists in that unbelief, will assuredly perish, for there shall be no deviation from this Divine declaration, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." That is the matter with which we have to deal. May God help us, like prudent men, to deal with it earnestly!

I. Leaving that knotty point altogether, I notice in our gloriously free and open text, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," that there is A NECESSARY ACT and that is, that we come to Christ.

Before we go any further, let me ask, "How many of us have come to Christ?" I believe that by far the larger proportion of those now present have done so and I am grateful that I am able to believe that. If any of you who have thought of coming to the Lord's Table have never come to Christ, I implore you not to come to the Communion until you are truly converted. None have any right to the sacred emblems but those who have already enjoyed true communion with Christ by believing in Him! If you have not come to Christ, you must not act as if you had done so, for that would not benefit you and it would insult the Lord and bring great guilt upon your own conscience. No, Brothers and Sisters, we must came to Jesus Christ—that is our one business if we would be saved—to come

to Christ is not only the main point in it, but it is the top, bottom, middle and whole of it!

"What is it to come to Christ?" asks someone. Here I feel a solemn trembling come over me, for too often in trying to explain what faith is, and what coming to Christ is, we darken counsel "by words without knowledge" and God forbid that I should do that! Look at the words which Christ used, "Him, that comes to Me." He speaks of an action, a movement, but not of an action or movement of the body, for there were many who came to Christ in a physical sense, but they were not saved by such a coming as that. *This coming is an action, or movement, or turning of the mind.* You know readily enough what it is for the mind to come to such-and-such a point. But observe that the pith of the matter lies here, "Him that comes to *Me*." Saving faith is a coming to Christ—to the Person of Christ—it is not merely to believe that Christ is God, though you must believe that if you would be saved. It is not merely to believe that Christ is a Sacrifice for sin, though you must believe that, too. It is not merely to believe that Christ lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation, though those three blessed facts must be believed. But it is to COME TO HIM. If you had seen Him when He uttered these words, perhaps you would have understood them better, for there He stood, the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—the very Person of whom John the Baptist had said, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world."

Jesus Christ says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Everybody knows what it is for the mind to trust in a Doctrine, but you will perish if you trust only to Doctrine! The true way of salivation is trusting to the living Person of Jesus Christ who is the God-appointed Savior. Perhaps some of you know what it is to trust to Baptism, Confirmation, "sacrament"—but you will perish if you trust only to them. You must come, not to them, to sprinkling or immersion, or the "mass" or to the Communion—but to HIM, to the Christ who, upon the accursed Cross, has made expiation for all who trust in Him! You must come, by faith, to that Cross and accept Him as your Substitute. He has gone up into Heaven, but He is pleading there for sinners—and you must dart the eyes of your mind upwards to Him in such a way that you will trust in Him who has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory. That is coming to Christ—the mind resting in His Person and in His atoning Sacrifice.

It is clear, too, that when we come to a certain thing, we come from something else, so that coming to Christ implies that you leave something behind. And he who would be saved must leave behind the sins he formerly loved. He must come to the Holy Savior to be made holy. He must come to sit at Jesus' feet to learn His commands and to be willing to obey them. Jesus Christ will not save any man who abides *in his sins*—He came to save His people *from their sins*. The salvation of Jesus Christ is a salvation not merely from the guilt and the penalty of sin, but from the sin, itself—from the foulness and degradation of it. If we would come to Christ, we must come away from sin. Repentance must

make us turn from sin, and faith must make us turn to Christ—and we must also come away from self-righteousness if we are to come to Christ. It is very difficult for some people to part with their self-righteousness. They have looked in the mirror till they are in love with themselves and they cannot bear to be separated from their beloved self. They feel so good, so proper, so respectable, so excellent, so amiable, so lovely and so dear to themselves that they would gladly hang their self-righteousness about their neck and embrace it as long as they can! But, Sirs, you must come away from it! You must learn to look at it as a loathsome thing—and such it would appear to you if you could see it in the light in which God sees it! And you must give up every trust except trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. This, then, is coming to Him—coming away from your sinful self and your righteous self—and putting your trust alone in the one great Surety and Substitute for sinners!

When we come to a person in the full sense of the word, come, we also stay with that person. If I walk past a man in the street, I have certainly come to him in a sense. But I have also gone beyond him and so I have also gone from him. But *when a soul really comes to Christ, that soul stays with Christ and rests in Him.* Does it not need anything else? No. Surely it needs some more holiness? No. Does it not need a fuller pardon? No. Does it not need additional support? No. Does it not need some addition to its robe of righteousness? No. Does it not need another washing? No, for the Apostle says to those who have come to Christ, "You are compete in Him." Having come to Him, you stay with Him and rest in Him. The saved soul does not take temporary lodgings with Christ, but abides in Him!

Now, dear Friends, I cannot put this question personally to everyone of you, but you can, each one, put it to yourselves, "Have *you* come to Jesus Christ?" That is to say, is He your only confidence, or have you any other hope? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ alone? If so, you have come to Him and the promise in the text is yours—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

II. This brings us to the next point which is A NEEDLESS FEAR BANISHED.

There are some persons who say that they would gladly come to Christ but they fear that if they did come to Him, He would reject them. Ask them why and one of them says, "*I am too old to come to Christ.*" Will you kindly read the text, my venerable Friend? "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Now, if Christ cast out anyone who came to Him because he was too old, the text would not be true! There is nothing written between the lines—you may look as long as you like, but you will not find there anything like this, "Him that comes to Me up to 75 years of age, I will in no wise cast out." Christ says nothing of the kind! If you were a 100 years old—if you were two hundred—it would make no difference to Him! He would still say, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Perhaps another says, "*I am too young to come to Christ.*" Possibly there are some children here who have had the thought in their minds, "We are too young to come to Christ." But that cannot be, for He said, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." And He also said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." You cannot possibly be to too young to come to Christ, for He says, "Him that comes to Me"—and He intends that the youngest one who comes should be included—"I will in no wise cast out."

Many persons, however, see no difficulty as far as they are concerned, but they suppose that there is some difficulty because of their position. "May I come?" one asks, "*I am so very poor.*" The poorer you are, the more welcome you are to come! There is not a syllable here about property. Christ simply says, "Him that comes to Me." It does not matter though you come in rags, or though you come in the workhouse suit—whatever your outward appearance may be is of no consequence to our blessed Lord! Though you are as poor as poverty, itself, if anybody has any preference, I think that you will be all the more welcome to Jesus Christ because of that very poverty, for of old it was especially mentioned that the poor had the Gospel preached to them! And God has often chosen the poor of this world and made them, by His Grace, rich in faith. Come along with you, my poor Brothers and Sisters!

"Oh!" says another, "but it is not poverty that is the difficulty with me, it is *my lack of education.*" Well, my Friend, I am very sorry for you if you cannot read or write. That is a misfortune for you in many ways, but it has nothing to do with your salvation! I should think that there were very few of the early Christians who could read or write. Certainly, those who put up the inscriptions over the tombs in the Catacombs made all sorts of mistakes in spelling and grammar—and I suppose that they were as well educated as the most of the Christians who were buried there. What has the Gospel of Christ to do with education? You do not need a degree from a university—you do not need to be a master of arts, or bachelor of arts, in order to find Christ! Knowledge sometimes misleads in spiritual things. I would not commend ignorance, but certainly it is a fact that the shepherds of Bethlehem, when they wanted to see the newborn King, went straight to Him, but the wise men from the East went a long way round before they came to Him. Augustine used to say, "While Pharisees and philosophers are fumbling to find the latch of God's door, the poor and illiterate have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven." If you did but believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and did but rest yourself wholly upon Him, even if you were half an idiot, Christ would not cast you out! Yes, if there were only a faint glimmer of intelligence within your soul, yet if there were enough to catch the flame of faith, you would be saved—so let not that matter keep any of you back!

"Ah," says another, "I should not be kept back by such a thing as *that*, but *it is my past character that is my hindrance.*" Well, dear Friend, I will not enquire into your past character, but will take it for granted that it has been as bad as it could be. Yet, even then, what does Christ say in

our text? Does He say anything about character? No, He simply says, "Him that comes to Me." And if the person who comes to Him should have committed every crime of which it is possible for humanity to be guilty, my text would not allow even *him* to be excluded! I do bless my Lord and Master that He did not put any exclusions or exceptions here. Neither thief, nor drunk, nor harlot, nor adulterer, nor even murderer is shut out here! "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." So it stands and so it shall remain. If he will but come to Christ, he cannot be cast out on account of his sins! But his sins, which are many, shall all be forgiven him—he shall be pressed to the heart of everlasting Love and the kiss of pardon shall be imprinted upon his cheek!

I fancy that I hear someone else say, "I have not been guilty of any of those gross sins. I have almost wished—though perhaps it is a wicked wish—that I had been, for then I think I could feel more than I do now. Through the gracious arrangements of Providence I have been kept from gross outward sin and *I cannot feel what I want to feel of repentance*." No, dear Friend, but the Lord does not ask you to repent of sins that you have not committed. Just look at what you have done and do not wish that your sin was any greater than it is, for that would, indeed, be a wrong thing. "I do look at what I have done," says one, "yet I cannot repent." And do you expect to repent before you come to Christ? Is that your idea of the Gospel plan? The Gospel, as I understand it, is—to quote Joseph Hart's well known lines—

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

I also remember that Peter said to the high priest concerning Christ, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give (mark that term, *to give*) repentance." It is not for you to bring repentance to Him, but to come to Him for it! Some of you have been looking to the Law to make you conscious of your sin. Do you not know that—

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone"?

But if you will come to Jesus and trust in Him, then—

"A sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve the heart of stone."

You are to trust Jesus for a new heart, for repentance, for a tender conscience—if you cannot come to Him *with* them, come to Him *for* them. O you broken-hearted, come to Christ but do not plead your broken hearts! And you who want to have your hearts broken, come to Christ to break them! He is able, with the mighty hammer of His Gospel Grace, to break the heart of stone!

"Ah," says another, "I believe I *have* come to Christ. I know that I do wish to have Him as my only trust, but *I have not the experience that I have read about in others.* I have read of some people being dreadfully cut up, distressed and alarmed under a sessions of sin, but I have not been

like that." Whoever said that you should be? Listen again to the text, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Does Christ say anything about experience, law-work and all that sort of thing? Blessed be God, though men may set up those barriers around the Cross of Christ, the Lord has not set them up! If you come to Him, if you are trusting in Him, *whatever* your experience may be or *may not be*, He will not—He *cannot* cast you out! There are certain preachers whom I have heard who seem to me to be wonderfully busy trying to shut sinners out of the Kingdom of God! They are terribly afraid that more people should get saved than ought to be. They look upon Heaven as a sort of close borough into which a certain number of £10 householders may be admitted, but nobody else! They are dreadfully afraid lest there should be found in the Heavenly fold one that is not the Lord Jesus Christ's sheep. Such a fear as that never yet penetrated my heart—I bless His name that I have an ardent longing that many may come to Jesus—and I think that kind of spirit ought to be in all Christians, for Christ's words suggest it, "Him that comes to me"—not one special sort of "him" or any other sort, but any "him" who comes, whoever he may be—"I will in no wise cast out."

"Ah," says another, "but *I have such a little faith*." Bless God that you have even a little! Have I not often told you that if you have only starlight, you should bless God for it and He will give you moonlight? And if you have moonlight and bless God for it, He will give you daylight? Be thankful for any genuine faith that you possess! Does Christ say, "Him that comes to Me with a great faith"? No, Brothers and Sisters, if you come to Christ with only a grain of faith in your heart, the text must shut you in—it cannot shut you out! Do but come to Christ. Do but trust in Him and, however feeble your faith, if it is but sincere faith in Jesus, you are saved by Him, for He is all your salvation and all your desire! It is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of Him upon whom you rely! Christ is able to save you if you come to Him—be your faith weak or be it strong.

"But," I think I hear another say, "*I am afraid I am not one of the elect*." I have already answered that objection. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you *are* one of the elect! Beyond all doubt, if you come to Him, He cannot shut you out because of some secret reason, for He has said, "I will in no wise" that is, for no reason and in no way, and never—"cast you out." Therefore, there cannot be any secret reason in that unopened book of destiny for your being shut out. If you do but come to Christ, He must receive you, or He will have broken His Word—and that He can never do!

"But," says another, "*if I come to Christ, I should never hold on to Him*." That is very likely, but suppose He held you on, what then? "Ah, but I should not have the strength to persevere." But suppose that nobody on earth or in Hell can separate you from Him, for, "He keeps the feet of His saints," what then? Suppose when you come to Him, He says to you, "I give unto you eternal life and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of My hands"? Why, Soul, as you have not to take the first

step in salvation of yourself without Christ, so you have not to take the second, or the third, or the fourth, or any other step! You must rest only in Him for the whole of the way between here and Heaven! I believe that if you and I were to get as far as the very doorstep of Heaven—if we were to get our fingers on the latch of the gate—we would never get in if the Grace of God did not take us the last inch of the way! But then, the Grace of God *will* do this. Trust in Jesus, for—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep—
All that His Heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Not death, nor Hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast—
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."

So, any "him" in all the world and any "her," also, if they do but come to Christ shall not be cast out!

III. We have seen, in the text, first, a necessary act. And next, a needless fear banished. Now we are to see A MOST REASONABLE CONFIDENCE SUGGESTED.

I hope that there are many here who desire to be saved. If so, let them remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." I trust that you all understand that the whole process of salvation, so far as *you* are concerned, is for you to give up every reliance except reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. It has often been said that there are but two steps to Heaven—and that those two are but one—*out of self and into Christ*. If you are, at this moment, holding on to any other confidence, I pray you to let go of it and drop into the arms of Jesus! And know—for God has said it—that the instant you believe in Jesus, you are saved! At that instant there is conferred upon you a share in the Divine Life which will never die out. At the same moment there is taken from you the whole mass of your sin so that it cannot condemn you and will never return upon you. There is also imputed to you a perfect righteousness which shall never be taken from you—and in this spotless robe you may boldly stand even at the last Great Judgment Day!

Can we not all come, just now, and trust Jesus Christ? I mean not only you who have never trusted Christ before, but I would gladly hope that all of us who have believed in Jesus Christ would begin trusting in Him again. I wonder how many times I have had to begin my spiritual life over again at the foot of the Cross? I am always doing it and I am never so happy, so safe, or, I believe, so holy, as when I stand just as I did at first—at the foot of the Cross and look up, and say to my dear Lord and Savior—

"Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

If any Brother or Sister thinks that he has become perfect, he can appear in that character better than I can, for I cannot go to God in that fashion. The moment I think I am getting on in "the higher life," if I go back to the

Cross, my "higher life" all vanishes! In fact I have no "higher life." I have nothing but what Christ gives me—I am a wretched, miserable beggar dependent upon Him for everything! And I am never so right before Him as when I feel that it is so and just look to Him as I did when I first came to Him and put my trust in Him. Some brethren have a dreadful tumble because they have been building up their pretty little fancied experiences something like what I have seen on the top of a mountain. Certain people always want to see a little further than anyone else can, so they build a little wooden platform and stand on that. It is, no doubt, very delightful to stand up there and feel that you are so many feet higher than anybody else. But that platform gets rotten, in time, and all of a sudden it breaks—and all on it come down with it and they are very apt to say that the mountain itself is crumbling! Nonsense, the mountain is all right, but you tried to get above the mountain! If you had kept down where you ought to have been—on the granite rock—you would not have tumbled. I charge every child of God to strive after perfect holiness with all his might, but never to think that he has gotten any further then this—"Jesus Christ is All-in-All to me and I am nothing at all apart from Him. On Him do I hang and in Him alone do I trust."

The comfortable assurance of the text is this, *"If Jesus Christ will not cast me out, He will take me in."* He must do either the one or the other, there is no middle course. I never read of anybody but those He blesses and those He curses—those to whom He is a savor of life and those to whom He is a savor of death. Then, as I just said, if He will not cast me out, I know what He will do—He will take me in, He will wash me, He will cleanse me, He will clothe me, He will feed me, He will reveal Himself to me, He will make me His brother and His friend, He will keep me in life, keep me in death and bring me to be with Him where He is, that I may behold His Glory!

Now, who will begin with Jesus, or begin again with Jesus? By His Grace, I will! Savior, I have no confidence but in Your precious blood. I have preached Your Gospel for many a year and, by so doing, have been the means of bringing many sinners to You—but this I count less than nothing as the groundwork of my hope of eternal life—for that I rest on You, and on You alone!

Now, Sinners, come along, and may the Holy Spirit graciously lead you to do as we are now doing. And then, as you go your way, each one of you can say, "He will never cast me out, for I have come to Him." Trust Jesus, I implore you. He is worthy of your trust, for He is the Son of God and He has died to put away the guilt of all who trust Him! I wish someone would say, "I have tried to save myself, but I cannot do it. I will trust Him to do it and I believe that He can, and that He will." Ah, my Friend, you will never be disappointed if you make such a blessed resolve as that! May God, by His Grace, enable you to do it—and to Him shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

ISAIAH 55.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* The description of Gospel blessings grows sweeter as it advances. "Waters" first. "Wine and milk" next—and still all "without money and without price."

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* All your largest desires you long for, you will find in Christ! You shall have not only necessities, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the fullest! You shall not be able to conceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the Grace of God.

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me.* This is the gate by which salvation enters into man—Ear Gate, by hearing and believing—"Incline your ear," bend it forward as if you would catch every word "and come unto Me."

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Only think of a Covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners. God shaking hands with guilty men in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is a sure Covenant, too. Not made up of "ifs" and, "buts" and, "perhapses"—but a Covenant sealed with blood and signed by Him who gives an oath with it that He will never turn from it, that you may have "strong consolation."

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness of the Immutable Love of God and to be to us our Captain and our King. Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their Leader. You remember how David, in the cave Adullam, gathered to himself "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, and he became a captain over them." Even so, the great Antitype, David's Son and David's Lord is now willing to gather to Himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented and weary with the world! And God says, "I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* What joy this gives to you who love Him! Jehovah has glorified His Son and given to Him the power to call to Himself a people that He knew not in a saving sense, and He shall so call nations that knew Him not that they shall run to Him. We do not preach the Gospel, dear Brothers, at haphazard—we are sure of results. If we speak in faith, in the name of Christ men must be saved! They must run to Christ. It is not left to their option—there is a Divine hand that secretly touches the springs of the will of men so that when Christ calls them, they run to Him! Oh, that He would just now call

them, even those that are furthest off, that they may run to Him and that He may be glorified!

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found.* In these happy Gospel times when Christ is set forth on purpose that "He may be found."

6. *Call you upon Him while He is near.* And He is very near when the Gospel is preached with holy unction, when Christians are praying, when hearts are breaking for the conversion of sinners and when His Spirit is working in their hearts that they may repent of sin!

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way.* It is a bad way. It is a downward way. It is a way that will end in destruction! Do not follow it any longer—"Let the wicked forsake his way."

7. *And the unrighteous man his thoughts.* "Thoughts!" says one, "we shall not be hanged for our thoughts." Oh, but you may be *damned* for your thoughts! No man has really forsaken the way of wickedness until he hates the very thought of wickedness! If your thoughts run after evil, your tongues will soon utter evil and your hands will soon do evil.

7. *And let him return.* He is like one who has wandered from his father's house—"let him return." He is like the dove that flew away from Noah's ark and was ready to faint—"let him return."

7. *Unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* What a blessed word, "abundantly," is here! Abundant pardon to cover abundant sin! Abundant provocation, abundant rejection of His Word!

8. *For*—Says God, as if He would not leave the Prophet to speak any longer on His behalf, He Himself appears upon the scene and speaks! "For"—

8. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD.* No doubt He refers here to the pardon of sin. Our thoughts are narrow. We find it hard to forgive great offenses, to forgive many offenses, to forgive many offenders, to continue completely to forgive—all this is very difficult to men.

9. *For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Think of the biggest thought you ever had concerning God's forgiveness of sins. Try again. Let your thoughts rise still higher—you cannot have reached the utmost height, "for as the Heavens are higher than the earth," so are His thoughts and ways higher than yours!

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and gives 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.* If you believe this great promise, you shall have the full benefit of it. Let this gracious rain drop on you and it must refresh you! Let these blessed snowflakes come down on you, and they shall melt into your bosom and remain there to bless you forever! They shall not go back to God with their mission unfulfilled. As for us who preach that Word, or

teach it in the Sunday school, we may have a full assurance that we shall not labor in vain nor spend our strength for nothing. No, no, the raindrops go not on an errand that can fail and the snowflakes that fall to the earth accomplish the end for which they are sent! Much more shall the purpose of God's Word be accomplished! Behold, it drops like the gentle rain! The messages of mercy fly like snowflakes from the lips of the Lord, Himself, and they shall not fall in vain, blessed be His holy name!

12. *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.* There shall seem to be joy everywhere when there is joy in your heart. When you receive Christ, you have put everything around you into its true position. The whole Creation is a vast organ and man puts his tiny fingers on the keys and evokes thunders of harmony to the praise of God! When the heart is filled with joy and peace, mountains and hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

13. *Instead of the thorn.* Which is everywhere today, pricking our feet and maiming our hand—"Instead of the thorn"—

13. *Shall come up the fir tree.* There is the thorn? I see it upon the bleeding brows of Christ! He has taken it away and worn it as a crown!

13. *And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name.* It shall make men know what He is like, what gracious power He has, what goodness dwells in Him! "It shall be to Jehovah for a name."

13. *For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* That sign is exhibited today in the eyes of men. An evil and adulterous generation called for a sign and this is the sign that God has given—His converting Grace in His Church. Instead of miracles, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners and if any will not believe when this sign is sent to them, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead! It stands as "an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

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

SIMPLE BUT SOUND
NO. 2955

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

"One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."
John 9:25.

DID it ever strike you how wonderfully calm and collected our Lord must have been at this time? He had been preaching in the Temple, talking to a multitude of Jews. They grew furious with Him—a number of stones which were used in repairing the temple were lying about on the floor and they took up those stones to cast at Him. He, by some means, forced a passage and escaped out of the midst of them—and when He came to the gate of the Temple with His disciples—who seem to have followed Him in the lane which He was able to make through the throng of His foes—He saw this blind man and, as if there had been no bloodthirsty foes at His heels, He stopped! He stopped as calmly as if an attentive audience had been waiting upon His lips—to look at the blind man. The disciples stopped, too, but they paused to ask questions.

How like ourselves! We are always ready to talk. How unlike the Master! He was always ready to *act*. The disciples wanted to know how the man came to be blind, but the Master meant to deliver the man from his blindness. We are very apt to be entering into speculative theories about the origin of sin or the cause of certain strange Providences, but Christ is always for seeking out, not the cause, but the *remedy*—not the reason of the disease, but the way by which the disease can be cured! The blind man is brought to Him. Christ asks him no questions, but, spitting upon the dust, He stoops down and works the dust into mortar. And when He has done this, taking it up in His hands, He applies it to what Bishop Hall calls the eye-holes of the man (for there were no eyes there), and plasters them up so that the spectators look on and see a man with clay upon his eyes. "Go," said Christ "to the pool of Siloam and wash." Some kind friends led the man who was only too glad to go! Unlike Naaman, who made an objection to wash in Jordan and be clean, the blind man was glad enough to avail himself of the Divine remedy. He went. He washed the clay from his eyes and he received his sight—a blessing he had never known before! With what rapture he gazed upon the trees! With what delight he lifted up his face to the blue sky! With what pleasure he beheld the costly, stately fabric of the Temple and, I think, afterwards, with what interest and pleasure he would look into the face of Jesus—the Man who had given him his sight!

It is not my objective to expound this miracle, tonight, but well it sets forth, in sacred emblem, the state of human nature. Man is blind. Father Adam put out our eyes. We cannot see spiritual things. We have not the spiritual optic—that has gone—gone forever. We are born without it—born blind! Christ comes into this world and His Gospel is despicable in men's esteem even as spittle—the thought of it disgusts most men. Gentility turns on its heel and says it will have nothing to do with it. And pomp and glory all say that it is a contemptible and base thing! Christ puts the Gospel on the blind eyes—a Gospel which, like clay, seems as if it would make men more blind than before—but it is through "the foolishness of preaching" that Christ saves them that believe! The Holy Spirit is like Siloam's pool. We go to Him, or rather He comes to us—the convictions of sin produced by the Gospel are washed away by the cleansing influences of the Divine Comforter and, behold—we who were once so blind that we could see no beauty in Divine things and no excellence in the crown jewels of God, begin to see things in a clear and Heavenly light—and rejoice exceedingly before the Lord!

The man no sooner sees than he is brought before adversaries and our text is a part of his testimony in defense of the "Prophet" who had worked the miracle upon him, whom, not as yet did he understand to be the Messiah.

"One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Although the parables would furnish us an admirable topic, we prefer to keep to this verse and linger upon the various reflections it suggests.

I. We have before us, in these words, AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT.

Every now and then you and I are called into a little debate. Persons do not take things for granted in this age and it is quite as well that they should not. There have been ages in which any impostor could lead the public by the nose. Men would believe anything and any crazy maniac, man or woman, who might stand up and pretend to be the Messiah, would be sure to have some followers! I think this age, with all its faults, is not so credulous as that which has gone by. There is a great deal of questioning. You know that there is some questioning where there should not be any. Men who stand high in official positions and who ought long ago to have had their faith established, or to have renounced their position, have ventured to question the very things they have sworn to defend! There is questioning everywhere, but to my mind it seems, Brothers and Sisters, that we need not be afraid. If the Gospel of God is true, it can stand any quantity of questioning. I am more afraid of the deadness and lethargy of the public mind about religion than any sort of enquiry or controversy about it. As silver tried in the furnace is purified seven times, so is the Word of God—and the more it is put into the furnace, the more it will be purified—and the more beauteously the pure ore of Revelation will glitter in the sight of the faithful! Never be afraid of a debate. Never go into it unless you are well armed and if you do go into it, mind that you take with you the weapon I am giving you tonight. Though you may be unarmed in every other respect, if you know how to

wield this, you may, through Grace, come off more than a conqueror! The argument which this man used was this, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

It is forcible because it is a *personal argument*. I heard a person, the other day, use a similar argument. I had been laughing at a certain system of medicine—and really, it seems to me pardonable to laugh at all the systems, for I believe they are all almost equally as good or bad as the others. The person in question said, "Well, I can't laugh at it." "Why?" I asked. "Because," he said, "it cured me." Of course I had no further answer. If this person had really been cured by such-and-such a remedy, it was to him an unanswerable argument! And to me, could he produce many other cases, it would be one that I would not wish to answer. The fact is, the personality of the thing gives it power. People tell us that in the pulpit, the minister should always say, "We," as editors do in writing. We would lose all our power if we did! The minister of God is to use the first person singular and constantly to say, "I bear eyewitness for God that, in my case, such-and-such a thing has been true." I will not blush nor stammer to say, "I bear my personal witness to the truth of Christ's Gospel in my own case." Lifted up from sin, delivered from bondage, from doubt, from fear, from despair, from an intolerable agony —lifted up to unspeakable joys and into the service of my God—I bear my own testimony and I believe, Christians, that your force in the world will be mightily increased if you constantly make your witness for Christ a personal one!

I daresay my neighbor over there can tell what Divine Grace has done for him. Yes, but to me, to my own soul, what Grace has done for me will be more of an establishment to me for my faith than what Christ has done for him! And if I stand up and talk of what God's Grace has done for this or that Brother, it may do very well. But if I can say, "I myself have proved it," here is an argument which drives in the nail—yes, and clinches it, too! I believe, Christians, if you would prevail when you have to argue, you must do so by bearing a personal testimony to the value of religion in your own case, for that which you despise, you can never persuade others to value. "I believed, therefore have I spoken," said the Psalmist. Luther was a man of strong faith and, therefore, he kindled faith in others. That man will never move the world who lets the world move him, but the man who stands firm and says, "I *know*, I *know*, I *know* such-and-such a thing because it is burnt in my own inner consciousness"—such a man's very appearance becomes an argument to convince others!

Moreover, this man's argument was *an appeal to men's senses* and hardly anything can be supposed more forcible than that. "I was blind," he said, "you saw that I was. Some of you noticed me at the gate of the Temple. I *was* blind, now I see! You can all see that I can look at you—you perceive at once that I have eyes, or else I could not see you in the way I do." He appealed to their senses. The argument which our holy religion needs at the present moment is a new appeal to the senses of

men. You will ask me, "What is that?" The holy living of Christians! The change which the Gospel works in men must be the Gospel's best argument against all opposers! When the Gospel was first preached in the Island of Jamaica, some of the planters objected grievously to it. They thought it an evil thing to teach the Negroes, but a missionary said, "What has been the effect of your Negro servant, Jack, hearing the Gospel?" And the planter said, "Well, he was constantly drunk before, but he is now sober. I could not trust him, he was a great thief—but he is now honest. He swore like a trooper before, but now I hear nothing objectionable come from his mouth." "Well," said the missionary, "then I ask you if a Gospel that has made such a change as that in the man must not be of God and whether you ought not rather to put your influence into its scale than to work against it?" When we can bring forward the harlot who has been made chaste. When we can also show the drunk who has been made sober, or, better still, when we can bring the careless, thoughtless man who has been made sedate and steady—the man who cared not for God, nor Christ who has been made to worship God with his whole heart and has put his confidence in Jesus—we think we have, then, presented to the world an argument which they will not soon answer!

If our religion does no more in the world than any other, well then, despise it! Or if men can receive the Gospel of Christ and yet live as they did before and be none the better for it, then tell us at once so that we may be undeceived, for our Gospel is not needed. But we bring forward proofs to you! I hope, my Brothers and Sisters, there are scores and hundreds here who are yourselves the proofs of what the living Gospel can do! Many and many a story could I tell of a man who was a fiend in human shape, a man who, when he came home from work, made it an hour of peril—for his wife and children fled to hide from him! And now that man—see him when he goes home—how he is welcomed by his wife, how the children run down to meet him! You shall now hear him sing more loudly than ever he cursed before! And he who was once a ringleader in the army of Satan has now become a ringleader in the army of Christ! I shall not say where he is sitting tonight. I should need many fingers if I had to point out all such who are here. The Lord's is the Glory of it. That is the argument, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Do we not know of some who when they came to make their profession before the Church, said, "If anyone had told me, three months ago, that I should be here, I would have knocked him down! If any man had said I would make a profession of faith in Jesus, I would have called him all the names in the world. I, become a canting Methodist? Not I!" But Grace has changed the man—his whole life is now different. Those who hate the change cannot help observing it. They hate religion, they say, but if religion does such things as these, the more of it the better!

Now we need, dear Friends, in the dark lanes and alleys of London—yes and in our great wide streets, too, where there are large shops and places of businesses—we need to give the groveling world this argument against which there is no disputing, that, whereas there were some men

blind, now they see! Whereas they were sinful, now they are virtuous! Whereas they despised God, now they fear Him! We believe this is the best answer for an infidel age. What a deal of writing there has been lately about and against Dr. Colenso! You need not think of reading the replies to his books, for most of them would be the best means of sending people to sleep that have ever been invented! And, after all, they don't answer the man—most of them leave the objections untouched, for there is a speciousness in the objection which is not very easily got over. I think we would be doing much better if, instead of running after this heathenish bishop, we would be running after poor sinners! If, instead of writing books of argument and entering into discussions, we keep on, each in our own sphere, endeavoring to convert souls, imploring the Spirit of God to come down upon us and make us spiritual fathers in Israel, then we may say to the devil, "Well, Sir, you have stolen a bishop. You have taken away a clergyman or so. You have robbed us of a leader or two. But, by the help of God we have razed your territories, we have stolen away whole bands—here they are, tens of thousands of men and women who have been reclaimed from the paths of vice, rescued from the destroyer and made servants of the Lord!" These are your best arguments. There are no arguments like them—living personal witnesses of what Divine Grace can do!

II. We will now change our view of the subject. Our text presents us with A SATISFACTORY PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE—"One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

An affectation of knowledge is not uncommon. The desire for knowledge is almost universal—the attainment of it, however, is rare. But if a man shall attain the knowledge of Christ, he may take a high degree in the Gospel, a satisfactory degree, a degree which shall land him safe into Heaven! Put the palm branch in his hand and the eternal song in his mouth—which is more than any worldly degrees will ever do. "One *thing* I know." The skeptic will sometimes overwhelm you with his knowledge. You simple minds that have read but little, and whose business occupations take up so much of your time that you probably never will be very profound students, are often in danger of being attacked by men who can use long words, who profess to have read very great books and to be very learned in sciences—the names of which you have scarcely ever heard. Meet them, but be sure you meet them with a knowledge that is better than theirs! Don't attempt to meet them on their own ground—meet them with this knowledge. "Well," you can say, "I know that you understand more than I do. I am only a poor unlettered Christian, but I have a something in here that answers all your arguments, whatever they may be. I do not know what geology says. I may not understand all about history. I may not comprehend all the strange things that are daily coming to light, but one thing I know—it is a matter of absolute consciousness to me—that I, who was once blind, have been made to see." Then just state the difference that the Gospel made in you. Say that once, when you looked at the Bible, it was a dull, dry book. That when

you thought of prayer, it was a dreary piece of work. Say that now the Bible seems to you a honeycomb full of honey and that prayer is your vital breath! Say that once you tried to get away from God and could see no excellence in the Divine Character, but that now you are striving and struggling to get nearer to God. Say that once you despised the Cross of Christ and thought it a vain thing for you to flee to—but that now you love it and would sacrifice your all for it! And this undoubted change in your own consciousness, this supernatural work in your own innermost spirit shall stand you in the stead of all the arguments that can be drawn from all the sciences! Your one thing shall overthrow their thousand things if you can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

Says one, "I don't know how that can be." Let me suppose that someone has just discovered galvanism [electric shock] and I have had a galvanic shock. Now, 20 people come and say, "There is no such thing as galvanism. We do not believe in it for a moment." And there is one gentleman who proves by Latin that there cannot be such a thing as galvanism. And another proves it mathematically to demonstration. And 20 others prove it in their different ways. I would say, "Well, I cannot answer you in Latin, I cannot overthrow you in logic, I cannot contradict that syllogism of yours, but one thing I know—I have had a shock of it—that I *do* know." And I take it that my personal consciousness of having experienced a galvanic shock will be a better answer than all their learned sayings. And so, if you have ever felt the Spirit of God come into contact with you, (and that is something quite as much within the reach of our consciousness as even the shock of electricity and galvanism), and if you can say of that, "One thing I know, which cannot be beaten out of me, which cannot be hammered out of my own consciousness, that whereas I was blind, now I see"—if you can say that, it will be a quite sufficient reply to all that the skeptic may bring against you!

How often, dear Brothers and Sisters, are you assailed, not only by the skeptic, but by our very profound doctrinal brethren? I know some very great doctrinal friends, who, because our experience may not tally with theirs, will sit down and say, "Ah, you don't know the power of vital godliness." And they will write very severe things against us and say that we don't know the great secret, and don't understand the inner life. You never need trouble yourself about these braggarts—let them talk on till they are finished. But if you do want to answer them, do it humbly by saying, "Well, you may be right and I may be mistaken, but yet I think I can say, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.'" And I have known them to sometimes go to the length of saying if we don't hold all their points of Doctrine and go the whole *18 ounces* to the pound, as they do—if we are content with 16 and keep to God's weights and God's measures—"Ah, those people cannot be truly converted Christians, they are not so high in Doctrine as we are." Well, we can answer them with this, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

And you young Christians sometimes meet with older Believers, very good people, too, and very wise, and they will put you into their sieves. Some of our Brothers and Sisters always carry a sieve with them and if

they meet a young Brother, they will try to sift him and they will often do it very unkindly—ask him knotty questions. I always compare this to a man's trying a newborn child's health by putting nuts into his mouth—and if he cannot crack them, he will say, "He is not healthy." Well, I have known very difficult questions asked about such things as sublapsarianism, or supralapsarianism, or about the exact difference between justification and sanctification, or something of that sort. Now, I advise you to get all that sort of knowledge you can but, putting all of it together, it is not nearly equal in value to this small bit of knowledge, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

I have studied many and many an old Puritan book and tried to enrich my mind with the far-sought lore of the writers of them, but I tell you there are times when I would give up everything I have ever learned, by nights and days of study, if I could but say for a certainty, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." And even now, though I have no doubt about my own acceptance in Christ and my having been brought to see, yet, compared with this piece of knowledge, I count all the excellency of human knowledge—yes, and all the rest of Divine knowledge, too—to be but dross and dung, for this is the one thing necessary, the one soul-saving piece of knowledge, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

My dear Hearer, do you see a beauty in Christ? Do you see a loveliness in the Gospel? Do you perceive an excellence in God, your Father? Can you read your title clear to mansions in the skies? You could not do this once. Once you were a stranger to these things—your soul was dark as the darkest night without a star, without a ray of knowledge or of comfort—but now you see seek after more knowledge but, if you still cannot attain it, and if you tremble because you cannot grow as you would, remember this is enough to know for all practical purposes, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

III. We will again change our view of the subject. This is a MODEL CONFESSION OF FAITH.

This blind man did not do as some of you would have done. When he found his eyes, he did not use them to go and hunt out a quiet corner so that he might hide himself in it—he came out boldly before his neighbors and then before Christ's enemies, and said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Why, there are some of you who, I hope, have Grace in your heart, but you have not courage to confess it! You have not put on your regimentals. I suppose you call yourselves members of the Church militant, but you are not dressed in the true scarlet—you do not come forward and wear the Master's badge and openly fight under His banner. I think it is very unkind of you and very dishonoring to your Master. There are not many who speak for Him and it is a shame that you should hold your tongue. If He has given you eyes, I am sure you ought to give Him your tongue! If He has taught you to see things in a new light, I am sure you ought not to be unwilling to confess Him before men! After so much kindness in the past, it is cruel

ingratitude to be ashamed to confess Him. You do not know how much you would comfort the minister—converts are our sheaves and you who are not added to the Church, do, as it were, rob us of our reward! No doubt you will be gathered into God's garner, but then we do not know anything about that—we want to see you gathered into God's garner *here*! We want to hear you boldly say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

Besides, you cannot tell how much good you might do to others. Your example would move your neighbors. Your confession would be valuable to saints and might be a help to sinners. Your taking the decisive step might lead others to take it. Your example might be just the last grain cast into the scale and might lead others to decide for the Lord. I am ashamed of you, who were once blind, yet now see, but do not like to say so! I pray you lay the matter to heart and, before long come out and say, "Yes, I cannot withhold it any longer. Whereas I was once blind, now I see!"

"Well," says one, "I have often thought of joining the church, but I can't be perfect." Now this man did not say, "I was once imperfect and now I am perfect." Oh, no! If you were perfect, we could not receive you into church fellowship because we are all, ourselves, imperfect—and we would fall out with you if we took you in. We don't want those perfect gentlemen—let them go to Heaven—that is the place for perfect ones, not here!

"Well," says someone else, "I have not grown in religion as I should like. I am afraid I am not as saintly as I would desire to be." Well, Brother, strive after a high degree of holiness, but remember that a high degree of holiness is not necessary to a profession of your faith! You are to make a profession as soon as you have any holiness—the high degree of it is to come afterwards.

"Ah," says another, "but I could not say much." Nobody asked you to say much. If you can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," that is all we want! If you can but let us know that there is a change in you, that you are a new man, that you see things in a different light, that what was once your joy is now your sorrow, and what was once a sorrow to you is now your joy—if you can say, "All things have become new." If you can say, "I feel a new life heaving within my bosom—there is a new light shining in my eyes. I go to God's House now in a different spirit. I read the Bible and engage in private prayer after quite a different fashion. And I hope my life is different, I hope my language is not what it used to be. I try to curb my temper. I endeavor to provide things honest in the sight of all men. My nature is different. I could no more live in sin as I once did than a fish could live on dry land, or a man could live in the depths of the sea"—this is what we want of you.

Suppose now a person getting up in the church meeting, (and there are scores and hundreds here who attend church meetings), and saying, "Brethren, I come to unite with you. I know the Greek Testament. I have also read a good deal in Latin. I understand the Vulgate. I can now, if you please, give you the 1st chapter of Mark in Greek, or the 2nd chapter of Exodus in Hebrew, if you like. I have also, from my youth up, given

myself to the study of the natural and applied sciences. I think I am master of rhetoric and I am able to reason logically." Suppose he then went on to say what he knew about business, what a skillful tradesman he had been and, after going through that should say, "I have a great deal of theological knowledge. I have read the Fathers, I have studied Augustine, I could talk about all the ponderous tomes that were written in the ancient times, I am acquainted with all the writers on the Reformation and I have studied the Puritans through and through. I know the points of difference between the great Reformed teachers and I know the distinction between Zwingli and Calvin"? I am sure, dear Friends, if a man were to say all that, before I put it to the vote whether he should be admitted to church membership, I would say, "This dear brother has not any idea of what he came here for. He came here to make a confession that he was a living man in Christ Jesus and he has been only trying to prove to us that he is a *learned* man. That is not what we want." And I would begin to put to him some pointed questions—something like this, "Did you ever feel yourself a sinner? Did you ever feel that Christ was a precious Savior and are you putting your trust in Him?"

And some of you would say, "Why, that's just what he asked poor Mary, the servant girl, when she was in the meeting five minutes ago!" All that learned lumber is good enough in its place. I do not depreciate it. I wish you were all scholars. I love to see you great servants in the Master's cause, but the whole of that put together is not worth a straw compared with this, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." And this is all we ask of you—we only ask you, if you wish to join the church, to be able to confess that you are a changed character, that you are a new man, that you are willing to be obedient to Christ and to His ordinances. And then we are only too glad to receive you into our midst. Come out, come out, I pray you! You who are hiding among the trees of the forest, come forth! Whoever is on the Lord's side, let him come forth! It is a day of blasphemy and rebuke. He that is not with Christ is against Him, and he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad. Come forth, come forth, you that have any spark of love for God, or else this shall be your doom, "Curse you Meroz, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

IV. And now, to conclude, my text may be used in another way, for it sets before us A VERY CLEAR AND MANIFEST DISTINCTION.

You cannot, everyone of you, say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." My Hearers, solemnly, as in the sight of God, I speak to you. Lend me your ears and may these few words of the Truth of God sink into your hearts! Are there not some of you who cannot even say, "I was blind"? You do not know your own blindness. You have the conceit to imagine that you are as good as most people and that if you have same faults, yet certainly you are not irretrievably lost! You have no idea that you are depraved, utterly depraved, saturated through and

through and rotten at the core. If I were to describe you in Scriptural language and say, "You are the man," you would be shocked at men for giving you so bad a character! You are amiable, your outward carriage has always been decorous, you have been generous and benevolent and, therefore, you think there is no need for you to be born-again—no necessity for you to repent of sin! You think that the Gospel is very suitable for those who have gone into foul, open sin, but you are too *good*, rather than too bad! O my Hearers, you are stone-blind and the proof that you are so is this—you do not know your blindness! A man who is born blind does not know what it is to lose sight! The bright beams of the sun never made his heart glad and, therefore, he does not know his misery! And such is your state. You do not understand what it is that you have lost. What it is that you need. I pray God to do for you what you cannot do for yourselves—make you feel now, once and for all, that you are blind! There is hope for the man who knows his blindness—there is some light in the man who says he is all darkness—there is some good thing in the man who says he is all foul. If you can say—

"Vile and full of sin I am"—

God has begun a good work in you! You know that when the leper was afflicted with leprosy from head to foot, the priest looked at him and if there was a single spot where there was *no leprosy*, he was unclean, but the moment the leprosy covered him everywhere, then he was made clean—and so you, if you know your sin so as to feel you utterly ruined, lost estate, God has begun a good work in you—and He will put away your sin and save your soul. Alas, there are many who do not know that they are blind.

And yet I know, to my sorrow, there are many of you who *do* know that you are blind, but *you don't yet see*. I hope you may—I hope you may. To know your blindness is well, but it is not enough. It would be a dreadful thing for you to go from an awakened conscience on earth to a tormenting conscience in Hell. There have been some who have begun to find out that they are lost here and then have discovered that they are lost hereafter as well. I pray you, do not tarry long in this state! If God has convinced you of sin, I pray you do not linger! I prayed tonight that the Lord would save us, and He is now waiting. The way of salvation—oh, how many times I have preached this! And how many times more will it be necessary to tell you over and over again the same thing? The way of salvation is simply this—trust Christ and you are saved! Just as you are, rely upon Him and you are saved. With no other dependence, with no other shadow of a hope, Sinner, venture on Him. Venture wholly, venture now! I hear the wheels of the Judge's chariot behind you. He comes! He comes! He comes! Flee, Sinner, flee! I see God's bow in His awful hand and He has drawn the arrow to its very head. Flee, sinner! Flee while yet the wounds of Christ stand open! Hide yourself there as in the cleft of the Rock of Ages. You have not a lease of your life, you cannot tell that you shall ever see another Sabbath to spend in pleasure! No more warnings may ever ring in your ears. Perhaps you will never have even another week-day to spend in drunkenness and blasphemy. Sinner, turn! God

puts this alternative before some of you tonight—turn or burn! "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die?" One of the two it must be—die or turn! Believe in Christ or perish with a great destruction. "He that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." And you who are awakened and convicted tonight, I pray you to trust Christ and live!

The whole matter is very simple, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Do you, tonight, see that Christ can save you? Do you believe that He will save you if you will trust Him? Then trust Him and you are saved! The moment you believe, you are saved, whether you feel the comfort of it or not—yes, and the thought arising from the full belief that you are saved will yield you the comfort which you will never find elsewhere! Have I trust in Christ, O my Soul? You know, O Lord, I have! You know I have—

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

It is written, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Then I am not condemned. Perhaps I feel at this present moment no joy, but then the thought that I am not condemned will make me feel joy, by-and-by. Yet I must not build on my joy, I must not build on my feelings, but simply on this—that God has said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I, believing in Christ am saved. And that is true of you, also—you in the aisle over yonder. You by that door there, and you behind me here. It is true of every man, woman, or child in this place who has now come to put trust in Christ! It is true of the man in the smock frock who did not intend to come here tonight, but who, seeing the people, strolled in and who has been saying in his heart, "I will believe. I will trust Christ." Well, then, you are saved, your sin is blotted out, your iniquity is forgiven, you are a child of God, the Lord accepts you—if you have really trusted Christ—you are an heir of Heaven! Go and sin no more! Go and rejoice in pardoning love. And God bless you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 10:46-52; JOHN 9:1-7.

We have several records of blind men being cured by the Lord Jesus Christ. One of them is in Mark 10:46-52.

Mark 10:46. *And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people.* For now His march to the battle was like a triumphal march, which was, by-and-by, to be attended with the waving of palms and the shout of Hosannas—"as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people."

46, 47. *Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth.* That is all that the crowd called Him—"Jesus of Nazareth."

47. *He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, You son of David, have mercy on me!* He had advanced much further than the mass of the people. To him it was not "Jesus of Nazareth," but it was "Jesus, You Son of David."

49-50. *And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, You son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.* Blind as he was, he found his way to the Savior—I suppose the ears directed by the voice helped him to do so.

51. *And Jesus answered and said unto him, What will you, that I should do unto you? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.* His request was plainly put, but it was most respectfully and even adoringly addressed to Christ.

52. *And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole.* You will find that it is often the Savior's way to thus give the credit of His own work to the patient's faith. "Your faith," He says, "has made you whole." Whereas, you and I, if we do a good thing, are very anxious that nobody else should take the credit for it. We are very willing to have all the honor put upon ourselves, but Jesus does not say, "I have made you whole," though that was true enough, but, "Your faith has made you whole." And why is it, do you think, that Christ takes the crown off His own head to put it on the head of Faith? Why? Because He loves Faith and because Faith is quite certain not to wear that crown, but to lay it at His feet! Of all the Graces, Faith is the surest to deny herself and ascribe all to Him in whom she trusts.

52. *And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.* Another of these records is in John 9:1-7.

John 9:1-7. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* I will not say anything now about this miracle, as it will form the subject of my sermon. [The exposition was *before* the sermon.]

—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 HANDKERCHIEF
NO. 2956

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1875.

"Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" John 20:15.

IN the Garden of Eden, immediately after the Fall, the sentence of sorrow and of sorrow multiplied, fell upon the woman. In the garden where Christ had been buried, after His Resurrection, the news of comfort—comfort rich and Divine—came to a woman through the woman's promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. If the sentence must fall heavily upon the woman, so must the comfort come most sweetly to her. I will not say that the Resurrection reversed the curse of the Fall, but, at any rate, it took the sting out of it, lifted it up and sanctified it! There was reason enough for the woman to weep after the sentence had been pronounced upon her, but there is no reason for her to weep now that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the promise which followed upon man's disobedience, namely, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

Observe the wise method followed by the Divine Consoler. In order to comfort Mary Magdalene, our Lord put a question to her. It is often the wisest way to relieve minds that are swollen through grief to allow them to find the natural end of their sorrow by asking them why they are weeping. We have to do this with ourselves sometimes. We enquire, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" The soul begins to ask for the reason of its grief and often finds that it is insufficient to justify so bitter a sorrow and, perhaps, it even discovers that the sources of its sorrow have been misunderstood and that, if they had been rightly comprehended, they would have been sources of joy instead! He who would be wise in dealing with the daughters of grief, must let them tell their own story and, almost without a single sentence from you, their own story will be blessed by God to the relieving of their grief.

Moreover, it is always wise, before we attempt to comfort anyone, to know what is the peculiar form and fashion which grief has taken. The physician who without investigation should at once proceed to apply a remedy to his patient, might be giving the wrong medicine for the disease. He has to make his diagnosis of the malady, to see whence it came, what are its symptoms, and how it works—and then the physician adapts his medicine to the case. Sit down with your sorrow, my Friend,

and let us hear what ails you. What causes you to fret? What causes your soul to travail? Possibly the sorrowing ones will themselves direct you to the right remedy for their malady and so you shall be able to speak a word in season and, "a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" You are at present like a man groping in the dark and you will be as one pouring vinegar upon niter if you sing songs to a heavy heart! And you will make matters worse which you had hoped to make better unless you find out the cause of the mourner's tears.

My one objective at this time is to take this question of our Lord to Mary and apply it to all who are sorrowing here. And although I shall keep to the text and repeat the question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" I shall hope that other sorrowers besides the women here will find comfort from the words which the Holy Spirit will teach me to speak. I shall ask, first, *is it natural sorrow?* And secondly, *is it spiritual sorrow?*

I. We will first enquire about that which is common to us all without exception, IS IT NATURAL SORROW? Is it sorrow which springs from our human nature and is common to all who are born of woman, to whom sorrow comes as a portion of our heritage?

Well, my Friend, what is the cause of your grief? What ails you? *Is it because you are bereaved?* Have you lost someone who was very dear to you? Then your grief is not unusual and your weeping is not unpardonable, for Jesus wept as He stood at the grave of His friend Lazarus. But let not your weeping go beyond due bounds. Your tears are right enough so far, but they may be wrong if they go any further. There is a weeping of regret and of a lacerated spirit, upon which God looks with pity, but there may come a weeping of rebelliousness upon which even our Heavenly Father may feel that He must look with anger. "Why are you weeping?" Will you look into your heart, Beloved, and see whether the cause of your grief is such as does fully justify it, or see whether you have already carried it too far? You have lost a child—a lovely child, but, my Sister, you have not really lost your child. Do you count that lost which is in Christ's keeping? Do you count that baby lost which is up among the angels? If your child had been taken to be a prince in a palace, you would not have said that he was lost! Inasmuch as he has been caught away to be with Jesus, say not that he is lost. You are the mother of one who can see the face of God and thus says the Lord unto you, "Refrain your eyes from weeping, for your children shall come again from the land of their captivity."

Have you lost your husband? It is a heavy blow and well may you weep, but still, who took him from you? Was it not He who lent him to you? Bless the Lord that you have had all those years of comfort and joy! And say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." The loss of your husband has made a great void in your life, but the Lord will fill that void. Do you know Him? Then He will be a Husband unto you and a Father to your fatherless children. He has said, "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me." You are a widow. Then trust in the

Lord. If you are a widow without faith in God, then yours is a sorrow, indeed, but if the widow's sorrow shall drive her to trust in Christ as her Savior, if she shall look up and in her deep sorrow trust herself with the great Helper of the helpless, she shall find her loss to be a gain!

"Woman, why are you weeping?" Whatever relative or friend you have lost, your God will be more to you than the loved one could ever be! The Well-Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, is better to us than all earthly friends. And when they are taken away from us, He more than fills the space which once they occupied, so that, if we have less of human love, we have more of the Divine—and thus we are gainers rather than losers! Look forward to the Resurrection and be comforted. Remember that the worm has not consumed the beauty forever, neither has the precious temple of the body been given up to everlasting ruin. If they fell asleep in Christ, as surely as they were buried they shall rise again in beauty, in the image of Jesus Christ! So let us not sorrow as those who are without hope. Brush away your tears, or, if they must fall, smile through them in sweet resignation to the Divine will and be still.

"Why are you weeping?" Is there another reason for your sorrow? *Do you weep because you are very poor?* There are some who do not know the sorrow of poverty, who will, perhaps, blame you. But I know that there are some of you who have a hard task to find a livelihood—a task at which a slave might be pitied. In this great city many toil till they wear themselves almost to skeletons—and even then scarcely find food enough to keep body and soul together! There are some of the choicest sons and daughters of the Lord who seem to be the lowest of all in the scale of this world's possessions! And their lot, from morning to night, is one of incessant drudgery. Were it not for these sweet Sabbaths, to live on earth would be to them altogether a bondage! But weep not, my poor Sister. Weep not, my poor Brother. There is One who was poorer than you are who will bear your burdens for you! Jesus Christ was poorer than poverty because He had once been so exceedingly rich—and none are so poor as those who come down from wealth to poverty. You know that though He was rich, yet, for our sakes, He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich. Poor mourner, remember the promise to him that walks righteously and speaks uprightly—"Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." Remember, also, how the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Why, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them." So, will He not feed you, also? Wipe away your tears! Bend your back to the burden which God has laid upon you, "and be content with such things as you have, for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

"Woman, why are you weeping?" Suppose that neither of these causes account for your sorrow, *have you a beloved sick one at home?* Yes, and you may well weep if that sickness has been long—and if it wears away the beauty from the cheeks and the brightness from the eyes and if it costs innumerable pains and anguish only to be understood by those who suffer it and those who watch, hour by hour, by the sufferer. I can understand your weeping and yet, Beloved, your case is in Christ's hands and you may safely leave your dear ones in His hands. He never sent a trial to any child of His unless it was so necessary that to have withheld it would have been unkind! Accept it as the Lord's love-token. Besides, remember that He can recover our loved ones if He deems it wise, or He can sustain them in their sickness if He does not see fit to recover them. And he can give them a joyful exit from this world and an abundant entrance into His everlasting Kingdom. So do not weep too much, but say, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

Possibly, however, the weeping may come to us because *we have sickness in our own bodies*. While we are sitting or standing here, some of us little know the amount of suffering that may be felt by the person who is sitting next to us. I have often wondered how some of my beloved hearers ever manage to get here at all—yet they are here, although full of pain. They find a sweet forgetfulness, at least for a little time, while the Word is being preached and they cannot forego the pleasure of mingling with the people of God, even though it costs them many a sharp pang. Yet I would urge even such sufferers to dry their tears. It may be that the dreaded disease of consumption is gradually wearing away the life, but, my Sister, it is no ill thing to just swoon away into Heaven and to gently pass from this life to another and a brighter day! Perhaps you are suffering from some painful disease which is known to be fatal. Well, that is only another way of bringing a King's messenger to take you swiftly Home. If you have no Christ, you may well weep if you have received your death-wound, for after death comes judgment. This disease is a messenger sent to bid you prepare to meet your God. Suppose you were smitten down today? God has given you a timely warning. Take it, I pray you, and, instead of weeping over your sickness, may the Holy Spirit enable you to weep over your *sin* and to trust in Christ as your Savior, for then all shall be well! If we have believed in Jesus, we need not weep, even though the dread archer may have lodged the fatal shaft quite near our heart. What is there to weep about? When a Christian has received an intimation that he is soon to be with his Savior in Glory, we may congratulate him that he is the sooner to be out of the strife and the sin—and to forever wear the crown of victory and glory! So we will not weep about that.

Perhaps I am addressing one who says, "My sorrow is neither bereavement, nor personal sickness, nor the sickness of friends, nor poverty—I sometimes think I could bear any or all of those trials. I have been the victim of a treacherous friend *I trusted and have been deceived*. I gave my heart's best affections and have been betrayed." You, too, dear

Friend, are not alone in that trial. There was One, far better than you, on whose cheek came the hot kiss from the betrayer's lips, so that Jesus said to Judas, "Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Many have had so-called friends who, in the time of testing, have been more cruel than avowed foes. They have been as the cunning fowler who spreads his net so warily that he may catch the little birds. Well, if your case is like that of the birds, fly away to Jesus! Trust Him, for He will never deceive you. If Jesus shall fill that vacancy in your heart, it will have been a blessed vacancy! A broken heart is best healed by a touch of the pierced hand of Jesus! Get away to Him, you Hannah, you woman of a sorrowful spirit—go to the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and He will find a balm for your spirit.

I cannot go further into these natural sorrows—they are so many and the river of grief is so deep and rapid. But, whatever your sorrow may be, one piece of advice I have to give to every weeping one—find the Divine Comforter and, whatever your griefs may be, they shall be relieved!

II. Now I come to our main question, which is this, IS IT SPIRITUAL SORROW? If so, *is it sorrow for others, or sorrow for yourselves*?

I will begin with the nobler form. "Woman, why are you weeping?" Do you weep for others? Are there some whom you love and for whom you have often prayed who remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity? This is a suitable subject for mourning. Weep not for those who have gone to be "forever with the Lord," for all is well with them! But weep for those who are living in sin—for the young man in his unbridled lust who has dishonored his father's name—for the daughter who, in her willfulness, has gone astray into the paths of transgression. Weep for the heart that will not break. Weep for the eyes that will not weep. Weep for the sinners who will not confess their sins, but are resolutely seeking their own damnation! Ah, my dear Friends, when you are weeping like that, you are weeping as your Savior did when He wept over Jerusalem—and God will put your tears into His bottle. Be comforted, for those tears of yours are omens of good to the souls you pity, for, as surely as you groan and sigh and cry over these beloved ones, you are doing what you can to bring them the blessing! And I think that is a token that the blessing of God is on its way to them. You remember that it is written that "the power of the Lord was present to heal" on a certain occasion? Why was it more present, then, than at any other time? Was it not because there were four men who were breaking up the roof to let down a sick one into the room where Christ was? Wherever there is real concern for souls, although it is only in four persons, there is about the ministry a power of an unusual kind! Go on, then, and still weep, but not hopelessly, not with the bitterness of despair. The Lord will see your tears and will hear your prayers, and will grant your petition, even though you may not live to see it! Perhaps when you are in Heaven, your son, your husband, your sister—over whom you now are weeping, shall be brought to Christ.

Possibly, however, the sorrow for others relates to the church with which this mourner is connected. It is often my lot to meet with Brothers and Sisters coming from country towns who say to me, "What are we to do? The place of worship where we attend might almost as well be pulled down, for there is no life, no energy, no power there." Oh, it is wretched work, indeed, when that is the case! Many towns and villages would be all the better if the meeting house and the parish church, too, were utterly demobilized—because then they would feel that they had not any religious means at all and would, perhaps, be stirred up to seek them! But now there is dead formalism in both places. There is nothing worse than sluggishness in the pastors and members of a church. What is the use of a dead church? It is no use at all! The fact is, the better a church is, the sooner it rots when it is dead. The man who is very stout is the very worst person to keep in the house when once he is dead—and the church that seems to be most packed with Divine Truth is the most obnoxious to all when once the life goes out of it.

Well, my dear Friends, if you are sorrowing over the low condition of the church to which you belong and the state of religion in general in the neighborhood where you live, I would not stop your tears, yet I would try to comfort you, and I would advise you to take the case to your Lord. He is the Head of the Church, so carry that burden to Him. Do not go about finding fault. Do not try to sow dissension and dissatisfaction, or you will do hurt instead of good. But lay the matter before your Lord and Master and give Him no rest till once again He puts forth His almighty power and raises His Church to life!

Now I must leave this point, but I think that it is a grand thing to sorrow and weep for others. We ought to make it a rule of our life to bear the sorrows of other people. If sinners will not repent, we cannot repent for them. If they will not believe, we cannot believe for them. True religion can never be a matter of sponsorship, but we can do this for sinners—we can say to the Lord, "O Lord, these sinners will not feel their sin, but we feel it! It grieves us and cuts us to the heart! O Lord, will You not give them repentance? Will You not cause these sinners to believe in You? We confess their iniquity before You, for we know the guiltiness of their hearts in rejecting You. We weep and mourn that they will not admire Your beauty and will not yield their hearts to You, but, dear Savior, *do* win their hearts in answer to our prayer. They are far away from God by their wicked works—bring them nearby Your precious blood." That is what I mean. And if you can do this, appropriating, as it were, the sins and sorrows of mankind to yourself, you will be showing your sympathy with them in the best possible way. Woman, if you weep thus for others, blessed are you among women!

But, now, "why are you weeping?" *Is it for yourself?* Are these spiritual sorrows on your own account? Are you a sorrowing child of God? Do you know yourself to be a Christian and yet do you weep? Then, what is the cause of your grief? Do you miss your Lord's Presence? If so, there is reason enough for your weeping, yet why should you weep? He is present

even now—you have not seen Him, but He has seen you and is gazing upon you at this very moment. Beloved mourner, do not say, "I am out of fellowship with Christ and I am afraid I cannot return to that blessed experience for months." Listen to this text—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door"—that is all—"I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." It was to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, the lukewarm Laodiceans, that these words were written! And they are also written to you, my Sister, and to you, my Brother if you have grown lukewarm. Be willing for Christ to come to you and, before you are aware, your soul shall make you like the chariots of Amminadib! Do not imagine that restoration to communion with Christ need occupy a longer time than conversion—and remember, conversion is often worked instantaneously! So you may be lifted up from the depths of despondency to the heights of sacred fellowship with your Lord before this present service closes. Be of good cheer and let your joy be renewed this very hour!

But perhaps you say, "I weep because I have grieved my Lord." Those are blessed tears, although the offense which caused them is grievous. Well may we be grieved when Christ has been grieved by us, but, mourning Soul, though He is rightly grieved with you, remember this gracious declaration, "He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever." And this comforting promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer." Only confess that you have transgressed against the Lord, your Redeemer, and you may come back to Him at once! No, even now He comes to meet with you and He brings with Him the basin and the towel, that He may wash your soiled feet, for He has washed you once in His blood and now He will again wash your feet and you shall be clean, every whit, and shall walk with cleansed feet in renewed fellowship with your Lord!

Possibly some of you say that your sorrow is that you are not as holy as you wish to be. Ah, that is a sorrow which I share with you, for I can say with the Apostle Paul, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." And though I hear of some who do not find that evil is present with them, I suspect that the reason is because they do not know themselves as they really are, or they would find that it was so with them, at least at times. If I could, I would be without one sinful thought, or word, or deed, or imagination, or wish—and so would you—and because you cannot be so at present, you weep. It is well that such tears should fall, only do not let these tears dim your view of Christ! Do not let those longings prevent your knowing that you are perfect and complete in Christ Jesus! Do not let your struggles hinder you from believing that Christ has conquered sin *for* you and that He will yet conquer sin *in* you. Do not let anything take away from you the full conviction that sin shall be altogether destroyed in you and that Christ will present you to His Father, "without

spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," "holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight."

Perhaps you say that your sorrow is because you can do so little for Christ. Ah, there again I have sympathy with you, but do not fret about that. Those of us who have the largest opportunities, are often those who most regret that we can so little avail ourselves of them. But I know some godly women who are confined to the house with the care of a numerous family, or, worse still, are confined to their bed in constant pain—and one of their greatest griefs is that they can do so little for Christ. But, Brother, Sister, do you not know the rule of David and the rule of David's Lord? They that abide by the supplies shall have the same portion as they who go out to the battle! You are like the soldiers who have to keep in the rear and guard the baggage. But when the King comes back with all the active troops who have been doing the fighting, you will share the victory with them! You who are at home keeping the camp preserve many things which might be forgotten if we were all on active service. Be you comforted, then, if you are called to suffer or to be in obscurity—you shall be equal to the man and woman who are called to labor more prominently. Do what you can! I do not know that Christ Himself ever praised anybody more than He did that woman of whom He said, "She has done what she could." I daresay she wanted to do a great deal more, but she did what she could. And if you have done what you could, it is well.

"Ah," says another, "but I am conscious of a great deal of weakness. What I do is done so badly. Even in prayer, I do not always prevail. My petitions often seem to come back to me unanswered." Well, dear Friend, do not altogether regret your weakness, for there was one who said that when he was weak, he was strong. If you have many infirmities which make you weak, there is a way of glorying in infirmities because the power of Christ rests upon you! Suppose that you are not only weak, but that you are weakness itself—that you are nothing and nobody? When you have reached that point, the cause of your weeping will have vanished because where you end, there God begins! And when you have done with self, then Christ will be All-in-All to you and you will lift up your voice in praise of Him who has done such great things for you!

Many strange things happen to young Christians between the time of their conversion and their entrance into Heaven. Their program of life is seldom carried out. The map which they make of the route is not according to the true geography of it. They reckon that as soon as they have believed in Jesus they will enter into sweet peace and rest, which is probably correct, but they also suppose that this peace and rest will always continue and probably increase—that they will go to Heaven singing all the way, along pleasant roads and paths of peace—and that the light upon their way will get brighter and brighter till it comes to the perfect day! They feel so happy and they sing so sweetly that they imagine it will always be with them just as it was in the first hours of their Christian experience. They are like persons who have, for the first

time in their lives, come into the bright light of day after having lived in a deep mine, or been immured in a dark dungeon! They ask what season of the year it is and they are told that it is springtime, that the flowers have begun to bloom, but that there are more to follow. They hear the birds singing, but they are told that there are brighter days to come, that May is a fairer month than April and June still brighter, and then will come the months of harvest when the sickle shall be thrust in among the golden grain.

All this is very cheering, so this new beginner plans that tomorrow he will be out all day upon the green grass, or in the gardens admiring the bursting buds and gathering for himself many a delightful garland of flowers! But, perhaps, when he gets up tomorrow morning, the Heavens are black with clouds and a torrent of rain is falling. "Oh," he says, "I never reckoned upon this!" Then, perhaps, in June, there comes such a hurry-burly in the sky as he never thought of—flames of fire and loud thunders out of the Heavens and dreadful drenching showers intermixed with rattling hail. "Oh," he says, "I never calculated upon this! I thought the months were to grow brighter and brighter and that, at last, there would come the golden harvest." We tell him that these rains and storms all conduce to the very result which we promised him and that they are by no means contrary to our statement. We were only giving him a brief outline of the year's history and these things are by no menus contrary to our outline—nor need he fear but that the month of harvest will come in due season. It is true, young Christian, that you will have a light upon your road and that it will grow more and more bright unto the perfect day! It is true that the ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Your highest conception of the joy to be found in Christ is not an exaggerated one. However much delight you may anticipate, you shall have all that and you shall also have even more, as you are able to bear it! But intermittent times will come—strange times to you—in which your joy will seem to be dead and your peace will be fearfully disturbed. Your soul will be "tossed with tempest and not comforted." You will sorrowfully sit in sackcloth and ashes and you will not go to the table of feasting, but to the house of mourning. There will you be made to drink the water of tears and have your bread salted with grief. Be not surprised, then, when this comes to pass, as though some strange things had happened to you. Remember that we have told you of it. We who have gone further on the road to Heaven than you have gone, tell you that there will come dark times and stormy times—and we bid you prepare for them.

Now I must turn to others in our assembly. "Woman, why are you weeping?" Perhaps you say, "O Sir, I dare not put myself down among the saints!" Well, then, will you put yourself down among the sinners? "Yes, I am a sinner," you reply, "yet I think—I hope I am not altogether without some little faith in Christ. I sometimes feel myself inclined to love Him but, oftentimes, I am of another mind, averse to all that is good."

Ah, my Friend, I know you and I have met with many like your class. I said once to one of your sort, "You say that you are not a Christian." "No," she said, "I fear I am not." "Then," I asked, "why do you go to the House of God on the Sabbath? Why don't you stay at home, or go where sinners go?" "Oh, no, Sir," she answered, "I could not do that! When I hear people blaspheme the name of Christ it cuts me to the quick. And I am never as happy as when I am with the people of God. I enjoy the hymns that they sing and while I am with them, my heart gets so warm that I feel as if I must praise the Lord. I think it is a great mercy that I cannot help blessing and praising God." "Well, then," I said, "I think that you must really have some faith in Christ or you would not feel and act as you do."

I remember hearing of a minister who wrote down these words, "I do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and asked a person who was full of doubt to sign her name to that declaration, but she would not do that! She did believe in Christ though she did not think that she believed. I once offered a person who said she had no faith, a five pound note if she would give up her faith, but she said that she would not take a thousand worlds for it! Mrs. Much-Afraid, and Mr. Despondency, and Mr. Feeble-Mind, and Mr. Ready-to-Halt—there are plenty of that family still living! And I know why you weep, good woman, for you also belong to that tribe! Well, then, if you cannot come to Christ as a saint, come to Him as a sinner! If you have made a mistake and have really never trusted in Christ—do it now! If you really have not repented and have not believed and have not been renewed in heart, remember that it is still written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And, "whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If the title-deeds of your spiritual estate are not genuine, but forgeries, do not dispute the question with one who is wiser than yourself—come straight away to Jesus Christ, empty-handed, in the manner in which He bids all sinners come to Him—and then I shall not have to ask, "Why are you weeping?"

But, last of all, is this person who is weeping, a seeking sinner? Christ not only said to Mary Magdalene, "Why are you weeping?" but also, "Whom are you seeking?" for He knew that she was seeking HIM. I would give all I possess if I might always preach to weeping sinners who are seeking Christ. I sometimes think that I would like to be always weeping on account of sin, if I might be always sure that I was seeking Jesus. It is possible that there has come into this place someone who is seeking a Savior. Ah, weeping woman! Do you weep because sin burdens you? Do you weep because sweet sin has become bitter to you? Do you weep because the things wherein your soul once delighted have now become your torment and your grief? Then I rejoice over your tears for they are precious in God's sight! They are more valuable than the finest diamonds in the world! Blessed is the soul that can repent of sin!

But, possibly, your weeping is because you are afraid of being rejected by Christ. Put every tear of that kind away for there is no fear of one sinner who comes to Christ being rejected by Him! As I reminded you

just now, He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come, then, you burdened sinner! Come, you heavy-laden soul and trust yourself with Jesus! And then He cannot—unless He can completely change, and that is impossible—He cannot reject you! Come and trust Him even now and you shall be saved this very hour!

But, perhaps, your weeping is for this reason. You say, "Alas, I have been awakened before this and I thought that I would seek the Lord. I did get some hope and I fancied that I was relieved of sin, but I have gone back and my last end has been worse than the first." Well may you weep if that is really the case and I cannot forbid you to do so. But, my dear Friend, if you came falsely once, that is only one more reason why you should now come truly! If you once built on the sand and that house is gone, it is but another argument for building on the rock! If you were excited and mistook a transient emotion for the work of the Spirit of God—if you put presumption in the place of faith, do not do it again, but come, just as you now are, and rest your weary soul on Christ's atoning Sacrifice and you shall find peace—immediate and permanent peace!

But possibly you weep because you say, "If I came to Christ, I fear I should not hold on to Him to the end." I know you would not by yourself, but I also know that He will hold you on if you will but come and trust Him! It is not you who has to keep Christ—it is Christ who has to keep you! I should not wonder if your former failure arose from your having so much to do with it. So, have nothing to do with it this time! If you are very weak, lean all the more heavily on your Beloved. No, if you are *nothing*, let Christ be all the more to you because of your nothingness! If you are black with sin, give all the more praise to the blood that can make you whiter than snow! If you realize that you are lost and fear that you will be found among the damned, flee the more eagerly to those bleeding wounds which give life, not merely to perishing sinners, but to sinners dead in trespasses and sins!

"Ah," says one, "I think you have invited me, but I feel as though I cannot come and I weep because I cannot come for I do not properly understand the matter." Well, then, dry your tears and listen while I tell you the story again. And we who believe in Jesus will pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to understand the Truth of God. The Father, whom you have offended, does not ask you to *do* anything to make Him pleased with you. He does not wish you to contribute either good works or right feelings in order to make an atonement for your sin. His dear Son, Jesus Christ, has made the only Atonement for sin that can ever be made! What the Father bids you do is to accept what His Son has done and trust alone to that. Can you not do this? What more do you need, you doubting, sorrowing seekers, but that you trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was nailed to Calvary's Cross, but is now risen from the dead and gone back to His Glory with the Father? We sometimes sing, in one of our hymns—

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

And I say the same to you who are seeking Christ! "What more can He say to you?" What sort of a promise would you like Him to make to you? Shall it be one like this, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"? You say that you would like such a promise as that—well, there is that very one in the Bible! Or would this one suit 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"? Or would this one meet your case, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"? Surely this one must suit you, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Or this message, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Or this, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near."

If these do not meet your case, I do not know what you would wish to have. My Lord, by His blessed Spirit, seems to have put the Gospel into all sorts of lights to suit all sorts of eyes, and He tells us, His ministers, to labor for this end, to get you to look at Jesus Christ. I have tried to do this and I beseech you not to be content with your weeping, or your feelings, or your Bible searching—do not be content even with prayer! This way of salvation is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" So, rest in Him—that is believing! Trust in Him, depend upon Him—that is another way of believing in Him. And when you have done that, you are saved—saved the moment you believe in Jesus! The great work of salvation then commences in you, as the work of salvation for you is already complete and you shall be saved from your sins, made new creatures, and made holy creatures through the power of that blessed Spirit whom Jesus Christ bestows upon those who believe in Him!

May God bless the words I have spoken to the comfort of some! I believe He will. I expect He will. I know He will! And He shall have the Glory. 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.

ADVANCE!
NO. 2957

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1905.

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"The LORD our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying,
You have dwelt long enough in this mountain."
Deuteronomy 1:6.

IT is a good thing, sometimes, to look back—to take a retrospective view of our life. It is a very bad thing to live upon the past—to say, "I believe I am a child of God because I had certain spiritual enjoyments and experiences 10 or 12 years ago." Ah, such stale fare as this will not feed hungry souls. They need present enjoyment, or, at least, present confidence in the ever-living God. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we may sometimes gather fuel for today from the ashes of yesterday's fire. Remembering the mercies of God in the past, we may rest assured concerning the present and the future.

If we have wisely learned by experience, we may, from our own failures in the past, gain wisdom which shall enable us to avoid the evils which overcame us on former occasions. It is well to do as you may sometimes have seen the bargemen do on a river or canal. They walk backward, pushing with all their might backward, to drive their barge forward and, sometimes, we may go backward just far enough to help us to push forward, but no further than that! Never must anyone of us say to himself, "What I was in my youth, or what I was in middle life, is a sufficient comfort for me now. Soul, take your ease, for I have much goods laid up for many years." That will never do, for we need to exercise a present faith to enjoy a present love—and to live in present holiness and fear of the Lord. Yet it will help us if we remember all the ways whereby the Lord our God has led us these many years in the wilderness.

But, coming to our text, we are reminded that *we must expect changes*—"You have dwelt long enough in this mountain." Secondly, *we ought not to make these changes without the authorization of our Divine Leader*—"The Lord our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying, You have dwelt long enough in this mountain." But, thirdly, *in our spiritual pilgrimage there are times when it becomes very clear that we have been long enough in a certain condition and need to make an advance towards the Canaan which is our blest inheritance.*

I. To begin, then, WE MUST EXPECT CHANGES.

Israel was not always to dwell at Horeb and even the choicest place of Divine manifestation is not always to be ours. The land of Jordan and of the Hermonites and the Hill Mizar, though very precious to us because of the spiritual experiences we have enjoyed there, are not to be our permanent places of abode. We have to journey onward and pitch our tent somewhere else.

We need not wonder at this, my Brothers and Sisters, *for this is a changing world*. We would be out of gear with the whole creation if we did not frequently change. Behold how the year changed. It seems but yesterday that the rivers were locked in ice. Soon we saw the flowers peeping up from the soil and now we have reached midsummer—and shall soon be looking for the appointed weeks of harvest! And it will not be long before winter will be here again. On this earth, on the greatest or on the minutest scale, all things change, whether it is an empire that rises and passes away, or a crocus or a rose that blooms and fades. All things that are, once were not and, by-and-by, shall not be, or, at least, the place which knows them, now, shall know them no more forever. The forest once slept in an acorn cup. That some forest, beneath the axe, shall pass away and vanish into smoke. All things change and, therefore, we, also, must expect to change.

And, mark you, *we have already changed*. Perhaps we had a happy childhood and can remember even now the songs of the nursery and the holy hymns of our cradle days. But there came a time when we had dwelt long enough in that mountain, for it would have been ill for us always to continue as children. Then we were youths and were at school. And perhaps we recollect with pleasure those free days of boyhood and girlhood when, if we did not know the value of knowledge, at any rate we found that those who taught us had more pleasant ways of teaching than our fathers knew! But it was not well for us to always stay at school—there came a time when our parents felt and we felt that we had stayed long enough in that mountain. Since that, some of us have passed from change to change till we have come to the full maturity of spiritual life. And some of you I see, with the snows of many a winter lying on your brows, are approaching yet another change—you know that, by-and-by, you must come to another, for it will be said of you, "You have dwelt long enough in this mountain." And so, we shall pass through all the several stages of man till we come to the blessed mountain where we shall never dwell too long, nor ever feel that we have dwelt there long enough! But while we are beneath the moon, there must be waxing and waning to all who come under the moon's spell. And where the very heart of the earth, like a great sea, has its ebbs and its floods, we cannot but expect that we, too, should have our ebbs and our floods without us and within us.

We must expect to have changes, next, because *it is good for us to have them.* For, if not, we might become rooted to the earth. This is not our rest. But if we were always in one place and in one state, we would begin to think that it was. Have you not noticed, with regard to the brethren who are free from trouble—who, to use a Scriptural simile, have

not been emptied from vessel to vessel—how they settle on their lees and what a scum generally rises upon the surface of such people's hearts? Because they have no changes, they begin to think that they shall continue forever as they are. They do not put that thought into words—they are not quite so foolish—yet they have the notion treasured up in their hearts that tomorrow will be as this day, only more abundant, and all the future in a similar fashion. If we have a long-continued spell of calm weather, we are apt to think that it will always be so. And if it *were* always so, perhaps we would get into as bad a condition as Coleridge pictures in his "*Ancient Mariner*." Because there was no wind to drive the ship along and the tropical sun was shining everywhere, everything was becoming corrupt. God knows that our tendency is in that direction and, therefore, He makes us to be pilgrims and strangers here—as all our fathers were.

Were it not for changes, too, *some would grow utterly weary*. Some of God's children would welcome almost any change from their present condition. They suffer, perhaps, from abject poverty—perhaps from unkindness on the part of those who ought to love and care for them. It may be that their condition is one in which the iron enters into their soul. Possibly their sorrow is a secret sorrow and the more severe because it must be kept to themselves and cannot be communicated to others. A worm, unseen by any human eye, is gnawing at their heart. They dare not mention it! If they did, they would not be sympathized with and might even be ridiculed. Ah, we little know the sorrows of others and there are some who look most cheerful and are wise to look so, who ought to be praised because with sacred patience they keep their sorrow to themselves! There are some whom you, perhaps, are envying, who far more need your pity than they deserve your envy. There is much sorrow even among God's saints and it is a great mercy for them that the Lord sometimes turns their captivity. It seemed a pity that when Job had all his treasures, there should come such a change to him and that he should have to sit down among the ashes. But when he sat among the ashes, it was a happy circumstance for him that a change came and that, "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." What if you are the lowest spoke of the wheel just now? You will be the highest spoke in less than a minute, for the wheel is always turning round! You are not in a permanent position as to your low estate any more than as to your high estate—if prosperity does not endure, neither does adversity. It is written, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The hours of the night will pass away in due course and the joys of the morning will recompense you for the sorrows of the season of darkness.

Besides, dear Friends, it is well that we should have these changes because, *if we did not, we might, all of us, become unwatchful*. I do not know anything that helps more to take away the freshness and vigor with which a man does a thing than for him to do that particular thing every day. The same kind of thing happens when he does something many

times that at first is very trying. If you put a man into one of the big boilers over in Southwark when they are putting in the rivets—well, I would not like to be that man, for the hammering is apt to make him deaf. Yet I am told by those who have to be inside the boiler to hold the rivet head, that they do not know anything about the great noise, for they have got used to it. They are like the blacksmith's dog that will go to sleep under the anvil when the sparks are flying all around him—and it is possible to get used to anything in life. The sentinel who stands still in his box must not be very severely blamed if he goes to sleep. It is a good thing for him if he has a little walk to take, so that he can go to and fro with his rifle on his shoulder and thus may be able to stay awake by a change of posture. He may have a difficulty in doing that, however, if the watch is continued too long. The mill horse that goes round and round perpetually in a certain track, learns to sleep as he goes his round. There was a prisoner who was sentenced to the cruel punishment of being awakened every quarter of an hour throughout the night, but, at last, he learned to answer to the knock and still sleep right on—and so was not disturbed one whit!

I can well understand how, abiding in one state, we may get to be mechanical as a matter of routine, with no life and no vigor. I wonder how some of you would feel if you had to preach as often as I do? I wonder whether you would not find that it was apt to become rather mechanical? That is one of the things which I dread almost beyond all else and I trust that it will never become so with me, for I feel that if our ministry ever becomes merely mechanical, our usefulness will be completely destroyed. But the same thing may happen in Christian life—you may get to live mechanically. I have seen professedly Christian people who have done the right thing, but they have done it while they have been sound asleep. Did you ever go into a congregation—it has not been my lot to see such a sight often, but I have seen such a sight—where the minister has been fast asleep and the preaching has been nothing better than articulate snoring? There, the people sing while they are asleep and pray while they are asleep—there is no life, no force, no power, no change of any sort! Well now, if you could burn that meeting house down and the good man had to preach tomorrow in the little meadow by the side of it, why, he would then be wide awake and so would all his people! The mere change of position would do them good. Sometimes, sitting in a different seat might help people to feel a little more attentive to the message. It is for this reason that the Lord comes and shakes us up, and we begin to awake out of sleep and each one says, "Where am I? New troubles have given me new Grace and new comforts, so, Lord, I bless You for them. Give me new praises." Thus the change begins to do us good! It lifts us out of the old ruts and sets us doing something different from what we have done before—which we are able to do with a measure of freshness which we have not previously known. That may be one reason why we have changes.

Another reason is this—*if we have no changes in our pilgrimage, it is quite clear that we shall make no progress.* If the children of Israel had remained at Horeb they would never have reached the land of Canaan. We cannot stay in one place and go on to another at the same time! So, shifts and changes often promote growth. Look, there is a tree which has grown in the place it now occupies as much as it can grow there because there is not much earth there. And besides, there is a pan of rock just underneath it from which it cannot derive any nutriment. Now, if with care the husbandman lifts the tree and shifts it to another position where the soil is deeper and richer, the tree will develop wondrously! And, sometimes, it is so with us. We have grown as big in Christ as we ever shall grow in that particular position, so now we must be shifted into a new one. Why, our very comforts may be like a pan of rock under the tap-root of our soul! We cannot get down any deeper and it may be that our circumstances shut us in like huge walls through which the roots of our spiritual being cannot penetrate to get fresh nourishment. To make us grow, it is a good thing that we do not always remain in one position.

And, moreover, I believe that *our moves help us to grow in proportion,* for one condition of life may make us grow only in one way. There is one set of trials that we have and they develop a certain set of Graces. Or there is one kind of service that we perform which brings out one special faculty and strengthens and sanctifies it. But God does not want His children to grow so as to have their arms twice as long as their toes! And He does not want the trees of His own right-hand planting to be lop-sided trees, sending all their branches out either toward the East or the West, and having no boughs for the other points of the compass. God would have us to be developed as manhood should be—each faculty and limb and muscle having its fair share of harmonious growth—and the whole keeping up that equilibrium which is characteristic of all God's works.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been in a very comfortable position for a long time and you know that you have never had a trial to test your patience. The result is that you have not any patience! You are very impatient if you have even a little trouble. Now the Lord is going to shift you into a place where you will need a great deal of patience, but He will give it to you! And there is another side of your character of which you know next to nothing—and which none of your friends suppose that you possess—but the Lord is going to bring that out. He has painted one part of your portrait and He is now going to turn His attention, by His blessed Spirit, to another side of it, that it may be seen that you are a representation of all the Graces of the Christian character! You ought to be glad that it is so, for who knows how much of Glory God is about to get from you through this change, which, perhaps, you are looking upon with the greatest possible dread?

Once more, and then I shall have given reason enough why we must expect changes. It may be, Brothers and Sisters, that *we undergo changes in order that we may do more good.* Some Christian, perhaps,

who has long been in one position, has practically brought to Christ all who ever will be brought in by him in that place. I know that it is so with ministers. We sow our seed and we reap our harvest, but it would be very wise of some Brothers if they would just take their sickles and go off to another field—and sow and reap there. After you have been a long while fishing in one pond and have caught all the best of the fish, it will be a weary task to go on fishing there, so, do as a wise angler would do—take your rod and line off to another pond and try there! Changes for God's servants are not at all things for which they ought to be blamed. At least I know some ministers whom I would not blame if they were to make a change. And neither do I think that the people of their charge would be particularly anxious to retain them. It is the same with us in our Christian life. It may be that we have done all the good we can do in our own family at home. Well, then, God is going to put us into another family! It may be that from our present standpoint we are only capable of a certain form of good—so the Lord is going to shift us and make different men and women of us, that we may be fitted for another form of service. And it is a blessed thing to be furnished and equipped for all the work of the Lord, whatever it may be that He commits to our charge.

II. And now, secondly, and very briefly, THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE TO BE CAREFUL THAT THEY DO NOT MAKE CHANGES WITHOUT DIVINE AUTHORIZATION—"The LORD our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying, You have dwelt long enough in this mountain."

The children of Israel had a fiery cloudy pillar to guide them in their many wanderings. And if the pillar did not move, they stopped. Whether it was a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, they stopped while the pillar stopped. And when the pillar moved, then they moved, even though they had scarcely pitched their tents. And, Brothers and Sisters, let us, also, always seek Divine guidance. Let us put ourselves under the protection of Providence—especially in making changes. Some make changes out of mere love of novelty.

Some make changes because they think that anything new will be better than what they have at present. My dear Brother, you know the temptations that now assail you, so I would not advise you to seek to have a new set, about which you know nothing. My dear Sister, the cross that you have been carrying did not, at first, seem to fit your shoulders, but your shoulders have by degrees become fitted to it, so you had better keep that cross than seek another. There are many people who leap out of the frying pan into the fire, as our old proverb says. They think that things are going to be much better with them as soon as they make a change, but they had better "let well enough alone," as another proverb says, for "as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." There have been many people who have changed from side to side, just as sick persons restlessly move to and fro, merely shifting their position, yet all the while keeping their pain. One of the greatest blessings that we can have is a contented mind—if we have that, we shall not be anxious for a change.

Do not change because of a mere whim—let not that be your reason for altering your position. Do not change from worldly motives and be not always seeking the best for yourself. Do not change because of distrust, or because of anger with your God. If He bids you stand where you are, stand there and die at your post if necessary. But if He bids you go, then go, though it would make a tear as if your very heart were cut in two. It will be better for you thus to suffer then to disobey your Lord. We do not make many mistakes in life where we absolutely give ourselves up to God's guidance because, though we do not hear a voice speaking out of the oracle, and we have not our way mapped out for us as on a chart, yet, somehow or other, if we are honestly seeking to do right and yet are about to make a mistake, God graciously interposes and prevents the mistake! Or He overrules what evidently was a mistake in such a way that it turns out to be the right thing, after all. Commit your way unto the Lord! Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. You are not fatherless. You are not left without a Guide. Poor tempest-tossed and weather-beaten boat, you still have a Helmsman! You are not a derelict left to drift upon the sea at the mercy of every current and every gale. There is within you, O Believer, One who is strong of hand and keen of eye who steers you through the fiercest storms and direst tumults of the sea, making even these to contribute to your progress towards the desired haven! Be not swift to change because of any reason of your own, but be not slow to change if God bids you do so. When the time comes and you have dwelt long enough in this mountain, up with the stakes, roll up the tent lines and put the canvas on the camel's back and be off to the next place which the Lord has marked out for you, for He has gone before you to prepare your way!

III. I will not dwell longer upon that topic, but pass on to notice that THERE ARE SOME PLACES, SPIRITUALLY, IN WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE DWELT QUITE LONG ENOUGH. I wish to speak to the heart of everyone here—take home what belongs to you and may the Spirit of God be pleased to apply it to your soul!

Some of you know that you are not happy and that you lack something, but you do not know what it is that you lack. Some of you used to be very happy, at one time, in the pleasures of the world, but, somehow, either they have changed or else you have. You now have an empty space in your heart and you cannot fill it. The glass seems to have come off the world's amusements and your businesses, which used to occupy you from morning to night, has become distasteful to you. You feel that you needed something, but you do not know what that something is. Let me tell you that what you really need is your God. Surely you have lived long enough without Him! You have lived long enough in sin. You have lived long enough in impenitence. You have lived long enough in danger of the wrath to come! O prodigal son, your Father calls you to come home! You surely have had enough of riotous living, enough of the swine-trough and the company of the hogs, enough of the citizens of that country and their scorn and cruelty, enough of rags and enough of the husks that the

swine feed upon. Say right now, "I will arise and go to my Father!" And if you say this, the Spirit of God helping you to do so, this very hour you shall be in the embrace of your God, you shall receive the kisses of His love, the best robe shall be put upon you and you shall be welcomed home even as the prodigal in the parable was!

The mountain mentioned in our text was Mount Horeb, or Sinai—the mountain that burned with fire, the mountain around which they set boundaries so that if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it would be stoned or thrust through with a dart! It was that mountain from which they heard the thunder pealing while the Law of God was being proclaimed in a voice so terrible that they entreated that they might not hear it anymore! I believe there are some here—I had almost said that I *hope* there are—who have been long standing at the foot of Sinai. You have heard the thunder of that dreadful voice and you have felt condemned. Your soul is in bondage even now. If ever there was a slave in this world, you are one. You have the fetters on you and you have the cruel whip perpetually flagellating your conscience! Sometimes other slaves have rest, but you get none—you are tortured and tormented—you are almost like the fiend, himself, when he walked through dry places seeking rest and finding none!

Well do I remember when I was in your present condition and I was in it, oh, so long! And blessed was the day when my Lord said to me, "You have dwelt long enough in this mountain," and then I came to Calvary and the blood of sprinkling, and I had done with Sinai! Yet I have never felt regret that I lingered so long at the foot of Sinai. I shall regret it if any of you do so, but I do not regret it in my own case because I think it was necessary for one who was to be a public teacher, that he should have more depression of spirit and more trials than anybody else—so that he might know the ins and outs of this matter in his own experience and so be able to help others who may be tortured in a similar way. But there is no reason why you, my Friend, should have this experience, for it may be that you are not to be a public teacher and it would be well for you if, this very moment, the spirit of bondage were cast out of you and the Spirit of adoption took possession of your soul! You need not remain at the foot of Sinai, for, as I found out, *there is another hill called Calvary*. You need not listen to the threats of the Law, for there is another voice—the voice of the blood of Jesus—"which speaks better things than that of Abel." If you will, by simple faith, but listen to that voice, you will learn that it speaks peace, not punishment, and cries out for mercy, not for justice! O tempted, distressed, despairing soul, you have dwelt long enough in Mount Sinai! At this glad hour, the silver trumpet proclaims a Jubilee for you! Your inheritance, which you have forfeited, has been redeemed and you, yourself, once sold into slavery, are now freed, for the price of your redemption has been paid to the utmost farthing!

There is another mountain, a little further on, to which some of my friends have come—*the mountain of Little Faith*. They do now believe in God. They have looked to Jesus and have been lightened, yet they still

see men as trees walking. Now and then they have high days and holidays and then they know whom they have believed and have great joy in the Lord! But at other times, they get down in the dumps and sing—or rather, moan—

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

Some of these are the very best people in the world and I would sooner see a man always doubling his interest in Christ and walking humbly and carefully before God than presuming upon his own safety and getting proud—and then venturing into temptation and falling into sin! There are some of God's children who are truly His, but who seem to be like those flowers that grow best in shady places. If they had too much sunshine, I do not know what might become of them. But these people do not allow themselves that luxury. They are constantly troubled. They say that they believe, yet the petition always has to be added, "Lord, help our unbelief!"

Now, my Brother or my Sister, if you are in this condition, do you not think that you have dwelt long enough in this mountain? I knew you when you used to be raising such doubts and questions five years ago. Is it not time that you abandoned that bad habit? You never complain of a baby for cutting its teeth and you do not wonder if it has a lot of little complaints while it is a baby, but you do not expect it to cut its teeth and to have all these little infantile diseases when it gets to be a man! Do you not think that it is time that you had grown from being little children to become young men? And should not the young men begin to grow into fathers in the Christian Church? We watch and tend you while you are the lambs of the flock, but are you always going to be lambs? You, who are forty, fifty, 60 years of age and who ought to set an example to others by being courageous and full of confidence, are you always going to be Feeble-Minds and Ready-to-Halts? What? Are you always going to use crutches? Will you never outgrow them? Must we always wheel you about in a baby carriage of rich consolation? Will you never walk alone? Will you never outgrow your days of weakness? You have dwelt long enough and far too long in this mountain! Remember that Jesus Christ declared that He had come that His people "might have life." Well, you have that, have you not? But He added, "and that they might have it *more abundantly*." You have not *that*—do not rest satisfied until you have it!

There is another company of professors—men of brain, but with less heart than brain—men of the Thomas order who need a great deal of evidence to convince them—who tarry *in the Mountain of Questioning*. We have some persons of this kind, who, we trust, are Christians, but they always have some question to ask—and they come to see the pastor about it. And after that one is answered, they ask another, and then another and another. We are very glad to see them so thoughtful—we

wish everybody was thoughtful and we do not want people to take things for granted just because we say them—we like to have them enquiring. But these people are always enquiring and they seem to have been always enquiring! If I have lost my way on a foggy night, I do not mind enquiring, but I like to move on a little and not stand still and keep on enquiring which is the way! There are some people who are always in a fog and always enquiring—and every new heresy that is started gives them a new set of enquiries! It is a wretched life that they lead, themselves, and other people, too—and I may well say to them, "You have dwelt long enough in this mountain."

Just think, my Christian Brother, while you have been vainly trying to find out how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, your Brother has been winning souls for Jesus Christ! You have been sitting up at night seeking to discover the meaning of the tenth toe of the great image mentioned in the book of Daniel and of the little horn and the fourth beast! And you have been puzzling yourself as to what is going to happen at a certain period of the world's history, but you have not found out much yet. Now, if you had been visiting the sick, the poor and the ignorant, and going after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, would not your occupation have been much more remunerative? Would it not have brought you a brighter crown at the Last Great Day? Enquire, certainly, as to all Truth of God revealed in the Scriptures, but many of you have already dwelt quite long enough in that Mountain of Questioning! It is time that you had ascertained that there are some things that are settled! I spoke with a man some time ago who said that he made his creed every week. I thought that he must be a disciple of the moon, though I did not call him a lunatic, yet he was very like one, and you might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as judge such a man by the creed which he is constantly changing!

Oh, but there are some things about which we are sure! And I bless God that some of us can say that the Gospel which we preached more than 20 years ago is precisely the same Gospel that we preach now! We are not conscious of having shifted our ground with regard to any of its doctrines, precepts, warnings, or invitations! It is a grand thing when an old Divine is able to say, as my own dear grandfather said to me not long before he died, "For 60 years I have preached the Gospel. And the sermon that I preached the first time I went into the pulpit, I could have preached the last time I went there, for I have made no alteration in my sentiments. The Truths that God taught me at the beginning, I have held fast, though I have been continually learning more and more of the meaning of them." It is very necessary, though, if we are to do any good to others, that we go to the Mountain of Enquiry for a while, that we should feel that there comes a time when we have made up our minds and have learned something which we never mean to question again—we have dwelt long enough in that mountain!

At Horeb, Moses divided the people and marshaled them and said that such-and-such a tribe should go first, and another second, and another

last. He drilled them as an army, yet they were not always to be content with being marshaled and drilled—they were to go forward and possess the land of Canaan! They had dwelt long enough in that *mountain of marshalling and drilling*, and some of you Christian people have had quite enough marshalling and drilling! Is it not time for those of you who are not doing anything for Christ, to begin to do something for Him? I do not think that when a young man is converted, he ought, at first, to begin working for Jesus Christ as the main business of his life. He should go to Christ's school and try to learn something that he can afterwards talk about to others. I was very pleased with a dear Brother, a working man, who joined the church here a month or two ago. When I put to him the question, "What are you doing for Christ?" he said, "Well, Sir, I have the heart to do a good deal and I hope I shall yet do it, but, at the present time I am trying to learn more about Him, for, if I were to go and speak to some of my mates about Jesus Christ, they would be more than a match for me and I should not like to have my Savior made a subject of ridicule." I thought there was sanctified common sense in that answer and I would advise other young Christians to go and do likewise—only do not forget to serve your Master when you have learned the way to do it! You, Mr. Recruit, have surely practiced "the goose step" long enough—can you not now go forward? To my certain knowledge you have been in the army for a dozen years—could you not do a little fighting if you were to try? Could you not learn to load a gun and fire it? Have you been studying the properties of gunpowder all this time and done nothing else to prove that you are a soldier? Shame on you!

I fear that the Church of Christ as a whole has been tarrying far too long in the Mountain of Marshalling and Drilling. Some clever Brother draws up a fine plan and the next thing is to form a committee, with a president and a vice-president and all manner of officers. You are getting on, now, like a house afire and that is how the thing usually ends—in smoke! There is the paraphernalia. There is the marshalling. There is the grand parade and there is the army—on paper! But when will the army begin the battle in real earnest? When will the Church of Christ get to close quarters with sinners? When will every Christian man and woman really begin working for Christ and cease talking about it? We have had the resolutions which have been proposed and seconded—and carried unanimously—and then forgotten! It is significant that there is no book containing the resolutions of the Apostles, but we have the *Acts* of the Apostles! And there will be something worth recording in the Lord's "Book of Remembrance" if we turn our good resolutions into acts of holy service. Let us get to work, for we have tarried long enough in this mountain!

There are many other "mountains" that I might mention, but I do not think I need to do so. Unto whatever Truth of God you have attained, dear Friend, make sure of that and then go on to something beyond. Do not stop anywhere, for you have not yet attained, neither are you yet perfect. You can buy a box of the patent perfection paint and cover over

all the knots and imperfections in the wood, but the wind and the rain will test your fine looking house and you will find the paint cracking and the bad joints and the holes in the wood showing before long. At least it is so with me in a spiritual sense. Imperfections will reveal themselves very soon and the paint will not answer after all. But, Brother, never be satisfied with yourself, for self-satisfaction is the end of all progress.

A painter said to his wife, one morning, "I shall never paint again." "Why, my husband?" asked the good woman. "Because the picture that I have just finished perfectly satisfies me—it realizes my ideal and, therefore, I know that, now, my genius is exhausted." When a man says, "Yes, I am a splendid fellow. I will tell everybody what I am, only I will do it very cunningly and say this is what Divine Grace has done for me. I will thank God for it, for the Pharisee in the Temple had Grace enough to do that!" Then depend upon it, Brother, the very power to grow has gone from you, for, if you were growing, you would have growing pains! You would feel like the chick in the egg that needs to get out. Oh, how often my soul feels cribbed, cabined and confined within my imperfect self! She will get completely free one day and, in anticipation of that blessed time, I joyously sing—

"Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,
That sets my longing soul at large,
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,
And gives me with my God to dwell!"

Till that "sweet hour" arrives when you will dwell with God forever, do not delude yourself with the notion that you have got where you may stop. "Forward, onward," must still be your motto! O eagle of God, if you are of the true royal breed, though you have looked the very sun in the face with undimmed eyes and soared till you have left the clouds far below you, yet still higher, higher, higher must you soar! If you could distance the sun, himself, and reach a yet more distant orb, still higher, higher must you soar! "Excelsior" is the motto of every Christian until, at last, he comes into the very Presence of his God and sees Him face to face! You never see an eagle roosting upon a thorn bush and saying, "I can get no higher." And if any of God's birds of paradise do that, I would bid them beware of the fowler! My self-satisfied Brother, he is after you and his big net will enclose you if you are not careful! Mount higher, Brother! Higher yet, for however high you have ascended, you have dwelt long enough in that mountain and must advance to something higher and still better! May God help you to do so for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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"Oh love the LORD, all you His saints."
Psalm 31:23.

DO we, if we are called the saints of the Lord, need to be exhorted to love Him? If we do, shame upon us! And we do, I am quite sure, so let us be ashamed and confounded that it should ever be necessary to urge us to love our Lord! Why, after He has done so much for us and manifested such wondrous love to such unworthy ones as we are, we ought to love Him as naturally as sparks of fire ascend towards the sun, or as the waters of the river run towards the sea. It should be our second and higher nature to always love the Lord without the slightest prompting. What the Law of God required, the Gospel should have worked in us, namely, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength! But, Brothers and Sisters, we need this exhortation—we feel that we do. Well, then, let us take it home to ourselves and let us hear it as though it had been spoken personally to each one of us who are the Lord's saints—"O love the Lord." Do nothing else just now. Bid every other thought be gone and every other emotion, too. Let your affections be graciously melted and let them all run in this one blessed channel—towards God—"O love the Lord, all you His saints."

Remember that the man who here exhorts the saints to love their Lord was one who had been enduring very sharp trials. This Psalm is, in many respects, a very sad one. If you will read it through, you will see that David had been afflicted by slanderous and other cruel enemies. And yet, while he was still suffering from their attacks and also fearing that he was cut off from the Lord's Presence, he still said, "O love the Lord, all you His saints," for my Lord is so good that I will speak well of Him even when He smites me. He is such a gracious God that I can truly say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Though He may smite me ever so hard, yet will I still adore Him. I will still bless and magnify His name as long as I have any being."

If a tried child of God could talk like that, how ought we, who have comparatively few trials, to love the Lord? If your pathway has been smooth of late—if temporal mercies have abounded—if spiritual comforts have been continued to you, then, O you happy saints, love the Lord! If David, when so sorely tried, could do so, how fervently should you do it,

who stand upon the mountaintops of full assurance and walk in the bright sunlight of confidence in God! I address myself to all here who have really been set apart unto God and who realize that they are among the Lord's saints. And I repeat to them this exhortation of David, "O love the Lord, all you His saints."

I. So first, let us remember that THIS EXHORTATION REFERS TO EACH PERSON OF THE DIVINE TRINITY.

We can never understand how Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be Three and yet One. For my part, I have long ago given up any desire to understand this great mystery, for I am perfectly satisfied that if I *could* understand it, it would not be true, because God, from the very nature of things, must be incomprehensible! He can no more be contained within the narrow bounds of our finite understanding than the Atlantic Ocean could be held in the hollow of a child's hand. We bless Him that He is one. As Moses said, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord," yet we also bless Him that Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each in His separate Personality, should be worshipped as God.

O then, you saints, *love God the Father!* We sometimes meet with Christians who are so ignorant as scarcely to give the same degree of love to the Father as they give to the Son. They foolishly suppose that the Son has done something to *make* the Father love us. That is not the belief of any Spirit-taught children of God, for we say, with good John Kent—

"'Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His Throne above
A suffering Man became.
'Twas not the death which He endured
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was Love before."

It was because of His love that the Father gave His Son! It was not the Son who came to make that love possible! O Christians, love the Father, for He chose you! Before the earth was, the Father concentrated His love upon you and gave you to Christ to be His portion and His reward. Why did He choose you? He might well enough have passed you by, as He passed by so many others—but, inasmuch as He has chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, love Him, I pray you! In choosing you, the Father adopted you into His family and gave you a name and a place among His sons and daughters. If you are this day children of the great Father, it is because He has taken you out from among the rest of mankind and has made you "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." It is the Father, too, who has given you the nature as well as the name and the position of children, for He "has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away." And He "has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." For your election unto everlasting life, for your salvation by Christ Jesus, for your regeneration by the Holy Spirit, for

your adoption into the family of God, "O love the Lord, all you His saints!" I know that you do, but I want you to realize it afresh just now. Let your soul swim as in a sea of love and each one say, "My Father, my God, my own God, I love You! My soul exults at the very thought of Your great love to me which has made my love to You possible!"

And then, O you saints, *love God the Son!* I know that you do this, also, for there is not a Peter among us who, if Christ said to Him, "Do you love Me?" would not reply, "Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You." How shall I speak of what God the Son has done for us? Think of the Glory that He left and of the shame that He endured for our sakes! Picture Him hanging at a woman's breast at Bethlehem and afterwards hanging on a Cross at Calvary! Let your eyes lovingly gaze upon Him in the weakness of His Infancy and then in the greater weakness of His death-agony—and remember that He suffered all this for you! For you the crown of thorns! For you the spittle on His cheeks! For you the plucking of His hair! For you the accursed lash that scourged His sacred shoulders! For you the nails, the sponge, the vinegar, the gall, the spear, the tomb—all for you! "O love the Lord, all you His saints," as you think of His amazing love to you! I would almost ask you to come to those dear feet of His and to do as the woman who was a sinner did—to wash His feet with your tears and to wipe them with the hairs of your head, while you might softly sing—

"Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I'll bathe,
Constant still in faith abiding
Life deriving from His death."

And then, O you saints, I must not forget to dwell upon the thought that you must *love God the Holy Spirit!* Never let us forget Him, or speak of Him, as some do, as, "It," for the Holy Spirit is not, "It," or talk of Him as though He were a mere influence, for the Holy Spirit is Divine and is to be reverenced and loved equally with the Father and the Son! It was that blessed Spirit who quickened us when we were dead in trespasses and sins! It was He who illuminated us and removed our darkness and, since that time, it has been He who has taken of the things of Christ and revealed them to us. He has been our Comforter to cheer us and our Instructor to teach us and, most wonderful of all, He dwells in us! I have often said that I do not know which mystery to admire the more—the Incarnation of the Son of God, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! For Christ to take our nature upon Him was, doubtless, marvelous condescension, but that only lasted for a little other 30 years. But the Holy Spirit comes and dwells, century after century, in successive generations of His people, abiding and working in the hearts of men. O you saints, love the Lord the Spirit!

So, gathering up all that I have said, let us adore the mystic Three in One and, more than that, let us love the Lord, let us give our highest affection to Him who was, and is, and is to come, the almighty God, Father, Son, and Spirit!

II. Then, in the second place, note that THIS EXHORTATION MAY BE UNDERSTOOD IN THE FULLEST CONCEIVABLE SENSE—"O love the Lord, all you His saints."

You may pull up the sluices of your being and let all your life-floods flow forth in this sacred stream, for you cannot love God too much. Some passions of our nature may be exaggerated and, towards certain objects, they may be carried too far—but the heart, when it is turned towards God—can never be too warm, nor too excited, nor too firmly fixed on the Divine Object! "O love the Lord, all you His saints."

Put the emphasis upon that sweet word, love—*love the Lord as you cannot love anyone or anything else*. Husband, you love your wife. Parent, you love your children. Children, you love your parents. And all of you love your friends and it is well that you do. But you must spell all other love in little letters, but spell LOVE to God in the largest capitals you can find! Love Him intensely, love the Lord, all you His saints, without any limit to your love!

Next, *love Him with a deep, abiding principle of love*. There is a certain kind of human love which burns very quickly, like brushwood, and then dies out. So, there are some Christians who seem to love the Lord by fits and starts, when they get excited, or at certain special seasons. But I pray you, Beloved, to let your love be a deep-seated and lasting fire. What if I compare it to the burning in the very heart of a volcano? It may not always be in eruption, but there is always a vehement heat within—and when it does burst forth, oh, what heaves there are, what seething, what boiling, what flaming and what torrents of lava all around! There must always be the fire in the heart, even when it is somewhat still and quiet. Love the Lord with a deep, calm, thoughtful, well-grounded affection, for, if you do not, excitements may go as easily as they come, frames and feelings may change—and your love will turn out to be evanescent and anything but intense.

Then, after that, *love the Lord with an overwhelming emotion*. You will not always feel like that and you need not wish to do so—the human mind is not capable of continually feeling, to an overwhelming degree, the emotion of love to God. There may be a slackening of conscious emotion, for we have to go to our business and to be occupied with many cares and with thoughts that, necessarily, claim our attention. But we do not love the Lord any less because we are not so conscious of our love as at others times. Still, you must have your times when you are conscious of the emotion of love to God. Set apart special seasons when you may pray the Lord to come to you in an unusual manner. On such occasions you do not want to do anything but just love Him and give your soul full liberty to gaze upon the unspeakable beauties of your God. Oh, it is delightful to be utterly carried away with this emotion! There are some of the saints of God who have found that this emotion has been too strong for them and they have had to cry to the Lord, "Hold! Hold! For I am but an earthen vessel and if more of this amazing love is poured into me, I shall be unable to bear it!"

There have been very remarkable experiences with some of the saints when this sacred passion has completely overpowered them. They have been forgetful of all other things and have seemed absent-minded and abstracted—whether in the body, or out of the body, they could not tell. Well, Beloved, indulge that emotion all you can! If you cannot get the highest degree of it, get as much of it as you can. Have the principle of love and then ask the Lord to give you the emotion which arises from it. Yes, dear Friends, I would go still further and join you in praying that our love to our God might come to be a very passion of the soul—a passion that can never be satisfied until we get to Him and are with Him forever! That is the true love which grows so eager and impatient that it counts life a banishment so long as it is spent down here. It is well with your soul when it sometimes cries out, "Why is His chariot so long in coming?"—when you can truly sing that blessed verse—

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

For, surely, the spouse desires the return of her Husband! Does not the boy at school long for the holidays when he may get back to his parents' embrace?

And if we really love the Lord, we shall feel that passionate longing to be with Him and, in the strength of it, if we must tarry here for a while, we shall feel that we can do anything for Him "till the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

III. Having thus shown you that this exhortation is applicable to each Person of the Divine Trinity and that it may be understood in the most emphatic sense, now let me say, in the third place, that IT HAS A THOUSAND ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE IT.

Brothers and Sisters, the short time we have for this service will not allow me to mention many of these reasons; but this is my comfort—that *a soul that truly loves God does not need any reasons for loving Him.* We have an old proverb which says that "love is blind." And certainly, love is never very argumentative. It overcomes a man so that he is completely carried away by it and he who really loves God, will feel that this supreme passion puts aside the necessity for cold reasoning. Hear could you, by logic, produce love even between two human beings? You may prove that you ought to love, but "ought to love" and love, itself, are two very different things! Where true love is, however, it finds a thousand arguments for its own increase.

This love, to which God's saints are exhorted, is in every way deserved. *Think of the excellence of His Character whom you are bid to love.* God is such a perfect Being that I feel now that, altogether apart from anything He has done for me, I love Him because He is so good, so just, so holy, so faithful, so true. There is no one of His attributes that is not exactly what it ought to be. If I look at His dear Son, I see that His Character is so gloriously balanced that I wonder why even those who deny His Godhead

do not worship such a Character as His, for it is absolutely unique. When I think of the Character of the ever-blessed Spirit—His patience and His wisdom—His tenderness and His love to us—I cannot help loving Him. Yes, Beloved, we must love Father, Son and Spirit, for never had human hearts such an Object to love as the Divine Trinity in Unity.

If you will let your mind specially dwell upon God's great goodness, surely you must feel the throbs of strong affection towards Him. What is God? "God is Love." That short word comprehends all! He is a great God, but He is as gracious as He is great. We might conceive of a god who was a great tyrant, but it was impossible that our God should be one. "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works." He is as full of goodness as the sun is full of light and as full of Divine Grace as the sea is full of water. And all that He has, He delights to give out to others. It is His happiness and glory to make His creatures happy—and even when He is stern and terrible, it is only of necessity that He is so because it cannot be for the good of the universe which He governs that sin should be lightly treated or allowed to go unpunished. God, my God, You are altogether lovely! And where the heart is in a right condition, it must love You! I should think that the anatomist, taking each bone to pieces and observing the singular adaptation of every joint to promote the comfort of the creature—I should think that the naturalist, observing all the habits of birds and beasts and fishes, and seeing what wonderful delight, upon the whole, is enjoyed by such creatures—must often feel that God is a blessed God!

Certainly, I cannot walk the glades beneath the forest and listen to the singing of the birds, and observe how even the insects in the grass leap up for very joy, without saying, "He is a blessed God, indeed, who has made such a beautiful world as this!" Some men and women seem to think that this world was made for them and they talk about flowers wasting their sweetness upon the desert air, but let them gaze upon the marvels of beauty in the fair woods and let them look at the myriad ants which build their cities there. They appear to be happy enough, in their way, and to be bringing some honor and glory to the God that made them and this beautiful world in which they dwell. With all the stain of sin there is upon it, you may find many places where—

"Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

Standing on the brow of some high hill and beholding the lovely scenery all around you, you might well burst forth in the lofty language attributed by Milton to our first father, Adam, but if you do not speak thus to His praise, "O love the Lord, all you His saints," for He is a blessed Creator!

Then think of the Providence of God— especially His Providence to you. I cannot tell the various ways in which the Lord has led each one of you, but I can speak for myself. If there is any man under Heaven who has reason to love the Lord for every step of the way in which he has been led, I am that man! But I hope there are many others here who

could say just the same if I gave them the opportunity. Notwithstanding all your trials and troubles, dear Brothers and Sisters, has not the Lord been a good God to you? I have heard many strange things in the course of my life, but I have never heard one of the Lord's servants, when he came to die, regret that he had taken Him for a Master. Nor have I ever heard one of them rail at Him because of even the heaviest blows of His hand, but, like Job, they have said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Yes, as much blessed when He takes away as when He gives!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, if I call to your remembrance the great mystery of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ—if I only utter these words—"Incarnation"—"Substitution"—"Justification"—"Sanctification"—without dwelling upon the great Truths of God that they represent, surely they must awaken responsive echoes in your spirit and, as far as your faith has grasped these precious things, you must feel that you have many weighty reasons why you should love the Lord!

I must pass on to remark that another reason for loving the Lord is that *it is such a pleasant and profitable exercise*. If David had said, "Dread the Lord's anger, fear the Lord as a slave fears the lash," that would have been a crushing, weakening, sorrowful message. That is not what you are bid to do, but, "O love the Lord, all you His saints." If it had merely been said, "Obey the Lord, whether you do it cheerfully or not; just do what you are told to do"—well, that is a poor sort of religion that consists in a formal round of performances and nothing more! If it had then said, "Submit to the Lord: you cannot do otherwise, for He is your Master"—well, we should have been obliged to do it, but it would have been cold work and there would have been no comfort to be derived from it. If it had been written, "Understand the Lord," we might have given up the task in despair, for how can the finite comprehend the Infinite? But when it is written, "O love the Lord"—why, one of the most delightful exercises of the human heart is to love! Many who have had no other sources of happiness, have found great joy in domestic love. And those who have been denied domestic love have found a sweet relief of their grief in the love of benevolence towards the poor. That heart may well be wretched that has no one to love!

I have heard of a rich nobleman who had large estates, but whose life was a constant misery to him, and who, in sheer despair, was about to drown himself in a canal. But, as he was going, a little boy plucked his coat and asked him for a few pence. He looked in the face of the little fellow and noticed that his face was pinched with poverty and hunger. And the nobleman said to him, "Where do you live?" and the boy led him into a dreary place where his mother lay stretched upon the bed, dying of starvation, and his father, looking like a ghost, was scarcely able to move. The nobleman went off to various shops, made several purchases and returned and fed these poor people! And, as he saw how great was their joy as he supplied their needs, he said to himself, "There is something worth living for, after all!" That benevolent love which had led

him to feed the hungry, had given him back some joy in his life! If this is the result of love to our fellow creatures, how much more must it be the effect of our love to our God! If you want to be happy and to do the best thing that is possible in your whole life, love your God! When you want to have a season of ecstatic bliss, this is the way to it—by the road of love to God you will get to the purest, highest joys that can be known even in Heaven itself! Now that you have this blessed secret communicated to you, make use of it and love your God because it is such a pleasant and profitable exercise!

Let us love the Lord, next, *because it is so beneficial to do so*. The man who loves God is delivered from the tyranny of idols—and idols are great tyrants. Suppose you make an idol of your child—you directly have a tyrant. Suppose you make an idol of your money—there is not a more grim tyrant even in Hell than Mammon is! Do you make an idol of other people's opinion of you? The poor galley slave who is flogged at every stroke of the laborious oar, is free in comparison with the man who lives upon the breath of popularity, who craves the esteem of his fellow men and is afraid and trembles if they censure him. Whatever idol you have, you will be the slave of that idol, but, dear Friend, if you love God, you are free! The love of God makes men true and, making them true, it also makes them bold—and making them bold, it makes them truly free!

Moreover, *to love God is the way to be cleansed from sin*. I mean that the love of God always drives out the love of sin. The one who really loves the Lord, when tempted to sin, cries with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Every act of sin arises out of the absence or the decline of the love of God, but perfect love to God leads to the perfect life with God.

Love to God will also strengthen you in the time of trial. Love will bear His will without repining, will endure bereavements and the loss of worldly substance and, even when the suffering saint lies panting on the bed of sickness, or on the bed of death, love will enable Him to sing—

"You, at all times, will I bless!
Having You, I all possess.
How can I bereaved be
Since I cannot part with Thee?"

And, then, *love to God will also strengthen you for service*. A man is strong to serve his God, spiritually, just in proportion as he loves God. Love laughs at what men call impossibilities! Perhaps someone here says, "I could never go abroad as a missionary, leaving my native land and living among heathens." Brother, you could do it if you had love enough. Another says, "I could never spend my whole life in the back slums of London among the filthy and the ragged, trying to raise them up! I recoil from such work." Brother, you would not recoil from it, but you would rejoice in it if you had more love. There is a power in love to God, which makes that pleasant which, without love, would have been irksome and painful—a power which makes a man bow down his shoulders to carry the Cross and then finds the Cross grow into a seraph's wings enabling him to mount up toward his God! Only love God

more, Brother, and you can do anything! You know that if a thing is very hard, you only need to get something that is harder and it will go through it, so, if the work is hard, get more love to Christ and you will be able to accomplish it, whatever it may be!

I might continue to give you reasons for loving the Lord, but I will only give you one more and that is, *it is most ennobling*. He who loves God is certainly akin to the holy angels, for this is what they do. He is also akin to glorified saints, for this is what they do. He is also akin to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, for this is what He does. The three Persons of the Divine Trinity delight in one Another and when *we* delight in Them, we have fellowship with Them as well as with one another. "God is love and He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." The less love you have to God, the lower is your rank among His saints—and the more love you have to Him, the higher is your rank! May we all know, to the fullest extent possible, what it is to be ennobled by being filled with love to our Lord!

Now, having given you all these reasons why we should love the Lord—and really I have only skimmed the surface of the subject as the swallow touches the brook and is up and away again—I want to propose to my Brothers and Sisters in Christ something which I hope will be congenial to them. It is this—O LOVE THE LORD, ALL YOU HIS SAINTS!

Sit there and feel that He loves you! Sit there, and love Him and then say to yourself, *"Now, if I really do love the Lord, I must do something to prove it."* Every now and then I like to do something for the Lord which I would not have anybody else know, for that would spoil it—something which I do not do for you, nor for my wife and children, nor for myself, but purely and wholly for God. I think we ought to have something in our purse which is not to be given even for the winning of souls, or the relief of the poor, or the comfort of the sick—though these are most important things which must not be neglected—but something which shall be for God alone. I like to think of that woman breaking the alabaster box and pouring out the precious ointment upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There was Judas, the traitor, who shook his head and said that it might have been sold for much and given to the poor—he being the representative of the poor and intending to see that a portion of the money should remain adhering to his own palms! But the woman had no thought of pleasing Judas, on Peter, or anybody but the Lord Jesus Christ whom she loved so intensely!

Cannot you, Beloved, select something which you can do out of love to Him? What can I suggest to you? Is there some sin that still lurks within your heart? If so, hunt it out and destroy it for Christ's sake! Fling down the gage of battle and say that you will contend against the evil thing, in the name of God, with this as your war cry, "For the love of Christ!" You will get the mastery over it in that way. And when you have done that, is there not something that you could give distinctly to the Lord? Have you ever done that? If not, you have missed a very pure form of happiness and I think that love to God suggests that we should sometimes do this—

telling nobody about it, but keeping it entirely to ourselves. Cannot you also think of some service which you could render distinctly to God? It is a very wonderful thing that God should ever accept any service at our hands! It is thought to be a great act of condescension when a king or queen accepts a little wild flower from some country child, yet these is not much cause for wonder in that! But it is a marvelous condescension when God accepts the services even of cherubim and seraphim—and it is truly amazing that He should be willing to accept anything from *us*!

Is there not something, my Sister, that you can do over and above what you have been doing—something, perhaps, which you do not quite like the thought of doing? Yet you mean to do it and you will like to do it because you will do it out of love to your Lord. Do not neglect anything that has now become a part of your duty, but I want you to do something more than that—not that we can ever do more than our duty, for when we have done all, we shall still be only unprofitable servants to our great Lord and Master—and, in all that we do, let this be our highest motive, "We want to do something altogether and especially for our Lord Jesus Christ."

Shall I suggest something else? You know that there is nothing which pleases our Lord more than when we try to be like Him. Have not you, father, been greatly pleased when you have seen your little ones imitating your way of walking and your way of talking? Yes, and our Lord loves to see Himself reproduced in us, even though it is in a very childlike way and more like a caricature than a true image. For instance, He is very great at forgiving those who have offended Him. Is there somebody with whom you have been out at elbows for a while? Then, for love of your Lord, seek out that somebody—I do not know who it may be—a former friend, perhaps—possibly a child, or a brother. Seek him out. Go and find him. "Oh, no," you say, "he must come half-way to meet me!" No, you go all the way, dear Brother, for the love of Christ. You would not do it for anybody else, but you can go all the way for Christ's sake! I remember two Christian men who had been greatly at variance one day, but they both happened to remember the text, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." So each of them started off to go to his friend's house and they did meet half-way. That is how it ought to be, but still, if the other one does not come to meet you—that is the very reason why, for the Lord's sake, you should go all the way to find him!

Then is there somebody who has never quarreled with you, but who is a very objectionable person and a very ungodly person about whom you have always felt, "I should not like to have anything to do with that person"? Yet, perhaps, God means to bless a word from you to that man's salvation—will you not try to bring him to Christ? You know that there are many others who will look after the very pleasant people. We are always glad to bring them with us to hear the sermon and we can talk to them about Christ because if they do not like it, they will not say so, for they are so gentlemanly or so ladylike. There are always plenty of people willing to go after *them*, so will you not try to take up one of those

hedgehog sort of people that nobody else cares to handle? If he pricks your hands, you can say, "Ah, my Lord was pierced far deeper than this for my sake! I am glad to bear the sharp cuts and hard words for His sake—the more there are of them, the better I like it, for I feel that I am bearing all for His sake." You know that when you have something to do for a friend, you like it to be something big. If you love him very much and he says, "I want you to promise to do such-and-such a thing for me," you hardly like it when it turns out to be some insignificant thing scarcely worth mentioning. You say, "No, no, no, I have such ardent affection for you that if you had asked some very hard thing, I would have been only too pleased to do it!" Well now, try to do for your Lord Jesus Christ something which will cost you much—perhaps a good deal of pain, or the overcoming of strong natural tendencies—and do it for His sake.

Perhaps you are called to suffer persecution for Christ's sake. Well, I have told you this story before, but I will tell it again. There was once a king's son who came down to a country which ought to have been his home, but it was full of traitors and rebels against him who would not receive him. They saw that he was their Prince, but they hated him and, therefore, they heaped all sorts of insults upon him. They set him in the pillory and pelted him with filth and finally put him in prison. Now there was, in that country, one loyal subject. And when he saw the Prince, he knew him and went and stood by his side. He was close by him when the mob surged around him and they hooted him as well as the Prince. When the Prince was put into prison, they pushed this man in with him to keep him company. And when they put the Prince in the pillory, this man also stood there, putting his own face, whenever he could, in front of the Prince's face, so as to catch the filth that was thrown at him. When a stain came upon the royal visage, he wiped it off with his handkerchief, and stood there in tears, entreating the wicked man to leave their Prince alone—and always interposing himself to receive any filthy garbage or stone that was aimed at the Prince.

Years went by and the Prince came to his throne, his enemies having been trod underfoot. He alone reigned supreme and his courtiers thronged around him. You know that Prince and who His courtiers are—angels, cherubim, and seraphim! And the Prince, looking among the throng, cried out, "Make way, angels! Clear the road, cherubim! Stand back, seraphim! Bring here the man who was My companion in the prison and in the pillory. Come here, My Friend," said He and He set him upon His own throne and honored him that day in the sight of the whole universe! Brother, is that man, you? I charge you to let it be so, for the day shall come when you will be rewarded ten thousand times over for any little jests, and jeers, and sarcasms, and lies that men may have poured upon you because you were loyal to Christ! As for me, this is my declaration to my Lord and Savior—

"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,

All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me!"

Perhaps I am addressing some *whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, but who have no knowledge of that blessed fact.* They are strangers to themselves and strangers to God, yet in His eternal purpose He has ordained that they shall be saved. It is possible that this very hour is to be the time in which they shall be brought out of Nature's darkness into God's marvelous light! Let me ask them—have you not lived long enough in sin? Will not the time past suffice you to have worked the will of the flesh? What profit have you had in all your sinning? And you self-righteous people who have tried to save yourselves, how much nearer to God are you now than when you began that task which you will never finish? Have you not put your money into a bag that is full of holes? "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?" Surely you have lived long enough at enmity against God and you have had time enough to prove whether this world is true or false—and whether her joys are real or delusive! How far has your experience in this matter gone and, as far as it has gone, what has been the result? Will you not trust the Lord Jesus Christ?

If you can do nothing else, come and wash His feet with the tears of your repentance! If you can do nothing else, come and lean on His bosom! If you cannot give Him anything else, give Him yourself! Give Him your whole heart, or give Him your broken heart. After all, Sinner, you are the man who can really honor Christ. I do not read that our Lord Jesus ever said to one of His *disciples*, "Give me to drink."But He did say that to the woman at the well who had had five husbands, and the man with whom she was then living was not her husband! Jesus did say to her, "Give me to drink," for a sinner is capable of satisfying the innermost thirst of Christ when that sinner comes and believes in Christ! Oh, that some of you might do that this very moment! That would be the best result of this service. I pray the Lord that it may be so and then, Father, Son, and Spirit—the one true God—we, who believe in Jesus, will love You forever and ever! Amen.

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

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

GOD'S LOVE TO THE SAINTS
NO. 2959

[Also see Sermon No. 2958, Volume 51— "The Saints' Love to God."]

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1875.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." 1 John 3:16.

TRUE love cannot long be dormant. It is like fire of an active nature—it must be at work. Love longs for expression—it cannot be dumb. Command it to be without expression and you command it not to live. And true love is not satisfied with expressing itself in words. It does use words, but it is painfully conscious of their feebleness, for the full meaning of love is not to be conveyed in any human language. It breaks the backs of words and crushes them to atoms when it lays upon them all that it means. Love must express itself in deeds, as our old proverb says, "Actions speak more loudly than words." Love delights, too, in sacrifices. She rejoices in self-denials and the more costly the sacrifice, the better is love pleased to make it. She will not offer that which costs her nothing—she loves to endure pain, losses and crosses—and thus she expresses herself best.

This is a general principle which is not only applicable to men, but it reaches even up to God, Himself, for, "God is Love," and being love, He must display love, nor can He rest with merely speaking of His love. His love must manifest itself in action. More than that, God could not rest until He had made the greatest sacrifice that He could make and had given up His only-begotten Son to die in the place of sinners. When He had done that, then He could rest in His love. God does not come to us and say, "Men and women, I love you and you must believe that I love you although I do nothing for you to prove My love." He does ask us to believe in His love and He has given us abundant proofs of it. Therefore He has a right to claim our belief in it. The Apostle of Love, who wrote the chapter from which our text is taken, tells us, "Hereby we are made to know"—for that would be the real translation of the original—"Hereby we come to know, we do know, the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." Just as we learn the love of others by seeing what they are prepared to sacrifice for us, so is it even with God, Himself, we discover, discern, perceive and are made to know the love which He bears for us by the fact that "He laid down His life for us."

I. First, I want to show you that THERE ARE MANY ACTS OF GOD IN WHICH HIS LOVE IS VERY CLEAR, BUT IN WHICH THE MOST OF MEN FAIL TO SEE.

There are many of His acts of which it might be said, "Hereby the love of God is manifested," yet many men fail to perceive the love which lies behind the actions. Let us examine ourselves to see how we stand with regard to this matter. There are some of us who ought to have perceived the love of God to us *in the surroundings into which we were brought at our very birth*. I am addressing many who, like myself, owe very much to Christian parents. Many of us could truly say, in the words of the children's hymn—

"I was not born, as thousands are,
Where God was never known
And taught to pray a useless prayer
To blocks of wood and stone."

But without being born slaves or heathens, it might have happened that we would have had to spend our childhood in the slums of London. Some of you think that you have been very good, but would you have been better than the boys that fill our reformatories—would you have been better than those who crowd our prisons—if you had had the same training, or lack of training, that has been their lot? If you had had such an example as they have had—if the taste of strong drink had been familiar to you almost from your birth—if the first thing you ever heard was blasphemy—if you had lived in the thieves' kitchen—do you think that you would have been any more clear from guilt than they have been? When we look down upon others and despise them, it may be that if we knew all their temptations and the conditions of their upbringing, we might almost admire them for not being worse than they are! It costs some people a great struggle to be honest. And there are many women in this dreadful London whom we, perhaps, think ill of, who, nevertheless, have suffered almost a martyrdom and who have fought stern battles with temptation! If they have fallen somewhat, they are to be honored because they have not fallen still further!

But what a blessing it was to us that when we woke up in this world, we looked up into a face that smiled upon us and to lips that, by-and-by, spoke to us of Jesus Christ! The first example that we had was one that, to this day, we wish to follow. Our companions, from our youth up, have been of a godly order and there are some who are in Heaven, now, who had much to do with the formation of our character—and for whom we should always thank God. Now, had we been wise—had we understood the meaning of this gracious arrangement—we might, in the very conditions in which we were born and brought up, have perceived the love of God to us! Yet many of us did not. I should not wonder if some of you thought that you were badly treated because you were placed in such a strict family where you were checked and kept from what you regarded as the pleasures of life. Many a young man has felt that he has been tied to his mother's apron strings a great deal too much. He saw other young men enjoying themselves, but he could not—his father, like a grim jailer, was always looking after him too closely. That is the way

many of us put it in the days of our ignorance. But now that God has opened our eyes, we can see the love of God in it all. Yet we did not see it then and, as a general rule, young men and women who have the high privilege of Christian parents and training do not perceive the love of God in it, but often kick against it and wish they had not to endure what they regard as so great a hardship!

Then, dear Friends, the love of God may be clearly seen in reference to all of us *in His giving us a wise and judicious Law*. That Law of the Ten Commandments is a gift of great kindness to the sons of men, for it tells us the wisest and the happiest way of living. It forbids us nothing but what would be to our injury and it withholds from us nothing which would be a real pleasure to us. The commands which say, "You shall," or "You shall not," are like the signs which you sometimes see at swimming places, bearing the words, "Dangerous! Keep so many yards away from this spot." God does not make laws denying us anything that would really be for our good. There is a poisonous berry growing in your garden and your child has been told that he is not to eat it. If he is a wise child, he will understand that it is your love to him which has told him not to eat of that poisonous berry. If you had no care about him at all, he might eat what poison he chose. But because you love him, you say to him, "My child, do not do this and do not do that because it will be to your serious injury and, possibly, your death, if you disobey." We ought to see the love of God in the gift of His Law, but nobody ever does that till he is led to the love of God in other ways. We cannot say of it, though we ought to do so, "Hereby perceive we the love of God towards us."

We have also had *in the daily bounties of Divine Providence*, abundant manifestations of the love of God. If our eyes were really opened, every loaf of bread would come to us as a token of our Father's care—and every drop we drink would come as the gift of our Father's bounty. Are we not clothed by His love? The breath that is in our nostrils—who gives it to us but our Creator? Who preserves us in health but our great Benefactor? Is it not a proof of love that you are not on a sickbed tonight? That you are not in the lunatic asylum? That you are not do the borders of the grave? Yes, and that you are not in Hell? We are a mass of mercies and a mass of sins—we seem to be made of mercy and ingratitude mixed together! But if the Lord will open our eyes, we will then perceive the boundless mercies of which we are the recipients and we shall begin to perceive His love! But this is not the first place where man ever sees God's love. The Cross is the window through which the love of God is best seen, but, until that window is opened, all the bounties of God's Providence fail to convince us of His love. See how the mass of men reap their harvests and yet never thank the God who gives the harvest. See how they drive the loaded wagons to the granaries and thresh out the wheat—and send it to be sold in the markets—but did you ever hear of a song of praise being sung in the market when they brought the first new wheat to be sold? Did you ever hear of such a thing? Why, they would think we were all

gone mad if at Mark Lane, on the arrival of a sample of new wheat, we were to begin to sing—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

The probability is that there are many of them there cursing because the wheat has gone down a shilling or two and the poor people will, possibly, get their bread a little cheaper! Praising God seems to have gone out of fashion and we are told by philosophers, who ought to know, that the wheat springs up naturally and that God has nothing to do with it. They say that whether it rains or whether the sun shines, the processes of Nature are ruled by iron law with which God has no concern at all—and they practically imply that He has gone for a holiday and left the world to manage itself, or wound it up, like a watch, and put it under His pillow and gone to sleep! That is the philosopher's religion and, as far as I am concerned, the philosophers may keep it, for it is not mine! My religion believes in the God of the showers, the God of the sunshine and the God of the harvests. I believe in "the living God, who gives us all things to enjoy" and let His name be praised for it! Were our hearts right with Him, we would "hereby" perceive the love of God, but we do not—that perception comes to us through a stained glass window—the window that was stained crimson by the precious blood of Christ! There, and only there, do we perceive the love of God, "because He laid down His life for us."

II. That brings me to my second point which is this—IN THE LAYING DOWN OF HIS LIFE, CHRIST'S LOVE IS BEST SEEN.

I have already said that in many acts of God, His love *ought* to be seen, but, according to the text, we "hereby" perceive the love of God, "because He laid down His life for us." It is universally admitted that *there can be no greater proof of love than for a person to lay down his life for the object of that love*. All sorts of sacrifices may be taken as proofs of affection, but the relinquishment of life is the supreme proof of love which nobody doubts. A man says that he loves his country—and suppose that man should be in the condition of Curtius, in the old Roman fable, when a great chasm opened in the Forum and it was declared that it could only be closed by the most precious thing in Rome being thrown into it. The story goes on to say that Curtius, fully armed and riding his charger, leaped into the chasm, which instantly closed. Well, nobody could doubt the love of such a man for his country! If the question happened to be the love of humanity, we have the story—the true story—of the surgeon at Marseilles. And if we acted as he did, nobody could doubt our love to our fellow creatures. The plague was raging through the city and the people were dying by thousands. The good bishop remained among them, discharging the last offices to the dying and cheering the living—and many of the surgeons of the town who might have departed, lingered to wait upon the sick. At a consultation among them, it was resolved to make a *post mortem* examination of one of the worst cases of the plague and the question was who should make it, for whoever did it must certainly die of the disease within a few hours. One of them, to his honor, said, "My life is of no more value than that of any other man—why

should I not sacrifice it if I can, by doing so, discover the cause of this terrible malady and save this city?"

He finished his grim task, wrote his notes about the case and then went to his home and died. Nobody doubted that he loved Marseilles, for he had laid down his life for it. And you probably read, the other day, the story of a mother's love which nobody could doubt. In the late disastrous floods, a mother who had her two little children in a cradle, climbed a hill, carrying them with her. She reached a tree, or some other frail shelter with these two dear objects of her love and held them up till she found that the support on which she was resting was not strong enough to sustain herself and her two babies. So, placing them out of harm's way as far as she could, she leaped into the waters and soon sank. Nobody could doubt that mother's love when she laid down her life for her children! This is the crowning proof of love! Even "the devil's advocate" will not rise up to dispute this truth! They that can die for others must surely love those for whom they lay down their lives.

Now, *our Lord Jesus Christ has proved His love to sinners by dying for them.* Do you need me to tell you the story again? O my Brothers and Sisters, read it for yourselves. Read it often! You have it written four times, but not once too often—the story of the Son of God, who, for our sakes, died a felon's death, barbarously nailed to the Cross to bleed away His life. Read that story and see how He proved His love to us!

But there were certain points about Christ's death which are very extraordinary and which are better proofs of love than those I mentioned just now. The first is this—*Jesus need not have died at all.* When the Marseilles surgeon died, he only did what he would have to do a few years afterwards. When the mother perished to save her children, she did but die a few weeks, or months, or years before her appointed time, for, being mortal, she must die. If we give our life for others, we do not really give our life—we but pay the debt of Nature a little while before it is due. But it was altogether different in the Lord Jesus Christ's case. Over Him death had no power—It is of Him that Paul writes, "who only has immortality." Who could, without His consent, have laid his hands upon the Prince of Life, the Son of God, and said to Him, "You shall die"? No one could have done that! It was a purely voluntary act for Christ to die at all—not merely to die on the Cross but *ever* to die, was a voluntary act on His part and, consequently, a most singular proof of His love to us.

Remember, again, that in our Lord's case, *there were no claims upon Him on the part of those for whom He died.* I can understand a mother dying for her children. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" I can see some reason why a noble citizen would be willing to die for his city. When the six principal burgesses of Calais put the ropes round their necks and went out to Edward III, to offer to die instead of their fellow citizens, I can understand their action. Were they not the leaders of that community? Were they not put into a position of responsibility and honor which, if it might not exactly demand the sacrifice, yet, at least, rendered it a most

likely thing that if they were men of truly noble spirit, they would make it? But there were no such claims upon our Lord Jesus Christ! When Queen Eleanor sucked the poison from her husband's wounds at the risk of her own life, I can see reasons why she would do it. I say not that she was *bound* to do it, but I do say that the relationship of a wife accounts for what she did. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had no relationship to us until He chose to assume the relationship which He did assume out of infinite compassion! There was no more relation between Him and us then between the potter and the clay! And if the clay upon the wheel goes amiss, what does the potter do with it but take it and throw it into a corner? And so might the great Creator have done with us. But instead of doing so, He shed His blood that He may make us into vessels of honor fit for His own use! O Son of God, how could You stoop so low as to take upon Yourself our nature and in that nature to bleed and die, when between us and You there was a distance infinitely greater than that between an ant and a cherub, or a moth and an archangel? Yet with no claims upon You, of Your own free will, You did yield Yourself to die because of Your amazing love to us!

Another extraordinary thing about Christ's love was that *there were no appeals whatever made to Him to die*. In the other cases which I have quoted, you may remind me that there were no vocal appeals made. The little children in the cradle did not beg their mother to die for them. No, but the very sight of them was enough to plead with their mother. In the case of the city dying of pestilence, could the surgeon—who believed that by an examination he might discover the secret of the evil—go through the streets and see the doors marked with the fatal cross and hear the wailing of the widows and the children without feeling that they did make most pitiful appeals to his heart? But man made no appeal to God to die for him! Our father Adam—and he was the representative of us all, did not fall down on his knees in the Presence of God and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner. O God, whom I have offended, provide for me a Savior and deliver me from Your wrath!" No prayer came from Adam's lips, nor even a confession—only a wicked and mean attempt to cast upon God the blame for his disobedience! "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." That is all that human nature usually does—it will not acknowledge that it needs a Savior and it will not confess that it has sinned sufficiently to need an expiatory sacrifice and, consequently, the sullenness of man might have paralyzed the love of Christ if anything could have done it! You did not sue for mercy—you did not ask for an Atonement—you did not desire expiation for your sin, yet Jesus came, unasked, undesired, unsought—to lay down His life for sinners!

Notice, again, that Jesus Christ well knew that if He did lay down His life, *He would get no love in return from those for whom He died unless He, Himself, created that love*. This He has done in the hearts of His own people, but, in the hearts of others who have been left to themselves, there is no love to Jesus Christ. Here, Sabbath after Sabbath, it is our privilege to preach a dying Savior to dying sinners, but, of all themes in

the world, it seems to make the least impression upon some of our hearers! If we were to come here and talk of Howard's devotion in living and dying to relieve the woes of the prisoners in our jails, many would be moved to admiration of the philanthropist! But how little admiration have most men for our sweet Lord and Master? It is an old story, you say, and you have heard it so often that you care little for it. Now, that mother, who died to save her children, felt that they loved her. How often they had charmed her with their cooing and smiles while they were lying on her bosom—and she felt that she could freely give up her life for them. But our Lord Jesus Christ knew that He was dying for stony-hearted monsters whose return for His love, if left to themselves, would be that they would utterly reject Him! They would not believe in Him. They would trust in their own righteousness rather than in His—and they would try to find a way to Heaven by sacraments and ceremonies rather than by faith in the meritorious Sacrifice which He made when He laid down His life for sinners!

Remember, too, that our Lord died by the hands of men as well as for the sake of men. The surgeon at Marseilles was not to die by the act of his fellow citizens. The mother was not to die at the hands of her children. Curtius, leaping into the gulf, was not forced there by the anger of his fellow citizens. On the contrary, all would have been glad for them to continue to live. But it was this that made the death of Christ so sadly unique, that He came to die for men who wished that He should be made to die! "Crucify Him, crucify Him," they cried in their mad rage, foaming at the mouth. "Oh," some of you say, "but *we* never said that." No, not then, but perhaps you are saying it now—for there are still many who hate the Gospel of Christ—and to hate the Gospel is to hate Christ, Himself, for that is His very essence and heart! And to reject Christ to choose your own pleasure and to keep on delaying to repent, as some of you do, and to die at enmity against Christ is very much the same thing as crying, "Crucify Him!" And it comes to the same thing in the long run. You know that if you could be quite sure that there is no Christ and no God, and no Heaven, and no Hell, you would be perfectly happy. That is to say, you would, if you could, crucify Christ and put Him out of existence with everything that has to do with Him! Well, that is the very same spirit as that which made the Jews of old cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Yet once more, there was this remarkable thing about Christ's death—that *in dying for us, He was taking upon Himself an awful mass of shame and dishonor, and also a most intimate connection with sin.* There was nothing shameful about the leap of Curtius into the chasm. Had I been there to see him, I would have clapped my hands and cried, "Well done, Curtius!" Who would not have said the same? But when our Lord died, men thrust out their tongues at Him and mocked Him! His was, indeed, a shameful death. And, I think when that mother put her babes up in a place of safety and herself sank into the raging flood, the angels might have smiled as well as sorrowed at such a deed of heroism. But when

Jesus sank into the raging flood to save us, even God, Himself, did not smile at Him! Among our Savior's expiring cries was that agonizing utterance, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was because He had, as our Representative, come into contact with human sin—and so with human shame. The just and holy Son of God was made a curse for us! Or, as Paul tells us, God "has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

All this helps to manifest to us Christ's amazing love, so I finish my discourse by asking—as the text says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us"—*have you and I perceived that love?* Do we know it? That is a very simple question, yet I take the liberty to press it upon you. I think it was Aristotle who said—and he was a great master of thought—that it is impossible for a person to know that he is loved without feeling some love in return. I think, as a rule, that is true. So, if you do really perceive that Christ loved you so much as to die for you, there will leap up in your heart somewhat, at any rate, of love to Him! One Sunday night I was reading, in Exeter Hall, the hymn beginning—

"Jesus, Lover of my soul"

And, just at that time, there strayed into the hall, a man of fashion, a man of the world, careless of all spiritual things, but that line caught his ear—

"Jesus, Lover of my soul."

He said to himself, "Does Jesus really love *me*? Is He the Lover of *my* soul?" And that line was the means of begetting love in his thoughtless heart—and then and there he surrendered himself to the love of Christ! Oh, that such a result as that might come of my repeating the story here—that some who have never loved the Lord Jesus Christ up till now, would say, "Did He thus love His enemies—thus strangely love them even to the death? Then we, though we have up to now been His enemies, can be His enemies no longer! We will love Him in return for His great love to us."

And you Christian people who do love Him, if you have perceived His love somewhat, try to perceive it still more, that you may love Him more! And if you really love Him more, try to show that you do. Notice the rest of the verse from which my text is taken. I did not leave out the latter part because I was afraid of it, but because I had not time to deal with it as it deserves—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We ought to prove our love to our God by our love to our fellow men—but especially by our love to our fellow Christians—and to prove our love by our actions! I do not know what the love of some professors is worth. I suppose they do if they put down how much it costs them in a year. I fear that it does not cost some professors nearly as much for their religion as it does for their ribbons, or for some foolish indulgence. They pay their shoeblacks better than they pay their ministers and they take care to spend upon themselves in perfect waste, a hundred times as

much as they spend upon spreading the Gospel, saving the heathen, helping the poor, or rescuing the fallen! We do not believe in such Christianity as that! And we certainly do not wish to practice it. If we profess to be Christians, let us be Christians in deed and let us especially show our love to Christ by loving our fellow Christians. If you see any of them in need, aid them to the uttermost of your power! If they need cheering and comforting, give them good cheer and comfort. But, if they need substantial aid—*financial* aid—let them have that, too!

In the old days of persecution, there were always some noble souls who tried to hide away the Christians from those who sought their lives, although they did so at the risk of their own lives. And many a Christian has given himself up to die in order to save the lives of his fellow Christians. Some of the old people came tottering before the judge because they thought that they would not be so much missed from the Church as the younger ones would be and, possibly, some of them also thought that they had more faith than the younger ones had—and if they had more faith, they were more ready to die and so to let the younger ones live on until they grew stronger in faith and hope, and love. But, on the other hand, sometimes the young men would gently push back the fathers and say to them, "No, you are old—you had better linger here awhile and teach the young. We young people are strong, so we will go and die for Christ." And there was many a contention in the Church of God, in persecuting times, as to who should die first for Christ! They were all willing to lay down their lives for their Brothers and Sisters!

Where has this self-sacrificing love gone? I would like to see some of it! I would even wear microscopes over my eyes if I thought that I could so discover it—but I am afraid I cannot. Why, if we loved each other, now, as Christians loved each other then, we should be the talk of the town and even worldings would say, "Look how these Christians love one another!" Yet this is only what we ought to do, so, Brothers and Sisters in Christ let it be what we *will* do! God help you to do it for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 3.

Verse 1. *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* Behold it, wonder at it and never cease to admire it! Is it not one of the greatest marvels that even God, Himself, has ever worked that we should be called the sons of God?

1. *Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.* It does not know the Father, then how should it know the children? It did not know the elder Brother—the First-Born among many brethren—and as it did not know Him, how should it know us?

2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* And that vision will be

transforming and transfiguring! The pure in heart see God and they are pure *because* they see God. There is both action and reaction—when God has purified us, we shall see Christ and when we see Christ as He is, our purification will be complete! When will that day arrive? Oh, for the blessed vision! Meanwhile, let us be content to look at Him by faith and to be always growing more and more prepared for that brighter vision which is yet to be ours.

3. *And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.* It is the nature of this Divine hope—this hope of being like Christ—that it helps us to grow day by day more like Him and so we purify ourselves, as Christ is pure.

4. *Whoever commits sin, also transgresses the Law, for sin is the transgression of the Law.* And there will never be a better definition of sin than this. However men may philosophically try to mar it, this simple statement will be better than any that they can give us—"Sin is the transgression of the Law."

5. *And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.* What a marvelous thing it was for Christ to bear sin as He did and yet to have upon Him or within Him no taint arising from it! You have to go into the world and you say, "How can we help sinning while we have to mix with so much that is evil?" Well, the Lord Jesus Christ had to mix with evil more than you will ever have to, for He not only lived in this sinful world, but the transgression of His people was actually laid upon Him so that He came into very close contact with sin—"He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin."

6. *Whoever abides in Him sins not: whoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.* If this declaration is related to any one act of sin, none of us could ever say that we have seen or known Him—but it relates to the *habit of sin*—if we love sin and live in sin—if the main course of our life is sinful, then we have "not seen Him, neither known Him."

7. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* You must judge a tree by its fruit. If it brings forth good fruit, it is a good tree—and if it brings forth evil fruit, it is an evil tree. Do not be deceived about that matter, for there have been some who have dreamed of being righteous and of being the children of God, yet they have lived in sin as others do! They have been self-deceived! It has been a mere dream on which they have relied. Practical godliness is absolutely necessary to a true Christian character—and a man is not righteous unless he does that which is righteous.

8. *He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning.* Ever since he became a devil, he has continued to sin. It was sin that changed the angel into a devil—and he has always remained a sinner.

8, 9. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested; that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever is born of God does not commit sin.* That is to say, this is not the course, habit and tenor of his life—

there is sin in much that he does, but he hates it, loathes it and flees from it.

9-11. *For His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* Love is the essential mark of the true child of God. "God is Love" and, therefore, he that is born of God must love. Hatred, envy, malice, uncharitableness—these are not the things to be found in the children of God! If they are found in you, you are not one of His children.

12. *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.* That was the real evil at the bottom of his great crime—it was the wickedness of Cain's character that made him hate the good that was in Abel—and, therefore, after a while he slew his brother, "because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous."

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you.* This hatred is too old for you to wonder at it. If it began with the first man who was born into the world, even with Cain, do not marvel if it should spend some of its fury upon you!

14, 15. *We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* What a warning this is against the evil spirit of hate, revenge and all that kind of feeling! These things are not compatible with the possession of the life of God! Where hatred lives, there is no life of God in the soul. That evil must be shot to the very heart by the arrows of Almighty Grace, or else we are not free from the dominion of the devil. Every man who hates another has the venom of murder in his veins. He may never actually take the deadly weapons into his hand and destroy life, but if he *wishes* that his brother were out of the way—if he would be glad if no such person existed—that feeling amounts to murder in the judgment of God! It is not the lifting of the dagger, nor the mixing of the poison that is the essence of the crime of murder! It is the hate that prompts the commission of the deadly deed! If we never commit the crime, yet if the hate is in our heart, we are guilty of murder in the sight of God—and eternal life cannot be abiding in us.

16, 17. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?* Indeed, it cannot be there at all! He has the love of himself and not the love of God dwelling in him!

18, 19. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him.* You notice how the Apostle constantly

writes about knowing. Take your pencil and underline the word, "know," in John's Epistles and you will be surprised to find how frequently he uses it. He is not one of those who suppose, or fancy, or imagine, or have formed a certain hypothesis—he *knows* and he tells us what he knows in order that we, also, may know! Love has a knowledge which is peculiarly her own—a full assurance which none can take from her!

20. *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.* If you, with your narrow knowledge of right and wrong—your imperfect understanding of your own motives—if you find reason to condemn yourself, what must be your position before the bar of the all-seeing, heart-reading God? That little flutter in your bosom, my Friend—that trembling, that uneasiness—what does it mean? Is not this a forewarning of the sounding of the trumpet of the Great Assize when you will have to stand before the Judge of all the earth and answer for yourself to Him? It is easy to deceive your fellow man—but it is impossible to deceive your God!

21. *Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God.* Other people may condemn us, but that does not matter. They may impute wrong motives to us and misrepresent us, but that is no concern of ours so long as we have confidence toward God.

22. *And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* Notice the link between confidence as to our rightness and power in prayer. When a child has done wrong and knows it, he cannot run to his father and ask for favors as he used to do—he feels timid in his father's presence because of the sense of his guilt. But if you and I know that we have endeavored with all our heart to love the Lord and our fellow men and to act righteously in all things, we have a sacred confidence which enables us to speak with God as a man speaks with his friend! God greatly loves this kind of confidence and He listens to those who possess it. Such people may ask what they will of God—they have learned to bring their minds into conformity with the will of God's so the desire of their heart shall be granted to them.

23, 24. *And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.* Oh, to be more and more under the sacred influence of that blessed Spirit!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—286, 293
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—44.

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

"WHERE ARE THE NINE?" WHERE?
NO. 2960

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"
Luke 17:17.

THE whole narrative connected with the text is worthy of your careful reading. There were 10 men, lepers who, according to the old proverb that "birds of a feather flock together," had made a company and seemed to have lived in greater amity through kinship of suffering than they would have done had they been healthy and competent to share the fragrance of each other's joys. Mutual woe may have softened some of their natural jealousies, for we find that there was at least one in the company who was a Samaritan, while the others were Jews. Now, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," yet, when both are placed beyond the pale of society—in their sickness an intimacy springs up between them. So does common calamity bring about strange friendships. These men, who, under any other circumstances, would have been mortal enemies, became comfortable companions—at least, so far as their disease would allow them the thought of comfort.

Do you not observe everywhere how sinners congregate together? Drunks are gregarious creatures—they will not often drink alone. The lascivious song is hardly sweet unless it thrills from many tongues. In most sorts of merry-making that are not wise, we know that it is company that gives the zest and yields the main gratification. Men seem to have a sort of anticipation of the time when they shall be bound up in bundles—they gaily forestall their gloomy doom as they bind themselves up in bundles while they are yet living! Oh, that Christians would adhere as closely to one another as sinners do! That they would forget their differences, whether they are Jews or Samaritans, and walk in friendship and love! If common sickness made the lepers a band, how much more should common mercy bind us to one another?

Well, it so happened that all these 10 lepers, at one time, agreed to go to Christ the great Healer. Oh, what a mercy it is when a whole hospital full of sinners will agree to go to Christ at once! I recollect—I can never look back but with pleasure upon the time when a whole company of friends who were simply worldly, irreligious people, and were accustomed to meet together constantly, were all moved with a desire to come up to the House of God. And it pleased God to so direct the shot that the most of them were brought under the Divine Power! Some of them who are

sitting here, now, will recollect right well when they used to issue invitations for their convivial parties on Sunday evenings! But now they are with us and are some of the most useful and vigorous church members that we have! It is a fine thing when the 10 lepers all agree to come together—it will be a grander thing when the ten lepers are all healed and not one left to mourn that he has been neglected!

These lepers become an example to us, for they went to Jesus. Their disease was foul and loathsome. They felt it to be so. Their own society could not stand them—they needed health and nothing else but perfect health would content them. How did they go to Jesus? They first of all went directly, for it is written in the narrative that as Christ entered into a village, these lepers began to cry out. They did not wait until He got into the nearest house and had sat down and taken some refreshment. No, but they meet Him at the village gates! They waylay Him at the very portals. They cannot stop—no delay, no procrastination for them! O leprous Sinner, go to Christ at once! Go now, tarry not until you have left the sanctuary! Wait not until the sermon is over! It is written, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Young man, at the threshold of your life, seek Christ! Go now, you who have begun to be sick. Go now, young woman, now that your cheeks begin to be blanched with consumption. Go now, go at once, go instantly to meet the healing Savior!

They went humbly. They stood afar off—note that. They felt that they had no right to come near. So must we go to our Lord for mercy—conscious that we have no claim upon Him and standing, just as the publican did, afar off, scarcely daring to lift our eyes to Heaven, we must cry—"God be merciful to me a sinner." William Dawson once told this story to illustrate how humble the soul must be before it can find peace. He said that at a revival meeting, a little lad who was used to Methodist ways—I do not tell the story for the sake of Methodism, but for the sake of the moral—the little boy went home to his mother and said, "Mother, John So-and-So is under conviction and is seeking for peace. But he will not find it tonight, Mother." "Why, William?" she asked. "Because he is only down on one knee, Mother, and he will never get peace until he is down on both knees." Now the moral of that story, using it metaphorically, is true. Until conviction of sin brings us down on both knees—until we are completely humbled, until we have no hope, no merit, no proud boasting left—we cannot find the Savior! And we must be willing not to embrace Him like sanctified Mary, but to stand at a distance like the unclean lepers.

Observe how earnestly they sought Him. They cried with a loud voice, or, rather, "They lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They emulated one another. One cried with all his might, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" And another seemed to say, "That is not loud enough." And so he shouted, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" And so each one strained his voice that he might reach the ear of the Savior. There is no winning mercy without holy violence. "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." You recollect

that blind man who was sitting on the bank, one day, when Jesus went by and, as he heard a great noise of a mob passing along, he said, "What is all the noise?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth passes by." The man, with quick perception, perceived that here was an opportunity for him, so he shouted with all his might, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" Now Christ was in the middle of a sermon and some of the Apostles, as some of our good deacons might do when there was a little disturbance—slipped out of the crowd to say, "Hush, don't make that noise! You will disturb the Preacher." But he cried, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Hold your tongue! The Master cannot attend to you." And other zealous friends gathered round and would have put him out of the way, but he cried the more a great deal, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Well, now, it is just thus that we must pray if we would get the mercy! Cold prayers court refusal. Heaven is not to be obtained by lukewarm supplications. Heat your prayers red-hot, Brothers and Sisters! Plead the blood of Jesus! Plead like one who means to prevail—and then you shall prevail!

Not to tarry where there is plenty of room for long observations, let me turn your attention to the way in which Christ cured these 10 lepers.

There is a singular variety in Christ's methods of cure. Sometimes it is a touch. Another time, clay and spittle. At other times, a word. This time He said to them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." They were not clean and they might, therefore, have turned round and said, "What a foolish errand! Why should we go and exhibit our filthiness to priests? Master, will You cure us or not? If You will cure us, we can *then* go to the priests. If You will not, it is a vain errand to go to the priests to be again doomed to seclusion." They did not ask questions, however. They were too wise for that. They did just what they were told and though they were white, and far from being like men whose flesh is sound, the whole 10 set off on their pilgrimage to go to the priests. And, as they went, suddenly the cure was worked and they were, every one of them, clean! Oh, what a beautiful picture is this of the plan of salvation! Jesus Christ says, "Believe on Me and live." Oh, be not foolish! Do not say, "But, Lord, make me whole and *then* I will believe." Do not say, "Lord, give me a tender heart and *then* I will come." "Lord, forgive my sin and *then* I will love You." But do as He bids you. He bids you trust Him, so, do as He bids you—trust Him! And while you are trusting Him—while you are going to Him with the white leprosy still in your skin, while you are yet upon the way—He will heal you! You know that we are not to be saved, first, and to believe in Christ afterwards—that may be the order of God's covenant revelation, but it is not the order of our spiritual apprehension! We are to first *believe*, just as we are—

"All unholy and unclean,
Being nothing else but sin"—

I am to believe that Jesus Christ is able to save me. I am to trust my soul with Him that He may save it. And, in the act of so doing I shall find salvation! Be not, I pray you, so foolish as to say, "Lord, I object to this

method of procedure." Seek no needless preparation! Do not hesitate and stop until you feel ready to come to Him—

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him—
This He gives you!
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Let us now fix our attention more closely on the text. I think I see those 10 men—they are trudging along the road and as they go they are obliged to wear a veil and to cry, as they march along—"Unclean, unclean, unclean," so as to warn the party that lepers are on the road. Suddenly, while they are marching on, one of them turns to his fellow sufferer, and says, "I am clean." And the next says, "So am I!" And the whole 10 turn round and look at one another and each man, as he looks first at his own flesh and then at his fellows, comes to the conclusion that the whole 10 have been healed in an instant! "What shall we do?" says one of them. "Why," say the others, "we had better go on to the priests and get officially cleansed as soon as possible." "I have a farm," says one, "I have been a long while away from it and I should like to get back." "Ah," says another, "and I have not seen my wife for many a day. Let me be off to the priest and then go home to her." "Ah," says another, "there are my dear little children—I hope soon to take them on my knee." "Yes," says another, "and I want to join my old friends—to get back to my former companions."

But there is another who says, "You don't mean to say you will go on, do you? I think we ought to go back and thank the Man that has made us whole. This is God's work and if we are to go and thank God in the Temple, I think we ought first to go and thank God in the Man who has done us this benefit, the Man, Christ Jesus. Let us go back to Him." "Oh!" says another, "I think we had better not. If we don't go to the priest at once, our friends will not know us again and it will be a disgrace to us, in later years, if they say, 'That is John the leper. That is Samuel the leper. I think we had better go to the priest at once, get the thing done and then get back as soon as we can. Let's see, you go to Bethsaida and you go to Capernaum. Let us get back as quietly as possible and hold our tongues about it. That, is our policy." "What?" says the other man—and he was a Samaritan—"What? Do that? Never has such love been heard of as that which has been shown to us, and such a gift as we have received ought to meet with something like gratitude. If you will not go back, I will," he said. And they turn round, perhaps, and laugh at him for his over-zeal and one of them says, "Our Samaritan friend always was fanatical." "Fanatical or not," he says, "I have received such a favor that I never could repay it, even if I counted out my life's blood in drops and, therefore, I will go back to Him and fall at His feet, and adore Him as God, seeing he has worked a Divine work in me." Away he goes! Down he falls at Jesus' feet, adores Him as God and with as loud a voice as once he cried, "Lord, have mercy on me," he cries now, "Glory, glory, glory be

unto Your name." Jesus answers, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

I am going to use the Savior's question, with that picture before you, and I hope we may give a satisfactory account of the nine. Gratitude is a very rare thing. If any of you try to do good for the sake of getting gratitude, you will find it one of the most profitless trades in the world. If you can do good, expecting to be *abused* for it, you will get your reward, but if you do good with an expectation of gratitude in return, you will be bitterly disappointed. If anybody is grateful for anything you do, be surprised at it, for it is the way of the world to generally be ungrateful. The more you do, the more you may do and when you have done your best, your friend will forget it. *Alas, that this should be true, in a spiritual sense, with regard to Christians!* I shall take that class first. How many are there in this House of God whose sins have been forgiven? They owe to Christ a healing far more wonderful than that of being cleansed from leprosy! The Lord has made them clean—they are saved from death and Hell. But, of the saved people in the world, how many there are who never make even an open profession of their being saved at all? A few there are who come—shall I say only one out of ten? They are baptized, we give them the right hand of fellowship, we thank God—this is well, "but where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?"

Every now and then a Brother who has been made a partaker of Sovereign Grace comes forward and says, "I am on the Lord's side." Bless God for that! But are there not many who are hiding themselves, like Saul, among the stuff? "Where are the nine?" Walk through the streets. Travel this great city of London—are we to believe that there is no more Christianity in London then that which is apparent in our congregations? *I* cannot think so! I hope that there are multitudes of true Christians who never did come out and say, "I am a follower of the Lamb." But is this right? "Where are the nine?" Are they where they are doing good? Are they not in the coward's place? Are they not skulking like deserters? "Where are the nine?" How it is that they bring no glory to God! Purchased with Christ's blood, why do they not acknowledge that they are His? Being one with Him secretly, why do they not become one with Him publicly? He said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." O, you nine, where are you?

But *out of those who do make a profession*, to come closer home to most of you, *how few there are that live up to it!* The profession is made and they call themselves the people of God. And there are some Christians—especially some in the humbler walks of life—whose daily walk is the best sermon upon religion that can possibly be preached. With what satisfaction have I often looked upon many a poor girl struggling hard to earn her daily bread with her needle, but adorning the Doctrine of God even more than a bishop on the bench! And how have I seen some of you in other ranks, too, and marked your consistency of life, the incorruptibility of your honesty—how you will stand out against temptations and are neither to be moved by bribes, nor to be subdued by

threats! Now this is true of many Christians. You will meet with them every now and then—men who are like pillars of light, as the saintly Basil desired to be—men who reflect the image of Christ. As soon as you see them, you have no need to ask, "Whose image and superscription is this?" They live like Jesus! Their holiness, their loving spirit, their prayerfulness, their gentleness all betoken that they are like the Savior. Ah, this is true of some—"but where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?"

That shop-counter can tell where some of them are—cheating the public. "Where are the nine?" Some of them inconsistent in their walk—worldly with the worldly, frothy with the light and trifling, as giddy and as fond of carnal pleasure as anybody! "Where are the nine?" O Brothers and Sisters, if all who profess to be God's people really lived up to what they profess, what a grand world this would be! How changed world trade would become! How different your merchandise and your traffic! How altered the appearance of everything! How blessed the poor, how happy the rich! Where would be your pride? Where your striving after high gentility? Where your longing after so much creature respect and earthly grandeur? The whole thing would be done away with if we became like Christ! In the case of some few, they are delivered from this present evil world according to the will of God. "But where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?" Let their conscience answer.

And in our churches, too, *how few there are who, making a profession of religion, are fervent in it!* If you want good people who go regularly to church or chapel, subscribe a little, sometimes—do not mind walking through the Sunday school once in a year. Feel a good deal for the poor and needy, only do not feel in their pockets! If you want good people who wish all sorts of good things, but never do them—I can find them as readily as I can find birds' nests in winter time when the leaves are stripped off the trees! But if you want those who give body, soul and strength to God's cause—if you would have women who can break the alabaster box of precious ointment for Jesus, as Mary did—if you would have those that love much because much has been forgiven, I hardly think you will find one in ten! And very likely that one in ten will be a Samaritan—one who, in her former state, was full of sin or a man who, before his conversion, was one of the vilest of the vile! You will often find pure and perfect love there when you may not find it anywhere else. I thank God that in this congregation there are many who consistently and cheerfully give up their substance to the Lord—one in ten—"but where are the nine?" I thank God that in this congregation there are many earnest workers, so that the Sunday schools in the neighborhood are mainly supplied with our congregation. This is good, but, "where are the nine?"

I thank God for those men who stand in the street and preach, and for those Brothers and Sisters who distribute tracts, or in other ways seek to serve their Master. This is noble of you—but, how many do it? "Where are the nine?" Summon the church members, march them all along and let the officer's eyes run down the ranks and he will say, "Yes, there is one there who serves his Master well. Stand out. One, two, three, four,

five, six, seven, eight, nine—you may go on." Here comes another—"Yes, this man *does* live for the cause of Christ. You can stand out, too. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—you may go on—you do nothing at all." I am afraid the average is even less in some churches and I might, if I were addressing some congregations, not only say "Where are the nine?" but, "Where are the ninety-nine?" For 99 out of a hundred among *some* professors do not live to God with zeal, with fire, with earnestness and with fervor! No, my Brothers and Sisters, when you fetch out such men as Brainerd. When you bring into the front ranks such men as Henry Martyn, such evangelists as Whitefield and Wesley, such toilsome missionaries of the Cross as Robert Moffat or John Williams, you may say, after you have looked at them, "Yes, these do well. They owe much to God and they live as if they felt it." But where are the ninety-nine? Where are the nine hundred and ninety-nine? *We* all owe as much as they, but oh, how little we do! The ground has been plowed as much, watered as much and sown as well, but we do not bring forth twenty-fold, while they bring forth a hundred!

"Where are the nine?" Come now, I should not like to leave this point until I have found out some of the nine. Are there not some of my own church members who are doing nothing? You do not help the Sunday school. We require a number of young men and women to go to Kent Street Ragged Schools to teach on Sabbaths and that is one reason why I want to find out where the nine are. There is a noble field of labor amidst the poverty and degradation of Kent Street and I think we, as a church, ought to look after that locality. "Where *are* the nine?" Am I not addressing some who are doing nothing for Christ? When Brothers and Sisters, now and then say to me, "Well, Sir, what *shall* we do?" I usually suspect that they are rather lazy, for an industrious person soon finds plenty to do in such a city as this! But if there are any of the nine present, let me call them out. For your own comfort's sake, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake, for your soul's sake because men are dying, time is flying, eternity is hastening, come, I pray you, come forth, you that are of the nine! One feels, sometimes, in prospect of death, like the venerable Bede, who, when he had nearly translated the Gospel of John, said to the young man who was writing from his dictation, "Write fast, write fast, for I am dying. How far are you now? How many verses remain?" "So many." "Quicker, quicker," he said, "write more quickly, for I am dying." When at length he said, "I have come to the last verse," the good old man folded his arms, sang the Doxology and fell asleep in Jesus! Quickly, Brother, quickly! You will never get through the chapter if you do not work and write quickly! Quickly, quickly, your time of dying is so near and then, when you have done, if you have worked quickly for Christ though it is not of debt but of Grace, you will be able to say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace," and with the Doxology on your quivering lips you will go to sing the Doxology in sweeter strains above!

Having thus somewhat roughly handled professors of religion, I am going to address *those who have received special favors from God.* Like

the 10 lepers, there are many in the world who have had very special favors. How many are present tonight who have had fever, cholera, or some sickness which appeared to be unto death? I bless God that when I was last sitting to see enquirers, a very considerable number traced their conversion to sickbeds. They were there awakened and they afterwards came up to God's House—

"To pay the vows
Their souls in anguish made."

Yes, those are the ones typified by the Samaritan! "But where are the nine?" Is there not one of them under the gallery there, to the right, he who was nearly drowned at sea and, just then, oh, how he vowed that if God would spare him, he would live to God's service? But he is one of the nine. Have I not another, yonder, who was given up by the doctor and, like Hezekiah, turned his face to the wall and said, "Lord, only let me live, and I will be a different man"? But if there is any difference, he has been rather worse than better! There is another of the nine. I need not go out to find the other seven—they are all here. They have, some of them, been sick, some of them have suffered from some "accident," some have undergone operations, some have passed through imminent peril both on land and sea and some have had their lives preserved—I think I see them now—to a very advanced period of life. "Where are the nine?" There is one of the nine here—he has passed his threescore years and ten and while some of his age have been brought to know the Lord by reason of His goodness and kindness in thus lengthening their span, he still remains and does not give glory to God. O souls, to lie to God is to lie with a vengeance! To promise Him and to not perform—what? Is God to be played with? Will you play fast and loose with Him? Dare you befool yourself with the Most High and promise Him this and that, and then break your vow? In the name of God, you nine, I cite you to make your appearance at the last great bar except you now turn from the error of your ways! May the Spirit of God turn you, for otherwise, when the question is asked, "Where are the nine?" you must be dragged forward and your vows, and bonds, and privileges shall be all urged against you and shall be swift witness against you forever!

"Where are the nine? "I may remind you of *the common mercies that we all enjoy*. Fed each day by Divine bounty, clothed by Heaven's charity, supplied with breath by God, there are some who live to praise Him, some who give back that breath in praise which God prolongs in mercy, who spend that life to His honor which His long-suffering permits to last. But these are but one in ten, shall I say one in ten thousand? "Where are the nine?" Here are some of them—men who live upon God, but never live to God! Men who go from morning to night without prayer—who roll out of bed in the morning and get to their labor—and roll into it at night, fall asleep again, but never utter, never feel a "God be thanked for this day's favor"! Never a breathing of the heart towards the God who is in Heaven! Like brutes they live and like brutes they will die. Only, unlike brutes, they will rise again and receive, for the deeds done in the body, the due reward of the evil that they have done! "Where are the nine?" Let

the question provoke you to weep over your ingratitude and lead you to turn to God.

Then again, to use the question another way, *where are the nine who have listened to the Gospel?* Lately the Lord has been very gracious to our city. Our preachers have not been quite so dead and dull as they once were. The theatres have echoed with the name of Jesus! Men like Radcliffe, and North, with Richard Weaver, chief and foremost, and Mr. Denham Smith, have preached the Word with power and from among the crowds who have gone in and out of the theatres, some have been converted to God—but "where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?" And in this house, too, with its aisles and its seats thronged so constantly—how many thousands listen to our voice? Yes, I thank God, some not in vain, for some of all sorts, of every rank and condition have believed in Jesus—but, still, "where are the nine?" Christians, here is a solemn question for you! There is much good being done in London just now, but we question whether all the Evangelical labor in London is carried on by so much as one in ten. Then, "where are the nine?"

When I was in some of the back streets in the neighborhood of Kent Street last week, I was very pleased, as I went along, to notice in one little house, "Cottage meetings held here." A little further on, a Ragged School. A little further on, "a Prayer Meeting held here twice a week." I could hardly see a street, however low, that seemed to be without some traces of religious effort and action! You could not have stated this seven years ago. I believe the signs of the time are favorable, but yet the effort put forth is not at all commensurate with the dire necessity of the age. You do much. The City Mission does much. Your tract-distributing, despite all that is said against it, does much. Your street-preaching does much more than critics will allow. I believe that there is more good being done by the preaching in the streets than by the preaching within walls, with some few exceptions. Go on with what is being done, but multiply your agencies, for let this question goad you on, "What of the nine? What of the nine?"

O dear Friends, if we could but hope that one in ten in this great city was converted, we might set the bells ringing far more merrily than when the Princess passed through the streets! But I fear we have not got to that. However, if we had, it would be a solemn question for us to ask, "What of the nine?" I am afraid some of that nine come here. You are here tonight unconverted. O dear Friends, do you remember when you were young? There were 10 of you—you are the only one left. What of the nine? They are all dead. As far as you know, they are all lost and you are the only one left. Oh, that God would make you His tonight! Or it may be that you have been listening a long time to the Word of God and you have seen one converted, and another converted, but there you are and your other companions still unblessed! Oh, that you, the nine, might be brought in! We must pray to God to convert the nine! We cannot let Him go with the one—we must have the nine brought in! The day will come when Christ shall sit on the Throne of His Glory and there shall come up

before Him the ones—and He shall say, "Come, you blessed"—but after He has done that, He may well say, "I gave breath to more than these! I sent the Gospel to more than these! I was merciful to more than these! Where are the nine?" And then, you nine, you must make your appearance. And He will say to you, "I fed you, but you lived not to Me. I called you, but you would not come. I invited you, but you would not turn. And now, you nine, depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

But, "hope," is the word for tonight, even for the nine! May God be pleased to give you hope within while I utter hope without! Jesus died. His death is your life! Trust Him and you are saved! Rest on Him with your whole weight! Throw yourself flat upon Him—have nothing to do with standing in your own strength, but prostrate at the foot of His dear Cross, lay yourself down and you shall not be numbered with the nine, but you shall return to give glory to God, even though, up to now, you may have been a Samaritan, a stranger, the chief of sinners! May God add His blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:* *ACTS 27:11-44.*

*[This Exposition belongs to Sermon #2952, Volume 52—THE CHURCH—THE WORLD'S HOPE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org. There was no space available for its publication there.]

Paul had advised the captain not to set sail for a while.

Verses. 11-13. *Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to depart at once, if by any means they might reach Phoenix and winter there; which is a harbor of Crete, and lies toward the southwest and northwest. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they sailed from there close by Crete.* He is very unwise who trusts the winds and equally so is he who sets his confidence upon any earthly thing, for fickle as the wind that blows are all things beneath the moon!

14, 15. *But not long after, there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.* You may have a calm at one moment and a storm at the next! And unless your protection is from above and your confidence in something more stable than can be found in this world, woe betide you! Sometime it is well to yield to the stress of circumstances. If you have struggled hard and can do no more, it is well to leave the result with God.

16-21. *And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksand, struck sail and so were driven. And we, being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship; and when*

neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken awry. But after long abstinence. They had not the time or the heart to eat and perhaps scarcely thought of doing so while they were in such imminent peril of their lives.

21. *Paul stood forth in the midst of them.* A prisoner, but the freest man there! Despised and yet the most honored among them. The bravest heart of all that company of soldiers and sailors.

21-24. *And said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you out of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.* Oh, what a privilege it would be if God would say the same to us! If, in the night of trouble, when you are tossed to and fro, mother, father, the Lord should say to you, "Fear not, I have given you your whole family—they shall all be saved." You would not mind how fiercely the storm might rage if you could be sure of that! And how happy would my heart be if all that sail in this big vessel were given to me! I should not be satisfied even then—I should want a great many more than that—but still, what a blessed thing it would be to have every soul that sails with us saved!

25-27. *Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country.* They could hear the roar of the breakers.

28. *And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.* They found that the water was very quickly becoming shallow, so they knew that they were getting near the shore.

29. *Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.* Then they "wished for the day." And how often the Christian throws his great anchor out and wishes for the day—waiting "till the day break and the shadows flee away." Well, it will not be long! If night lasts through the whole of this life, the morning comes—the everlasting morning!

30. *And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense they were putting out anchors from the prow.* These cowardly sailors meant to get away and leave the prisoners and passengers and soldiers to perish.

31. *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved.* Yet God had said that they should be, so that it is quite consistent to believe in Divine Predestination and yet to see the utility, no, the *necessity*, of the use of means! "Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved."

32. *Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the skiff and let her fall.* So that the sailors could not get away.

33, 34. *And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that you have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Therefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.* What a grand speech this is! It is the utterance of faith. Talk of eloquence! This is real eloquence—for Paul to be addressing the people in a storm-tossed ship as calmly as if he were safely on shore.

35. *And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.* He would not eat without giving thanks to God. There are some who do, even as the swine do, but the Christian finds it good at all times, before he eats, to bless the God that gave the food to him! It is a Christian habit which should not be given up. Paul gave thanks when it was most inconvenient to do so—when a great storm was raging and when there were only two or three on board who sympathized with him.

36. *Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.* Courage is contagious, as well as timidity. The holy bravery of one good man my make many others brave.

37-39. *And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.* They wanted to let her go ashore and break up, and so save their lives.

40-42. *And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground, and the forepart stuck fast, and remained immovable but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape.* The soldiers were responsible for them. It would be required at their hands if a prisoner escaped, so, with that cruelty and yet that obedience to law which was characteristic of the Roman legions, "the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape."

43, 44. *But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land.* So God had said, "and so it came to pass."

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

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"HEIRS OF GOD"
NO. 2961

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 22, 1875.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."
Romans 8:17.

THIS chapter—the 8th of Romans—is, like the Garden of Eden, full of all manner of delights. Here you have all necessary doctrines to feed upon and luxurious Truths of God with which to satisfy your soul. One might well have been willing to be shut up as a prisoner in paradise and one might well be content to be shut up to this one chapter and never to be allowed to preach from any other part of God's Word. If this were the case, one might find a sermon in every line—no, more than that, whole volumes might be found in a single sentence by anyone who was truly taught of God! I might say of this chapter, "All its paths drop fatness." It is, among the other chapters of the Bible, like Benjamin's meal which was five times as much as that of any of his brothers! We must not exalt one part of God's Word above another, yet, as "one star differs from another star in glory," this one seems to be a star of the first magnitude, full of the brightness of the Grace and Truth of God! It is an altogether inexhaustible mine of spiritual wealth and I invite the saints of God to dig in it and to dig in it again and again. They will find not only that it has *dust* of gold, but also huge nuggets which they shall not be able to carry away by reason of the weight of the treasure!

I notice, in this chapter, and also in many other parts of Paul's writings, that it is his habit to make a kind of ladder—a sort of Jacob's ladder, let me call it—which he begins to climb. But every step he takes leads to another, and that one to another, and that again to yet another. You see it here. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God"—there is the leading of the Spirit—"they are the sons of God." And when he gets to sonship, then he says, "And if children, then heirs." So he gets to heirship and he climbs still higher when he says, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." I think he means us to judge, by this mode of writing, that this ought to be the style of our Christian experience. Every measure of Grace which we receive should lead us to seek after something still higher! We are never to say, "This is the pinnacle of Grace—I cannot get beyond this." Self-satisfaction is the end of progress, so we are constantly to cry, "Higher, and yet still higher! Onward and

upward"—and still to ask to be filled yet more completely with all the fullness of God!

My text is far too large for me to attempt to preach from it in an exhaustive style, so I will just make four observations upon it. And even those observations will only give you a bird's-eye view of the great Truths revealed here. May God grant that in each of those four things, there may be food for your souls!

I. These first thing that I see in the text is THE GROUND OF HEIRSHIP—"If children, then heirs." The children of God are heirs of God and they come to be heirs through being His children, and in no other way.

Mark that *we are not heirs of God as the result of creation*. I cannot say what we might have been by creation had the Fall not ruined us, but that fatal disobedience of our first parent robbed us of any inheritance that might have come to us in that way. And now, by nature, we are "children of wrath, even as others," but certainly not heirs of the promise or heirs of the Grace of God. No, beloved Friends, Nature will never entitle you to be a joint-heir with Christ. Whatever you may think of your human nature—and you may suppose that it is not so depraved as the nature of others—you may even get the notion that yours is a very superior sort of human nature—well, let it be what it may, it will not entitle you to this inheritance! For as it was not the children of the flesh who were necessarily the heirs of the Old Covenant, even as Ishmael, born after the flesh, was not the heir, but Isaac, born after the spirit—and not Esau, but Jacob—so is it now. It is not what you are by *nature*—not that which is born of the flesh, but what you are by Grace—that which is born of the Spirit that is the ground upon which heirship may be claimed before God. So, my dear Hearer, if you are in a state of nature—if you have never passed out of that state into a state of Grace—this text has nothing to do with you.

And, further, as our heirship with God depends upon our being the children of God, *it does not depend upon our natural descent*. I have already shown you that it does not depend upon our nature, but there is another phase of that Truth which needs to be mentioned. There were some, of old, who said, "We have Abraham to our father," but being born as sons of Abraham after the flesh availed not to give them any part in the inheritance which was according to the Spirit. And, today, there are some who say, "We are the children of godly parents. We were born in a Christian land, so, of course, we are Christians." Not so, you are no more Christians, on that ground, than if you were the children of the Hottentot in his kraal! You need as much to be born-again as does "the heathen Chinese." You need to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit as much as if you had been taught from your childhood to bow your knee to a block of wood or stone. O you who are the inhabitants of this so-called Christian country, you stand before the living God in no sort of preference to the heathen except that you have the privilege of hearing the Gospel! But if

you reject it, it shall be more tolerable for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the inhabitants of heathen lands, in the Day of Judgment, than for you! Did not our Lord Jesus Christ say 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"—the favored ones of His day, or of our day—"shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"?

Further, as the inheritance is not by creation, nor by natural descent, *neither can it come by meritorious service*. The Apostle says, "If *children*, then heirs"—not, "if *servants*." You may toil and keep on toiling all your life, but that will not make you an heir of God! The servant in your house, however diligent, is not your heir. For a servant to claim to be the heir would not be tolerated for a moment in a court of law. The servant may be able to truthfully say, "I have been in my master's house these many years, neither transgressed I at any time his commandments; and all that is right for a servant to do, I have done for him from my youth up." But if he were to go on to ask, "What do I lack?" the reply would be, "You lack the one thing that is absolutely essential to heirship, namely, *sonship*." Oh, how this Truth of God cuts at the root of all the efforts of those who hope to win Heaven by merit, or to obtain the favor of God by their own exertions! To them all God says what Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born-again." Birth, alone, can make you children and you must be children if you are to be heirs. O Sirs, if you remain what you are by nature, you may strive to do what you please, but when you have dressed out the child of nature in its finest garments, it is still only the child of nature finely dressed, but not the child of God You must be, by a supernatural birth, allied to the living God, for, if not, all the works that you may perform will not entitle you to the possession of the inheritance of the Most High!

And as good works cannot do this, *neither can any ceremonial observances*. You know that there is a ceremony of which children are taught to say, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." It does not matter what people may say in order to make an excuse for believing that this statement is true, for it is as gross a lie as was ever put into human language! We know it is not true. Look where we may, we can see numbers of persons who were sprinkled in their infancy, or were even baptized after they had reached years of discretion, but their conduct shows that they are not members of Christ, children of God, or inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! And as that ceremony cannot make them Christians, neither can any other, whether it is devised by man, or ordained by God, Himself, for God never intended that any ceremony should take the place of the new birth, the regeneration which must be worked by the Spirit of God Himself—

"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."

And, without the Holy Spirit to carry out that Sovereign will of God by making us to be born into the image of His Son, we are not His heirs, for thus it stands in our text, "*If children*, then heirs," which implies that if we are not children, we are not heirs!

So this is the all-important enquiry for us to make. Do we, beloved Friends, possess this qualification which is absolutely essential to our heirship? Have we been born-again? We cannot have been born into God's family when we were born the first time, for Christ Himself said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing more—"and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," so we must be born of the Spirit, we must be born-again, born from above if we are to be children of God. Did you ever undergo that great change? Do you know what regeneration means? I do not mean have you read of it in the Confession of Faith, but have you *experienced* it in your own soul? Are you new creatures in Christ Jesus? For, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, if any of us have not been created anew in Christ Jesus, if we have not been born-again by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot possibly be the children of God and heirs according to the promise!

If we have been thus regenerated, we shall certainly know it. There may be times when we shall doubt it, but we shall know it, partly by the indwelling of the Spirit, as Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And in the verse before our text, we read, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Do you know anything, dear Friend, about this witness-bearing by the Holy Spirit? I have often asked myself that question, so I feel free to ask you the same. This is not a thing that you may know, or may not know—and yet possibly may be safe—you must have this witness of the Holy Spirit, or else the witness of your own spirit will be a very doubtful thing, indeed! The Holy Spirit never confirms a false witness, but a true witness He will confirm. And if the witness of your spirit is true, you will have, more or less definitely, the witness of the Spirit within you, bearing confirmatory testimony that it is even so.

Those who are truly the children of God have yet another mark by which they can be recognized, namely, that there is a likeness to their Heavenly Father begotten in them. If a man says to you, "I am the son of So-and-So"—some old friend of yours—you look into his face to see whether you can trace any likeness to his father. So, when a man says to us, "I am a child of God," we have the right to expect that there shall be at least some trace of the Character of God visible in his walk and conversation. Come, dear Friend, with all your imperfections, are you

seeking to be an imitator of God as one of His dear children? Do you try to do that which He wishes you to do? Do you make His Son to be your Exemplar? Do you strive after holiness? Are you aiming at obedience to those Divine commands, "Be you holy; for I am holy," "be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"? Do you feel that because you are a child of God, it becomes you to walk even as His first-born Son walked while He was here below? Remember that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, because without holiness no man has the evidence that he is, indeed, a child of God!

And once more, the main evidence of our being children of God, by the new birth, lies in our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." There are many evidences of the life of God in the soul, but there is no other that is so abiding as the possession of faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps, dear Friend, you are afraid to say that you have the likeness of God upon you, although others can see it, but I hope you are not afraid to say, "I do believe that Jesus is the Christ" and the Apostle John says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." If you accept Him as appointed and anointed of God to be your Savior—and commit your soul into His hands—then you can be sure that you are a child of God, for true, simple, sincere faith in the Lord Jesus exists only in the heart of the regenerate! No unregenerate man ever did, or ever could believe in Jesus Christ—but where the Lord has given the Divine Life, He gives faith at the same time—faith which is the surest proof of the existence of that Divine Life in the soul!

God grant to each one of you the Grace to test yourself by these four questions—"Have I been born-again? Have I the Spirit of adoption? Have I at least some likeness to my Heavenly Father? Do I believe in Jesus Christ?" If so, then you are a child of God and that childhood is the ground of heirship! So we can leave that point and go on to the next.

II. The text teaches, in the second place, THE UNIVERSALITY OF HEIRSHIP TO ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD. "If children, then heirs"—not some of them heirs, but, "if children, then heirs"—all of them without an exception! Proven that they are children, it is also proven that they are heirs. It is not so among men, for, often, it is only the first-born sons who are the heirs. But with God, the rule is, "If children"—whenever born—"then heirs."

Why is it that all the children of God are His heirs? First, *because the principle of priority as to time cannot possibly enter into this question.* There is a First-Born who has priority by nature, honor and right. But He is "the First-Born among many brethren," and in Him all the rest of the children of God are also first-born, for Paul writes of "the general assembly and church of the First-Born which are written in Heaven." The question of the time of birth is, sometimes, a matter of very great concern

on earth. In the ways of twins, a few minutes may make all the difference between his lordship and his brother who is no lord at all—between the brothers who shall be heir of many broad acres and the one who shall go forth upon the broad acres to earn his bread! But, with God's children, there is no difference in point of time. Adam, if he was the first man converted, certainly has no priority over Paul, although Paul says that he was as "one born out of due time." Noah, an early member of God's great family, has no preference over Abraham. Indeed, Abraham seems to be mentioned with greater honor than any of those who had gone before him—they certainly had no priority over him. Time has to do with time, but time has not to do with eternity, so, whether you, my Brother, were born to God 50 years ago and I, 25 years ago—and our young friend over there 25 *days* ago—it makes no difference. "If children, then heirs," because the date of birth cannot come into our reckoning when we have to do with eternal things.

Again, we know that *the love of God is the same toward all His children.* They are all His children—all chosen, all redeemed, all regenerated, all called, all justified and they shall all be glorified. Where a father loves all his children alike, his disposition leads him to treat them all alike, both as to what he gives them now, and also as to what he will leave them as an inheritance. But sometimes circumstances such as the law of the land and the title-deeds of estates prevent the father from treating all alike. But in the case of the children of God, laws cannot hamper or hinder Him. He is the great Law-Maker and He can control circumstances so as to do everything according to the dictates of His own heart. And His heart of love says, "I have loved all My children alike, and they shall all have the blessing." And so they shall, Beloved. Though you, my dear Friend, think yourself obscure and one of the least in God's Israel, your name is just as prominently written upon the heart of Christ as the names of His Apostles are! And you are as dear to the Lord as the very noblest among His saints. Indeed, He carries the lambs in His bosom, so the little ones have the best chariot of all! He may leave the sheep to walk, but He carries the lambs, and He always takes special care of the weak and feeble. "If children, then heirs," because all God's children are equally partakers of their Father's love.

Again, we know, from Scripture, that *all the children of God are favored with the same promise.* If you turn to the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the 18th verse, you will find there what Paul says to all the Lord's children. What a precious passage that is where he tells us that, "by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." In the previous verse he mentions the heirs of promise and by that expression he means all the children of God, for they are all heirs according to the promise—and all heirs of the promise. Well, then, as God has given them a promise, He will fulfill it! And that promise is that they shall be heirs of this world and

also heirs of the world to come! And He will fulfill it to them all and keep His oath by which He has confirmed it to them, so they shall surely be His heirs.

Notice, again, that all God's children are His heirs *because they are all equally related to Him through whom the heirship comes*, for every child of God is neither more nor less than brother to the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. In this brotherhood with Christ there can be no degrees—a man is not partly a brother and partly *not* a brother. If he is a brother of Christ, Christ is his brother. A man is not partly in Christ and partly out of Christ. If one with Christ, he *is* one with Christ. And all the members of Christ's mystical body are quickened with the same Divine Life and shall have the same Heaven to dwell in forever! Seeing, then, that we are all one in Christ Jesus, the heirship which comes to us by way of the First-Born must come equally to all the children.

And there is one more very comforting reflection and that is that *the inheritance is large enough for all the children*. Rich men sometimes have to let their estates go to the eldest son, according to the stupid regulations of this age, "to keep up the family dignity." There are some great lords who find that they can accumulate wealth enough to set up two or three sets of families and they do so. But, in other families there generally are some of the children who must remain lean in order that the first-born son may grow fat. Now, it is not so with the inheritance of God because there is enough for all! And there is this peculiarity about it, that every child of God has all the inheritance, yet there is not any the less for all the rest of the family! It can never be said, in relation to human heirs, that each heir has all the inheritance, yet no one else has any less than all. You, my Brother, if you are a child of God, are an heir of God, and so am I. And I have not any the less of God because you have Him and you have not any the less of God because I have Him. No, if it were possible for it to be so, I would have more joy in the fact that you, also, have the same blessing, and you would have more in the joy of seeing others partaking in the same privilege as you have! The whole of God belongs to Christ and the whole of God belongs to the least member of Christ! All are "heirs of God." So you see that there was no reason for the exclusion of the younger branches of God's family in order to make up a greater estate for the older ones. All the children of God are the heirs of God because the inheritance is an infinite one and there is an infinite inheritance for each one of them.

O Beloved, let us dwell for a moment or two on this theme! The text says, "If children, then heirs." It does not say, "If children, then Apostles." None of us could attain to that high office. It does not say, "If children, then preachers." Here and there, one of us could claim that title. It does not say, "If children, then deeply-experienced saints." Some of us may *never* be that! It does not say, "If children, then mighty men of valor." Perhaps some of us are too timid to ever grow to that. It does not

say, "If children, then rich men," because some of us are poor. It does not say, "If children, then favored with health," for some of us have little enough of that gift. It does not say, "If children, then filled with full assurance," for some of us are vexed with many doubts and fears. But it *does* say, "If children, then heirs." So let us rejoice that we are "heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Let us rejoice in that fact, now, and let us begin to live worthily of our rank as heirs of God! Let us strive after holiness and seek to live as becomes the heirs of eternal life considering what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness!

Thus I have spoken of the universality of the heirship to all the children of God.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to speak concerning THE INHERITANCE ITSELF. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God."

That little phrase which I have just uttered is one which none of us can fully comprehend and none of us may even attempt to do so. This is the glory of our inheritance, that we are "heirs of God." Will you give me your most earnest attention while I remind you of some of the descriptions of our inheritance which are given in Scripture?

Here is one which you will find in the 21st chapter of the Revelation and the 7th verse—"He that overcomes shall inherit all things." That is the extent of your inheritance, "all things." And it is not a singular expression, for you have it again in 1 Corinthians 3:21, 22—"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." The richest man who ever lived could not say that all things were his, but the poorest Christian who ever lived can say that! If you turn to the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 14th verse, you will find that we are there called, "heirs of salvation." Looking on a little further in the same Epistle, in the 6th chapter and the 17th verse, you will find that we are called, "the heirs of promise." In his Epistle to Titus, the 3rd chapter and the 7th verse, Paul calls us, "heirs according to the hope of eternal life," while James says, in the 2nd chapter of his Epistle at the 5th verse, that we are "heirs of the Kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him." And Peter says, in his first Epistle, the 3rd chapter and 7th verse, that we are "heirs together of the Grace of life." If any preacher wants to deliver a series of sermons upon the heirship of the saints, let him take these texts and preach upon them. I have not time to do that tonight and even if I should say all that I could upon all these texts put together, I should not then have said so much as my text says, for that does not speak of "the heirs of promise," or the "heirs of salvation," or the "heirs of the Kingdom," but it says, "heirs of God."

"Heirs of God"—what does that mean? Well, it means, first of all, that *we are heirs to all that God has*. Suppose I am my father's heir and that he has an old thatched cottage worth a shilling a week—well, that is what I am heir to. But if I happened to be the heir of the Duke of

Westminster, he might take me over a county and say to me, "That is what you are heir to." Ah, just so! Whatever the father has, *that* is what the child is heir to. Now think what God has! Stretch your wings, most vivid imagination! Fly abroad, most capacious thought! And when the remotest bounds of space have been crossed, you have only just commenced your endless journey! We will not attempt such a flight as that. We will stay at home and meditate upon the great Truth of God that all God has is ours because we are His—heirs of God!

Yet even that, great as it is, is only part of the meaning of our text, for the Apostle next means that *God Himself belongs to us*. David said, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance"—and this is what every child of God can say! So that the portion of each child of God is not only what God *has*, but what God, Himself, *is*! O child of God, you have God's power to protect you, God's eyes to guide you, God's Justice to defend you, God's Immutability to be constant to you, God's Infinity to enrich you! You have Gods heart of love, God's hands of power, God's head of glory—time would fail me to tell all that you have, for you have all that God is—to be yours forever and ever!

All the worlds that at present have been created are but as mere trifles compared with what God could make if He so pleased. A thousand, thousand, thousand, thousand worlds, when they were all made, would be but as a handful of dust scattered from His almighty hands and He could, if He willed, do the same again a thousand, thousand, thousand, thousand times over! "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." Think of the whole mountain range as one great altar and all the cedars set ablaze, and then all the beasts that feed there offered up as a burnt sacrifice! Yet the Prophet says that is not sufficient for God! Then how great He must be! Oh, make Him great in your hearts and reverence and adore Him! But when you do, do not forget to say, "My God! My God! My God!" How often you have that expression in the Psalms! It never could have been there, as the utterance of any mere man, if it had not first been in the *eternal purpose of God* as the utterance which was to be on the lips of Christ in that dread hour when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" So now each Believer can say, "*my* God," for Jesus Christ, Himself, puts it, "My Father and your Father; My God, and your God." In some aspects God is as much my God as He is Christ's God, and as much my Father as He is Christ's Father. O Beloved, I have got out of my depth now! I wish I were able to go even deeper into this wondrous Truth of God, but there I must leave off what I have to say concerning the inheritance itself—"heirs of *God*."

IV. My last point is, perhaps, as blessed as any in the whole text. It is, THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE CLAIMANTS TO THE INHERITANCE—"joint-heirs with Christ."

This is, first of all, *the test of our heirship*. Listen. You are not an heir of God alone—you cannot be. You can only be an heir of God through being "in Co."—in company—joint-heir with Christ. Now, are you and Christ in company? That is a simple question. Are you and Christ in company, or do you stand alone? If you stand alone, you are a poor miserable bankrupt, announced in the court of Heaven—so do not try to stand alone. You will perish if you do. But are Christ and you thus joined together? Have you learned to trust in Christ, to live in Christ, to pray in Christ, to trade with Heaven through Christ and to have everything in Christ? That is the test of heirship. God's child is born God's heir, but it is because he is in Christ and is born in union with Christ that he becomes God's heir. If we are out of Christ we are out of the family of God and out of the heirship of God. "Without Christ" you are "without God in the world." But in Christ, joined in company with Christ, you are an heir of God!

This, Beloved, seems to me to be *the sweetest part of all the inheritance*. Once let me know that I am one with Christ and so have become a fellow-heir with Him and it is like Heaven below to my soul! Indeed, I shall like Heaven itself all the better and I shall like all that God is going to give me, by-and-by, all the better because I am going to share it with Christ! A good deal depends upon the company we may meet in going to any place to which we may be invited. A person might ask you to his house and you might not know whether you cared to go. But suppose the host were to tell you that a very dear friend of yours was going to be there? You would then say , "Oh, yes, I will go for the sake of having his company!" Now, wherever Jesus Christ is—I do not care whether it is in the house of a Pharisee, or on some lonely hillside—it is good to be where He is and to go shares with Him. It makes everything more sweet to be able to enjoy it with Him. So, Beloved, while you are heirs of God, you are not the only heirs, for you are joint-heirs with Christ and you will share the inheritance with Him! When the Lord Jesus Christ prayed the best prayer that He could pray for His people, do you remember what He asked for? It was this—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me"—as if He knew that His people would prize something that belonged to Him better than anything else in all the world, or even in Heaven itself! If Christ sups with us, it is a blessed supper though it is only a dish of herbs. But if Christ is absent, it is a poor dinner though there may be steak enough to make the table groan. To my mind, then, this is the sweetness of our inheritance—that it is a joint-heirship with Christ!

This also shows *the greatness of the inheritance* because, if we are to be joint-heirs with Christ, it cannot be a little thing that we are to share with Him. Can you imagine what the Father would give to His Son as the reward of the travail of His soul? Give yourself time to think what the everlasting God would give to His equal Son who took upon Himself the

form of a Servant, was made in the likeness of men, who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross! Can you think of a reward that would be large enough for Him? Let the Father's Love and the Father's Justice judge. Oh, it must be a large inheritance for such a well-beloved Son and such an obedient Son as He was! I, a poor worm of the dust, cannot think of anything that I consider good enough for Him. Lord, I would have Him crowned with many crowns and set up on a glorious high throne! But what must be the reward which His Father devises for Him? What must be the greatness of the infinite recompense which the Infinite God will bestow upon His Only-Begotten? Follow that line of thought as far as you can and then recollect that you are to be joint-heir with Christ. What He has, you are to share! I will read those wonderful words again, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." The same Glory that is to be His, He will have us to enjoy with Him!

Again, this joint-heirship *ensures the inheritance to us*. I am quite sure that I would not like to go into partnership with just anybody whom I might meet in the street. Indeed, if I had a share in any limited liability company, I would do with it as the man did with the bad bank-note—lay it down and run away from it as fast as I could! What multitudes of people have been ruined by taking shares in companies which seemed to be the nicest, neatest, most money-getting schemes under Heaven! But one need not mind going shares if one has nothing at all and the other partner is the wealthiest person in the whole world! So what a blessing it is to go shares with Christ because we know that He cannot fail. I was thinking, just now, that if I ever should lose Heaven, seeing that I am joint-heir with Christ, it would be "the firm" that would lose it, because we must stand or fall together if we are joint-heirs. Somebody once said to a holy man, "Your soul will be lost." "Then," he said, "Christ will be the loser." He was like the Negro who was quite unconcerned when the ship was being wrecked. He said that he would not lose anything, for he belonged to his Massa, and his Massa would lose it. Well, what the Negro said in his simplicity, we may say in real earnest. If our souls are lost, it will be Christ who will be the loser, for He bought us with His blood and He will lose what He purchased at so great a cost! And His Father gave us to Him, so He will lose His Father's gift. And He has loved us and is married to us, so He will lose His spouse, the beloved of His soul. But He will *not* lose us—He *cannot* lose us—and if Christ cannot lose His inheritance, then none of His people can lose theirs, for we are joint-heirs with Him! If two partners go into a court of law and the case is decided against the one, it is against the other, also, for the two are one in that matter. So, if the decision could, by any possibility, be given against anyone who is in Christ Jesus, it would be given equally against the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. But that cannot be. How secure, then, is the inheritance of the saints! We are joint-heirs with Christ.

And, my Brothers and Sisters, to conclude, *how this endears His love to us*—that He should thus put Himself on the same footing with us as to His heirship, first taking us into union with Himself, making us joint-heirs with Himself, and then Himself going back to Heaven to plead for us and to make it part of His glory up there to prepare the place which we are to share with Him! Does not this bind us fast to Him? If He lets us be sharers in His inheritance in Glory, will we not gladly be sharers here in His sufferings and in His shame? Is there anybody who desires to spit upon Christ as they did of old? Then let him do me the honor to spit upon me for Christ's sake! Is there anyone who has an evil word for Christ? Then let that word fall upon my ears. Do you not feel, Beloved, that it is an honor for you to endure any reproach for Christ's sake? Surely if we are to be there with Him forever, it is but right that we should be with Him here! If we are to share the splendor of His Throne, we may be joyful to share the dishonor of His Cross so far as we may.

I have thus set before you the heirship of the saints and the way to attain it. I pray God the Holy Spirit to apply the message to His own people and to make them feel glad in the Lord. As for the others, I have shown that they can only be heirs through being children—and if you are not the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—I pray the Lord to reveal to you whose children you must be and what inheritance you must expect to have at the last. Yet I pray you to remember that the way of salvation lies in simply looking to Jesus Christ. May you look to Him tonight—not tomorrow. Before you leave this place, present this prayer, "O Lord, give me the nature of Your children, and the spirit of Your children, and faith in Jesus, as all Your children have it, for His dear 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.

DIAMOND HINGES—"AS" AND "SO"
NO. 2962

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1905.

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"For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."
Isaiah 54:9.

THERE are some people in the world who, the moment we begin to speak of a type, try to disparage that style of speech by calling it "spiritualizing." They seem to be far too wise to be able to learn anything by that mode of teaching. Yet the Holy Spirit has given us, in the Old and New Testaments, abundant instances of spiritualizing and, though He could have used new metaphors and fresh phrases in His Infinite Wisdom, He preferred to use the old historical allusions and the old historical types for the instruction of God's people. It is a pity that we should crave that which is new when it can truly be said, "the old is better." In the case before us, the Holy Spirit uses Noah's flood and the Lord's Covenant—that it should no more return to destroy the earth—as symbolical of the Covenant of Grace which is made with the people of God in Christ Jesus. Surely He did this for our instruction! Oh, that He would shine upon the Word and make it to be both for our edification and our comfort! His Divine Treasure House is full of blessings, but He must give us the key or we shall not to able to enter. Open it, blessed Spirit, to all Your believing people!

There are two things in our text for us to consider. The first is *that there are, in Noah and the Flood, and the Covenant, many symbols illustrating the Covenant of Grace.* And the second is that *there is one main symbol here* which was certainly intended first and chiefly, whether the rest were intended or not. On that main point I hope to speak at some length.

I. But, first, IN NOAH, THE FLOOD AND THE COVENANT, THERE ARE MANY SYMBOLS ILLUSTRATING THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

First, *Noah's name signified, "rest."* We know where our rest is to be found and who is our Noah. Of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can truly say, "He is our peace." It is through Him that "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," keeps our heart and mind at rest evermore. We rest in Him and nowhere else. Did He not say, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? And has He not fulfilled His promise?

Further, *Noah, in a time of general corruption, was the only man who was found righteous before God.* If you turn to the Book of Genesis, at your leisure, you will see that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth." But you will also read that "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." It is also written that "Noah found grace (or favor) in the eyes of the Lord." Noah was, in his day, the one man who was told to prepare a hiding place from the storm and a refuge from the tempest. Noah's ark was the one place of refuge for our race in which eight persons wore preserved, or, otherwise, the whole race would have been destroyed!

Now, we know that Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the one lone Man of the human race whose perfect righteousness has given God infinite delight. When all the rest of mankind had gone astray like lost sheep, He walked with God. Here upon earth He was found, tempted, but never sinning. He was compassed with infirmity, but never transgressing—the one Man upon whom God could look with complacency as the type of what the race ought to have been. He could not look thus on the first Adam, for, when He looked upon him, He cursed the ground for his sake. The blessing came through the Second Adam, upon whom the Lord always looks with joy, and for whose sake He blesses all those who are in Him. If I might call Noah the second father of the human race—and I might properly do so—I might with still greater propriety call Jesus the Second Father of the ever-living race—the race that is quickened into newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Again, Noah, thus standing out in solitary grandeur, as a type of the lone Redeemer, was *a preacher of righteousness* and therein, also, he was a type of our Lord Jesus, for never did any mere man preach righteousness as He did, for He not only preached it—He created it! We must not forget that Noah preached righteousness in vain, for no one except the members of his own family would believe his testimony. In this respect, also, he was a type and symbol of Him who was to come. The cry of Jesus and of His faithful servants in all ages has been, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But that wondrous man, *Noah, was also a builder.* Probably all that he had of worldly abundance and wealth went into that strange ark in which the survivors from the deluge were to be preserved. And you know how our blessed Master gave all that He had in order that He might build a spiritual Church out of which the new world should be peopled. He laid down His life that He might be the Redeemer of His chosen race, and He still lives to be the great Master-Builder of His Church.

You know also that when the right time came, *Noah went into the ark and was shut up in it, away from all the rest of mankind.* When the flood came, it spent itself upon the ark as well as upon all people and things outside it. The ark must endure the long pelting of the rain and go through the terrible deluge as through the waters of death, itself, as though it were a coffin, floating over the world's grave—from a dead world into a new world. "The same figure," says the Apostle Paul, "whereunto

even baptism does also now save us." That is to say, Baptism is a type and symbol of salvation, just as Noah's ark was, for therein we, being spiritually dead with Christ, are buried with Christ in the outward symbol and rise from the water, even as Christ rose from the grave, to live henceforth among the twice-born race who fear not the second death! After the deluge, *Noah came out into a new world* and Jesus rose into a new world to which He had brought life and immortality to light. Noah survived a flood that had spent all its force—and Jesus stands among us and we, His people, stand with Him to look upon a flood of Divine wrath that has spent all its force so far as we are concerned. It is true that it will sweep away the ungodly who are not of the twice-born race, but it will not injure any who belong to the race that is allied to this Second Adam, this more glorious Noah! For them, the flood of wrath has spent itself forever. Noah came out into a new world which was very different from that which existed before the flood. And he came out of the ark with a sacrifice of thanksgiving, even as Jesus presented Himself to His Father as the appointed Offering which made all His people acceptable in Him.

And, lastly, *it was with Noah that the Lord's Covenant was made*, even as the Covenant which most concerns us was made with Jesus Christ. And, as the Covenant with Noah still stands, so stands the Covenant with Christ. The world, preserved today from destruction by flood, is a symbol of the Church of Christ preserved forever from all the wrath of God which was due to it because of its sin, but which was borne by its great Substitute and Surety, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I have just hurriedly mentioned these various points in which Noah was a type of Christ. This is a subject which is worthy of being thought out another time—and it deserves your earnest consideration and constant remembrance.

II. But in the second place, I want to deal more fully with the chief point of the text. THERE IS A MAIN SYMBOL HERE—"This is as the waters of Noah unto Me; (for this reason, that) as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."

The text turns on the two hinges of, "as," and, "so"—two precious diamond hinges upon which it hangs! And these mean, I think, first, "*as surely as*," and then, "*in the same manner as*."

First, as surely as God has sworn that a devouring flood shall never again cover the earth, so certainly has He sworn that His wrath and rebuke shall never go forth against His redeemed Church, or against one of His redeemed people. And you may rest assured that as the one is a fact, so is the other, and as the one shall never be altered, so the other never shall be! The first oath is irrevocable and so is the second—"*As* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; *so* have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."—

"My God, the Covenant of Your love
Abides forever sure

And in its matchless Grace
I feel My happiness secure."

But it not only means "as surely as," it also means, "in the same manner as," and there I notice two points of resemblance. As God has sworn, absolutely, that He will not again destroy the earth with a flood, so has He sworn absolutely that He will not pour forth His wrath against any Believer, or against the Church of Christ as a whole. And the second point is that as God has promised with a symbol that He will not destroy the earth a second time by water, so has He also promised to His people, with a symbol, a token, a sure sign—that He will not be angry with them or rebuke them.

First, then, *in both cases God has promised absolutely what He will not do*. You observe that there is not a single, "if," in either of these Covenants. The Lord said absolutely, "I will not again destroy the earth with a flood." He did not say, "Unless such-and-such contingencies arise, I will not send another flood." He supposed no contingencies, or else, regardless of all contingencies, He said, "I will never again destroy the earth with a flood—under no circumstances, at no time, and for no reason whatever will I do so." In like manner, God has sworn that His wrath shall never be let loose upon you who believe in Jesus Christ and are saved, in time or in eternity, or under any supposable circumstances whatever—"As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." There may be dark rain clouds—there have been many such. There may be partial floods—there have been many such—but these have not invalidated the Covenant that the waters shall never again cover the earth as the flood did in the days of Noah. That Covenant stands fast forever!

In like manner, the Church of God may be very severely tried. Fierce persecutions may break out against her. She may be torn with schisms and poisoned with heresies—but God will not forget her or forsake her! And you, child of God, may have many trials and, indeed, you will have them because you are a child of God. You may have to go through deep waters, and sometimes unbelief will say—

"The Lord has quite forsaken you!
Your God will be gracious no more."

But that can never be true! You must not judge of God's love by any outward Providences any more than you would judge of His Covenant not to destroy the earth with a flood by the fact that there are heavy showers of rain now and again. God stands true to His Covenant with Noah, let it rain as heavily as it may! And God stands true to His still greater Covenant of Grace, let your trials and troubles be as numerous and severe as they may be! Get a firm grip of this glorious Truth of God, that there is not a drop of Divine wrath in all your sufferings! You have an aching head and a palpitating heart. You have lost your property. You have buried the darlings that nestled in your bosom. You say, "I am the man that has seen affliction," but, for all that, not a drop of God's wrath,

nor even a rebuke, in the strong sense in which that word is used here, has fallen upon you! Gentle, tender, paternal rebukes you have had and can expect to still have—but no such rebuke as signifies fierce wrath, no such rebuke as brings a withering curse with it can ever fall upon you if you hide yourself in the Redeemer's pierced side, if you trust to the Covenant of Grace which Christ has made with His Father on your behalf!

There will yet come upon the earth greater convulsions than have yet been experienced, for, in the verse following our text, we read, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed." Before the history of the world is complete there will come dreadful shakings and upheavals. I am no Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, but, as it has been in the past, so may we expect that it shall be in the future. Dynasties will die, empires will collapse, there will be wars, famines, pestilences and we know not what, for the earth is subject to all these things! But the Church of God shall never suffer from famine—her dynasty shall never be dissolved, the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her—and her King shall sit upon His throne forever! And you, dear Friend, may have such troubles that it shall seem to you as if the mountains had departed and the hills had been removed and you shall seem to have no resting place for the soles of your feet, but if you are trusting in Jesus, He will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you, for so God's promise stands! "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." Ah, the most terrible convulsions may come—the star called Wormwood may fall and the seven vials be emptied out! And the earth may shake with the tramp of the armies gathered together for the last dread battle—but, whatever may happen, the people of God must forever remain—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Stormy may be the outlook, but all are safe who are within the ark! The huge billows may threaten to overwhelm us, but, "with Christ in the vessel," we can "smile at the storm." His kindness shall not depart from us nor shall the Covenant of His peace be removed—

"Firm as the lasting hills,
This Covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills
Make every blessing sure.
When ruin shakes all nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same."

I would like to sit down and think over these blessed Truths of God and enjoy them. May the Lord be pleased to give each of us the Grace to feed upon them and to know, by personal experience, the blessedness of them! Think, dear Brothers and Sisters, how can there be any wrath treasured up against God's people when it was all poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ, their Surety and Substitute? For—

"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,

And then again at mine."

If Jesus suffered in my place, how can God's wrath fall upon me? Does Infinite Justice demand two victims? Can God smite the Substitute and them smite the sinner for whom He stood as Substitute? I know, in my inmost soul, that this is utterly impossible! If Jesus really did suffer in my place—and well do I know that He did—if, in the place of all His believing people, He has bled and died, and well do we know that it was so—then, Beloved, the wrath of God cannot fall upon us, for there is none, it is all gone! Christ has borne it all so far as all His people are concerned!

Observe, too, that there is such a close union between Christ and all His people that if God's wrath did fall upon Christ's people, it would also fall upon Christ! If you were to scald one part of my body—the soles of my feet, for instance—you would scald *me*. You could not crush my little finger without hurting *me*. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are so vitally united to Christ that if we were lost, Christ would not have a perfect body, for "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." So His Inspired Apostle assures us. Be comforted, then, you who are one with Jesus! How can wrath fall on any part of the body of Christ? And you are a part of that body and, therefore, you are safe from wrath forever—

"If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ should fall away,
My feeble, fickle soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day."

That shall never be, for He will keep His own and preserve them in righteousness and true holiness, in faith, and love, and hope, until He brings them to His eternal Kingdom and Glory! When our Great Shepherd counts His sheep at the last, they shall, each one, pass under the rod of Him that counts them, and they will, every one of them, be there! That little lamb that was all but devoured by the lion shall be there. That poor weather-beaten ewe that was seized by the bear shall be there—the one that had the hardest lot of all shall be there, for the Lord will never let it be said that He kept the strong but could not keep the weak! He will not let it be said that He kept them that were not tried, but that He could not keep those that were! That cannot be! The Good Shepherd will never have to say of any of His sheep that He has lost them—but He will say to His Father, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost." He will account for the full tale of His flock in the Presence of Him who gave them to Him. Oh, I think I hear the muster-roll being read out at the last! In it are the names of all those who ever put their trust in Christ. Let not any true Believer say—

"What if my name should be left out,
When You for them shall call?"

It will not be left out if you are one of His! If the question is put "Is Mrs. Much-Afraid here?" She will sweetly answer to her name and say, "Yes, Lord, I am here, by Your Grace, but I am afraid no longer!" "Is Little-Faith here?" And Little-Faith will sing out, "Yes, Lord, for Little-Faith's

grain of mustard seed has grown into a tree!" "And is Mr. Ready-to-Halt here?" "Yes, Lord, but without his crutches, for he no longer needs them!" "And Mr. Feeble-Mind—is he here?" "Yes, Lord, but he has left his feeble mind behind him and now he sings of the eternal love of Christ to such a poor sinner as he was!"

Besides, do you not know that "the Father Himself loves you," and that He loved you so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for you? Will He cast you away after doing that? Never! "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." If He so loved us when we were in the horrible pit and in the miry clay, when the filth of sin was all over us, as to lift us up into the bosom of Christ, do you think that He will not love us enough to keep us there? From eternity He has chosen us and by the precious blood of Jesus He has bought us! His is no child's love that burns brightly today and goes out into cold ashes on the morrow. His love is no spark of transient passion—it is an eternal flame and He will never allow it to burn itself out. Let us not be afraid, therefore, that the wave of His wrath will ever go over us, or that the torrent of His stern rebuke will ever sweep us away. Let us rest in the joyful assurance that if we are, indeed, in Christ, any question about the wrath of God falling upon us can be laid aside forever.

What you all need is to have that precious Truth of God brought home to your heart. Possibly some of you are like a sea captain to whom I was once talking about the precious things of the Kingdom. We were going up the river and he pointed to the great posts to which the barges and ships could be moored. "Ah," he said, "they would hold the forest if I could only get a rope over them. But, sometimes," he added, "we can't fling the rope so that it goes right over the head of the post and gives us a firm hold." If any of you, dear Friends, are in such a difficulty as that, I pray that the Lord, as He stands on the shore, may throw a rope to you and that you may lay hold of it and be moored fast to this sure Truth of God that as certainly as the waters of Noah will no more go over the earth, so will the waves of God's wrath never go over the man who is safely sheltered in the wounds of Jesus!

The other point we were to notice is that, *in both Covenants there was a sign*. As I read about the Covenant of Noah, I like to dwell upon that part where God said of the rainbow, "This is the token of the Covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations." So God has a sign for Himself, for us, and for every living soul that is in Christ. The rainbow is a very precious sign of the ancient Covenant. We cannot often see it, but now and then God hangs it out—often enough, I have no doubt. But He has given to us, in the Covenant of Grace, a sign which we can always see and I think it is this. Our Lord Jesus once said to His disciples, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." As certainly as the Father loves Christ, so certainly does Christ love His people. If you could look up into Heaven,

what would you see there? You would see Christ at the right hand of the Father—Christ the Beloved of the Father, Christ whom the Father delights to honor, Christ the very apple of the Father's eye! That is your token of the Everlasting Covenant made with Christ on behalf of all His people! Whenever you can see that sign—and you can always see it, for there is not a single child of God who has any doubt about the love which the Father bears to Christ—that is the token to you of the Covenant made with Christ for you. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you."

And, in a minor sense, I think that this Communion Table, around which many of us will presently gather, furnishes us with another symbol of the Father's love as instructive as the rainbow itself. Let me speak of it for a minute or two. Child of God, the fact that your Father loves you and that He will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you, is certain, for there stands His Table furnished and prepared. For what purpose? Why, that you may feast with Him! At the institution of the Supper, Christ Himself sat and presided at the table—and it is no Lord's Supper if He is not there! "You are My friends," He says to you who believe in Him—and He invites you to come and sit at His Table and feast with Him. If He did not love you, He would not have spread the Table for you. As if you have had any doubt about the continuance of His love to you, see the Table spread for you. I am sure that the poor prodigal, when he came back from his wanderings, was comforted, among other things, by the killing of the fatted calf and the loading of the table at which he was a welcome guest. See how your Father loads the table for you—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love"—

yet these items have been set before you. O Believer, rest assured that the Lord will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you—otherwise He would not have called you to sit with Him at His table! "Go to bed, Sir, without your supper," is what an angry father says to his disobedient boy. But "Eat, O Friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved," is what your Father says to you! Therefore, be you greatly comforted!

If you look on the Table, what do you see there? You see the bread and the wine, the emblems of the body and the blood of Jesus, and as you see the two emblems separate from one another, they become to you the emblems of the death of Jesus, whose blood streamed out of His body through His many wounds. God bids you come here and think of Jesus, your Savior. He does not bid you come here and sit and groan because of your sins! He would have you think of the death of His dear Son by which all your sins were put away. Our Father in Heaven says to us who have believed in Jesus, "Come, My children, to this Table, and see how you were cleansed from all your guilty stains. Come and see how all that could provoke Me to wrath against you was forever put away. Come to My Table and take the tokens of the great propitiatory Sacrifice offered by My well-beloved Son on your behalf." When I look into the wine cup and think of the precious blood of Jesus shed for many for the remission of

sins—and when I realize that He means this emblem of His bloodshed to be a luxury, a source of exhilaration, a means of spiritual strength to us as we drink it—I understand that His mind is not full of thoughts of wrath against us, but rather of thoughts of a sacred hospitality which bids His children to be happy while feasting with Him at His Table!

I have not time to say more, except to remind you that *all who lived in the days of Noah did not enter the ark of safety.* They did not all have a share in that Covenant of which the bow in the cloud was the visible sign, for the vast mass of the population was swept away by that terrible flood. As I look upon my present congregation, I bless God that it will not be so with you, for the most of you have, I trust, believed in Jesus. It is a melancholy reflection, however, that there are many here who have not entered the Ark of Salvation, or, as far as we know, have any share in the Covenant of Grace. Every time the Communion Table is spread here, it seems to me that it would be a wonderful sermon even if I did not say anything. Tonight, as soon as I have finished preaching, many of us will begin to gather around the Communion Table and the congregation will at once begin to break up into its several parts. There are some of you who will be going home and others of you will be going upstairs to look on while we are gathered at the ordinance. I do not know how you feel about this division, but I do not like it, especially with regard to some of you whom I respect and esteem, and who, I believe, have many admirable points about you.

But you are not decided, you have never given your hearts to Christ so you will be lost forever if you die as you now are! You know you will and, years ago, it caused you quite a pang to have to go away when others remained for the Communion. You have to leave your wife, do you not?—and your sisters and some of you have to leave your father and mother. I grieve to say that there are some parents here who have to leave their children to sit at the Table while they, themselves, go away. There was a time when you could hardly bear to do that, but you are getting used to it, I am afraid—some of you. I pray God that you may not get used to it because, if you do, there will come a day when these partings will be final—when you will not merely be going home or going up into the gallery, but you will be driven from God's Presence, far away from the everlasting halls where His saints will be feasting—and be cast down to the prison of black despair where weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth must be your portion forever! What says that old-fashioned hymn that the Revivalists used to sing?—

"Oh, there will be weeping!
Oh, there will be weeping!
Oh, there will be weeping—
At the Judgment Seat of Christ!"

The sharp, two-edged sword will cut many families in two and sever the husband from the wife whom he so fondly loved, though he did not love her Savior! And the son will be cut off from the mother whom he truly loved, but whose God he did not. Why should we be divided thus? Why

should we be divided? Why should we not go hand in hand to Immanuel's land?

Dear Savior, put Your almighty arms right round this Tabernacle—it is only like a little box to You—and take the whole Tabernacle full of us, and let us all be Yours in the day when You shall make up your jewels! Oh, that You could then say, "They are all here, as they were all in the Tabernacle on that first night in August, 1875—all here and all Mine, and all saved." Oh, how fervently I pray that it may be so! Will you not yourselves all pray the same prayer? God will hear you if you do, for He waits to be gracious! There must be a separation, now, but let this be the last time that it shall happen and, between now and the first Sabbath in September, may God grant that you may all have resolved to cast in your lot with Christ and with His people, too! I can assure you that if you do so, we who love the Lord, will greatly rejoice—and you also will rejoice with us! God bless you all, and so grant us our heart's desire, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 8:20-22; 9:8-17; ISAIAH 54:1-10.

Genesis 8:20, 21. *And Noah built an altar unto the LORD and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offering on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savor.*—A savor of rest.

21, 22. *And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite anymore everything living, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* So that you all live under a Covenant—a gracious Covenant and, by virtue of it, the day succeeds the night, the summer follows the winter and the harvest in due course rewards the labor of the seedtime. All this ought to make us long to be under the yet fuller and higher Covenant of Grace, by which spiritual blessings would be secured to us—an eternal day to follow this earthly night and a glorious harvest to follow this time of seed sowing!

Genesis 9:8-10. *And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My Covenant with you, and with your seed after you. And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.* Happy fowls, and happy cattle, and happy beasts of the earth to be connected with Noah and so to come under a Covenant of preservation! And we—though only worthy to be typified by these creatures which God had preserved in the Ark—are thrice happy to be in the same Covenant with Him who is our Noah, our rest, our sweet savor unto God!

11-17. *And I will establish My Covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off anymore by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be*

a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the Covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token for a Covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My Covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it. What a wonderful expression that is! It is similar to that remarkable declaration of Jehovah, recorded in Exodus 12:13. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The blood was not to be sprinkled inside the house where the Israelites might be comforted by a sight of it, but outside the house where only God could see it. It is for our sake that the rainbow is set in the cloud and we can see it there. Yet Infinite Mercy represents it as being there as a refreshment to the memory of God—"The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it."

16. *That I may remember the Everlasting Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.* So when my eye of faith is dim and I cannot see the Covenant sign, I will remember that there is an eye which never can be dim—which always sees the Covenant token—and so I shall still be secure notwithstanding the dimness of my spiritual vision. For our *comfort* we must see it, but for our safety, blessed be God, it is only necessary that He should see it!

17. *And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the Covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is upon the earth.* Now let us read what the Lord says, through the Prophet Isaiah, concerning this Covenant.

Isaiah 54:1. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD.* This promise is made to the long-barren and desolate Gentile Church. She may well sing, for God has visited her in mercy and, at this day, her children are more numerous than those of the Jewish Church. We have waited, but we have been well repaid for our waiting, for we have a larger and richer blessing than God's ancient people ever enjoyed!

2-4. *Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not: for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* O child of God, have you passed through a time of great sorrow in which the Lord seemed to desert you? Have all your hopes been blighted and have all your joys fallen, like untimely figs from the trees? Yet the days of your rejoicing shall be many! You shall soon

put aside your sackcloth and ashes and dancing and holy gladness shall be your portion!

5. *For your Maker is your Husband.* Rejoice, O Church of God, that you have such a Husband! Rejoice, every member of the Church of God, that you have such a Husband to help you!" Your Maker is your Husband."

5. *The LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called.* Well might Paul write, in the Epistle to the Romans, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." And here Isaiah says, Inspired by the same Spirit who taught Paul what to write, "The God of the whole earth shall He be called."

6, 7. *For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment have I forsaken you.* A moment is a small period of time, but it is made to appear still smaller by that little word, "small."

7, 8. *But with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.* Oh, what a blessed mouthful this text is! I might rather say, What a *heart* full! What a soul full! It fills and overfills my soul and gives me sweet contentment—"With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer."

9. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth: so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.* See how our faithful and unchanging God lays the foundation for our hopes—

"In oaths, and promises, and blood."

10. *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* Or, as the Hebrew has it, "says the Lord, the Pitier." Was there ever a sweeter title to comfort our hearts than this, "the Lord, the Pitier"?

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

UNMITIGATED PROSPERITY
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A SERMON
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IN THE YEAR 1863.

"The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hands."
Isaiah 53:10.

You know that the whole verse says, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands." The last words from our text—"The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands."

It may be that the devil thought that the death of Christ was the defeat of Christ. If so, how greatly was he mistaken, for when Christ yielded up the ghost, He won an everlasting victory! Nor is He dead. Jesus, who died, has left the dead, no more to die. He died, but could not long be held a prisoner in the grave. Loosing His cerements, He came forth in life and immortality and now is the promise fulfilled, "He shall see His seed." From the heights of Heaven He looks upon the multitude of His seed on earth. In eternal Glory He takes His solace in the society of His seed above. As many as the stars of Heaven, as countless as the dust of the summer are the seed of our Lord Jesus Christ! He indeed *lives* to see His seed—while others die and their children follow them, and they know not of their progeny—Jesus lives to see, one after another, all the souls that He has redeemed, born first to earth and then born a second time to Heaven.

"He shall prolong His days." More than 1800 years have passed since He rose from the dead to His new life, yet He still lives. And His days, we know, shall be continued while this earth shall stand. Yes, and at the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, He still shall prolong His days. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." *You* shall endure, though the mountains perish and though the skies are rolled up like a vesture that is worn out.

"He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days." Nor shall His life be a long one without usefulness. He shall have a work to do, Brothers and Sisters—He still has that work to do and oh, how well He does it! It is the joy of Heaven to know that Christ still stands hard and fast to His Covenant engagements! It is a comfort to us on earth that our Lord, for Zion's sake, will not stay His hands nor hold His peace until He has perfected the Divine will and brought all the redeemed Home to Himself!

This evening I propose to speak of our Savior's great work and of the way in which it prospers in His hands. Coming close to our text, we shall

first examine *this interesting description of Christ's work—it is "the pleasure of the Lord."* We shall then notice *how, and in what respects, that work prospers in Christ's hands* and, having done so, we shall solicit a little consideration as to *our connection with that pleasure of God and that great "hand" and prosperity of which we here read.*

I. From our text it is very clear that THE WORK WHICH JESUS CHRIST HAS UNDERTAKEN IS THE FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE. It is the work of bringing His elect out of darkness into light, from nature to Grace and from Grace to Glory. Why is this called "the Father's good pleasure"?

We answer, for many reasons. First of all, *because God's good pleasure is the source of all saving work.* For many centuries and ages, the source of the Nile has been a theme of wonder. Many travelers have spent their lives and lost them in endeavoring to track that mysterious stream to its first fount—at last the deed has been accomplished to the honor of our country. But the stream of Divine Grace, from where does *it* spring? In what mountain does *it* take its rise? Arminian theology, like all the ancient travelers, has failed to make the discovery. But the Gospel, as it is revealed in Scripture, plainly tells us that everything in salvation is according to the good pleasure of the Divine will. If you ask some good Brother who is rather muddled in his theology, "What is the cause why a man is saved?" He will say, perhaps, "Well, he is saved because he believes." You will then ask, "But why does he believe?" He will say, "Because he hears the Gospel." You will say, "Ah, but others hear it, too, and yet do not believe. How is it that his hearing produces faith in him?" He will say, "it is because he gives the more earnest heed." You will say, "Yes, but why does he give the more earnest heed?" And there will come another question, and another, and another, and another, and you will keep on beating around the bush until, if you succeed in getting your Brother into a corner, he will say to you, "Well, I do not know, but I think it must be the Grace of God." Happy is the man who begins *there*—who says, without going all the way round about to try and fight against a most precious and blessed Truth of God—"Yes, the good pleasure of God is that primeval source from where flows that first stream of electing love which goes widening on, forever manifesting itself more and more clearly—

"Till, like a sea of Glory,
It spreads from pole to pole."

Grace is called, then, God's *pleasure*, because there it takes its source!

It is the pleasure of the Lord, in the next place, *because it is there it finds its direction given to it.* I see the spring welling up, but in which way shall it flow? To what man shall salvation come? There was even an opportunity for election in the choice of the *nation* to which it should come. What is there in this little island that we should be favored with the Gospel? Why might not New Zealand, at the other end of the world, have had it years gone by, and this nation been without it? Why should it come to the descendants of barbarians, while the inhabitants of Greece, who were cultured and enlightened when our ancestors were naked

savages, have *not* received the Light of the Gospel as we have? Why should it not have glanced on China, or found a congenial home amidst the islands of Japan? Why did it come here? It is the Father's good pleasure that gave the stream of Grace the direction toward this land! And in this land, why did Grace come to *me*? Why to *you*? Why to your brother yonder? Was it that we were better than others? In no wise! Did we seek it more than they? No, verily, for we resisted its influence and would have none of its blessings when it came to our door! Why, then, did it come to us? We know of no answer but this—the good pleasure of the Lord! I know no other reason why Abraham, an idolater, should be called out of the land of Ur. Or why, to take a later case, Saul of Tarsus should be taken out of the college of the Pharisees, while yet a persecutor, to be made an Apostle of Christ. If I am asked to solve the question why these men are made heirs of Heaven and distinguished possessors of Gospel Truth, I must reply, "It is the Father's good pleasure." I know no other answer. Therefore I think it is because God gives the direction and sends the Gospel where He wills, that it is called the good pleasure of the Lord.

Further, *the good pleasure of the Lord is the Gospel's vital force*. Upon what does the Gospel depend for its existence and its spread? Upon the zeal of its bishops? *Some* of them deny the Gospel! Upon the fervor of its ministers? *Some* of them are sound asleep! Upon the consistency and energy of its professors? *Some* of them are hypocrites, many of them lukewarm. Upon what, I say, does the cause of Christ depend? Upon the influence of kings and princes? The kings of this world know it not! Upon some alliance with the State—it scorns it! "*My Kingdom* is not of this world." Brothers and Sisters, the vital force which gives the Kingdom of God to the chosen flock is the Father's good pleasure! And it is because God wills it that daily His Church stands, grows and gathers strength. The world stands upon God's good pleasure—He may truly say, "I bear up the pillars thereof." He hangs the golden lamps of Heaven with their silver chains. He binds the Pleiades, or looses the bands of Orion. All things depend upon His will! Much more does His Church—His grandest, His most choice and peculiar work—depend, day by day, upon His good pleasure, His predestination, His purpose and His will for all its vital powers!

Nor is this all. *The consummation of the Gospel is the Father's good pleasure.* Not simply its origin, its direction, and its sustenance, but its consummation! Never—for we must now speak of God after the manner of men—never shall the eternal God rejoice more than when He sees all the company complete, the whole of His redeemed standing around His Throne. At the very prospect of it, He will break forth into singing! He will rest in His love. He will rejoice over them with singing and He will never rest until He shall behold this consummation. From North and South, from East and West, He will continue to send His heralds—nor will He pause in sending forth His ambassadors and in giving them His strength until He shall say, "Here they all are whom I gave to the Messiah—He has

lost none—the jewels of My crown *all* glitter here! The rubies of My breastplate are *all* here! ALL those choice things have been gathered by the hand of Jesus."

And, dear Friends, I ought to add that *the great objective of all saving Grace is the Father's good pleasure*. What is God's objective in everything that He does? It must be an objective equal to Himself and there is no supposable objective equal to God, but God! God's Glory—that is the end and aim of all that He does. He saves His people. Why? For His great name's sake! It were unworthy of God to find a motive for His actions in anything lower than Himself. But there can be nothing but what is lower than God except God Himself! Therefore in His own heart He finds His motive, and in His own Glory we perceive the objective for which He acts. And you shall find, Beloved, in the whole of the great drama of the Fall and Redemption, which shall have been transacted when the curtain shall fall, that the result shall be, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!" from all worlds where creatures dwell, "unto that God who has manifested Himself to perfection in the wondrous work of Grace perfected in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ." When I read these words and began to think of them for the first time, they ravished my heart with joy! To think that the salvation of sinners was God's pleasure—how sublime! I can imagine a physician taking pleasure in the healing of certain diseases and yet there must be something irksome about his constant toil. If the disease is something hideous, there must be an alloy mingled with the pleasure of his philanthropy. But, in God's case, it is all pleasure! We even read that "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." God takes Divine pleasure in everything which ministers to the salvation of His elect! Christian, do you not see the drift of this? If it is God's pleasure to save you, *who* shall destroy you? If it affords the Eternal delight to see *you* saved, *who* can stand in His way! *Who* shall match himself with Omnipotence? Will not God have His own way? Will He be thwarted in His pleasures? What? The Infinite God robbed of His desires, balked in His intentions, frustrated in His aims, foiled in His designs? It cannot—it must not be! If it is the Father's good pleasure to give *you* the Kingdom, "Fear not, little flock, be of good comfort," the Kingdom of God you must and shall have!

Thus much, then, upon the first point—the work which Jesus Christ undertakes is the Lord's pleasure.

II. Now, secondly, THAT WORK GOES ON PROSPEROUSLY IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST since God has made His soul an offering for sin. Let me again give some subdivisions.

That work has prospered in Christ's hands thus far, that *all the great difficulties towards its accomplishment have already been surmounted*. That work prospers, indeed, which is complete as to its main point. In order that God's pleasure might be accomplished, it was necessary that the gulf should be filled between God and man. It is filled and there is fellowship this day between the almighty Father and His redeemed children! It was necessary that there should be a Sacrifice made to Divine Justice—the Sacrifice is made—Justice has received its full

demand and Mercy can now range without limit! It was necessary that the sinner should become clean—the bath is provided for his washing. It was necessary that he should be clothed with righteousness—the garment is woven from the top throughout without seam. In that gigantic enterprise which Jesus undertook—the forming of a great highway through the vast bogs and morasses of human guilt and inability, the constructing of that highway over the deep gulf of sin and across the very flames of Hell up to the Throne of God—all that, with His Cross in His hands, Jesus Christ has achieved and now, from the lowest depths to the loftiest heights, the way to Heaven has no break! It has been finished from the one end to the other—the great road that leads from the City of Destruction to the City of Refuge is finished by Jesus Christ! Child of God, see how this work prospers—you are ransomed, you are washed, you are clothed, you are adopted, you are accepted, you have been brought safely up to now—and all this has been accomplished through Jesus Christ who has made the way so clear that you need not miss it, but may rest assured that if you are trusting in Him, He has made your Heaven secure! In this respect the work prospers.

Further, the work prospers in Jesus Christ's hands *in the calling out of each of the chosen by Effectual and Sovereign Grace*. I was thinking, this afternoon, what a book of wonders will be opened at the Day of Judgment if the conversions of Believers shall all be published! In what strange ways have men been brought to Christ! A sailor, whose mother had been dead some 14 years, happened to have, one day, an idle hour in London, so he stepped into St. Paul's Cathedral. Well, there was not much there, I would think, except at the special services, that was likely ever to convert a soul. That way of singing out the prayers must always, one would think, rather excite a disgust at such religion than not. I wonder whether they suppose that when the penitent publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he intoned it? It seems such a strange, strange thing. But it so happened, that day, a lesson was read in which these words occurred, "Pray without ceasing." Well, Jack went away and forgot St. Paul's, forgot the text, forgot the lessons and the prayers. Seven years afterwards, it was one bright moonlight night and he was walking up and down the deck on his watch and, all of a sudden something seemed to remind him of the words, "Pray without ceasing." And as he walked up and down, he thought, "Where did I hear these words—'Pray without ceasing'?" St. Paul's Cathedral came before his mind. "'Pray without ceasing?' he said, "why, I have never *begun* to pray! I have lived 40 years and I have never prayed in all my life." It was the thin edge of the wedge. The consciousness that he did not pray led to his remembrance that there were many other things that he had left undone. He thought to himself, "I wish I had a Bible. I fear there is not one on board the ship." So he walked on his beat, up and down the deck, until he thought, "I wonder whether there is one in my chest? I should not wonder but what my old mother put one in there." It was over 21 years since the chest had been packed up—and at the bottom of it lay a Bible,

with a mother's prayer written in it. He took it out, and as he read it, God spoke the words of joy and peace to his soul and Jack became a believer in Christ! You would little have suspected that there was any connection between his idly strolling into St. Paul's Cathedral and his gloriously entering into the great Cathedral and Temple of the living God where they praise Him day and night!

Here is another case that shows how the Lord can make His work prosper in His hands. At Horselydown, a young man, in connection with a Religious Tract Society, went on board a vessel to distribute tracts. He saw nobody on board but one old gentleman who received his tracts very gladly and said he liked to see tracts and religious truth everywhere and anywhere. The tract distributor said he did not like to see the Bible used as it often was at the butter shops—he did not like to see pages of the Scriptures used to do up butter and cheese and such like things. "Well," said the old man, "I am of a different opinion from you upon that point. It is 12 years ago," he said, "and I was a wonderful smoker. One day I went into a shop—I was a godless, careless fellow—and bought an ounce of tobacco. It was done up in a leaf of the New Testament and, while I smoked my pipe, I looked at the leaf—and that was the means of making me a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so," he said, "I do not care what they do with it, as long as they put it where people may read it." This was a strange instance of one who would never have been caught by any ordinary means, but, just indulging in his own habit, God meets with him and the Word of God comes as truly from Heaven as though an angel had come into his chamber and delivered the message! Truly, the Lord's work does prosper in Christ's hands—by some means or other, He brings home His banished ones!

You may remember, perhaps, the case of good Mr. Wilberforce, one of the best, most excellent and noble of all modern Christians. When he was 23 years of age, Mr. Wilberforce was very far from being religious. He was said to be the crown and glory of Doncaster races! His affable manners and the geniality and humor of his bearing made him many friends among men of the world. He went to Nice on a journey and, while travelling there, he had for a companion, Dean Milner. They were talking about a certain clergyman in Yorkshire. Mr. Wilberforce said he thought that clergyman carried his religion a great deal too far. For his part, he considered religion a very good thing if it was kept within bounds, but he censured those who made too much of it. The dean said, "Mr. Wilberforce, if you read your Bible a little more, you would not think so, for I am persuaded there is no such thing as carrying religion too far." Mr. Wilberforce said, "Come, now, you and I are together—I will read the New Testament through if you will." "I will," said Milner, and being both of them excellent Greek scholars, during their journey they read the New Testament through in Greek. Happy, happy, happy thought for Wilberforce! He who was to speak with voice of thunder—

"Thus says Britannia,
Empress of the sea,
Your chains are broken,
Africa, be free!"—

must first hear the Scripture speak to him, and say, "Wilberforce, be free! Christ has borne your sins and carried all your sorrows. You are saved!"

There are, then, odd ways, strange ways, all sorts of ways, yet appropriate ways, fitting ways by which Jesus Christ brings His people to Himself! And as I look about, or read the narratives of their conversion, I can only say, "Truly, the pleasure of the Lord does prosper in His hands."

Furthermore, you may see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in the hands of the Savior *in the keeping and preserving of everyone that has been called.* If to call the saints is a miracle, to *keep* them is a long string of miracles! To what temptations and trials have not the saints been exposed? In the olden times, they suffered from fire, the rack, hot pincers, gloomy dungeons, the dropping of water—a most cruel form of punishment—drowning, death in all its shapes and yet they stood fast! They were more than conquerors through Him that loved them! In this age, the children of God have had to suffer laughter, scoffing, slander, obloquy, all sorts of shame—then the devil has thrown them over to the other side and tried them with prosperity, honor, esteem, worldly dignity—but still they have not yielded. They have been tried in the furnace of temporal distress, of bereavement, of mental despondency. They have been forsaken by friends and often been subjected to labor too severe for natural strength—but what can we say of the safeguard of all the people of God? Not *one* of them is lost! Christ has kept them—they have, all of them, been in the hollow of His hands. As the eagle covers her nest and flutters over her young, and will not suffer the spoiler to take away so much as one eaglet from the nest, even so has Christ always kept and preserved His people! And He holds them fast even to this day. In all this, we see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in His hands.

And dear Friends, no doubt we see this very conspicuously *in the constant growth of the Redeemer's Kingdom.* I sometimes feel sad to think how very slowly the work of conversion is going on, but, on the whole, this one thing we can say—if we do not make the progress we should like to make, at any rate we *are* on the progressing side! Idolatry advances not a step—it manifestly crumbles. Mohammedanism makes but few converts. If our religion does not increase as fast as we desire, it *does increase* and it seems to be, just now, in that state in which we are laying mines and trains of Heavenly gunpowder so that when the time comes and the match shall be struck, the work shall be done suddenly and the battlements of evil shall fall with a crash to the ground! But though I say we are not doing what we should, yet here and there we see fertile spots. The Master *is* causing His Kingdom to come! The seed does not rot under the clods. Heaven grants us revivals, seasons of refreshing in the Presence of the Lord. We believe that the good pleasure of the Lord is prospering in His hands.

And mark you, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see this, by-and-by, *when everyone among us shall begin to feel his own individual responsibility.* We shall, indeed, then see God's good pleasure prospering!

Suppose we were the House of Commons and some speaker should rise and tell us that there was a world of filth in the City of London, that the streets were very dirty, that people threw their rubbish out of the front door every morning and that the road was covered with all sorts of garbage? One wise member of Parliament would propose that there should be a troop of orderlies and another would say that there was a capital machine invented that ought to be tried. But what would you think if some common-place member of Parliament should rise and say, "Don't you think the quickest way to sweep all London is to make every householder sweep in front of his own door?" "Why," you would say, "that is the thing! It would take months to do it in any other way, but this would allow it to be done at once!" Now, when we have once got the Church of God to feel that every man is to sweep in front of his own door, that every convert is to try to make more converts, every Christian man and woman to bring others to Jesus—then I believe we shall see such a wonderful growth in the Church as we never anticipated! And then the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in Christ's hands.

Today there is too much leaving of the work to a few of us. I do not think that is right. I love to see our friends give something to the cause of God every week. I believe that principle of everyone giving something and everyone laying by in store every week will provide the Church with all the money that she needs. And then every Christian doing something and everyone doing it constantly out of zealous love to the Lord Jesus Christ—beyond a doubt we shall see a flood-tide of Grace and a beginning of the tides of Glory which are yet to cover the world! Only let us get the Church right and get the saints stirred up and we shall see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in Christ's hands!

Now mark these words, for they shall surely come true—the work is so sure to prosper in Christ's hands that *it will not fail in any one point*. All along the line of battle there shall be victory. In every point of His work there shall be success. The great Architect shall not bring out beauty here, and leave deformity there, but the plan shall be carried out without a single variance of the splendor of the first design. You shall see each stone, yes, the very stone that was chosen, dug out of the quarry, and put in its place. You shall see every sheep of Christ's fold brought safely to the pastures on the hilltops of Heaven. You shall see Christ defeated nowhere, but Conqueror everywhere! He shall stand, at the last, in the midst of all the troops that have fought by His side—they shall all wear the laurels of victory! They shall all be conquerors and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them! The cause of God is quite safe in the hands of Jesus—it *does* prosper, it *shall* prosper, it *must* prosper forever!

III. I conclude by asking, WHAT IS OUR RELATION TO ALL THIS?

Alas, *there are some who oppose the pleasure of God in the hands of Christ*. What we have to say to them is, "Mind what you are doing." He that falls upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder! You who oppose Christ might as well lay yourselves down before the huge wheels of the car of Juggernaut

in order to stop it. As surely as you are a living man, if you stand in its way, Christ's chariot will go on and crush you to powder! If you choose to go down to the low-water mark on the shore and attempt to push back the sea, the sea will come rolling over you—and its great billows, as they swallow you up—shall seem to howl your funeral dirge. Had you not better change your side? Is it wise to oppose the Irresistible? Is it prudent to become an enemy of the Omnipotent? We sometimes hear a person say, "I cannot be on Christ's side, for how do I know that such-and-such a thing is true?" That excellent servant of God, Mr. John Williams, the martyr of Romania, tells us that on one occasion, when a person of skeptical turn had been questioning about Scripture and so forth, he called together a number of the natives of the South Sea Islands. They stood around him, little knowing what was to be done. Mr. Williams put to them the question, "How do you know that the religion of Jesus comes from God?" They had never been asked that question—they had accepted it as Divine Truth without investigating evidences—but they were not long at a non-plus, for one of them very properly answered, "How can that religion be anything but Divine which has broken up an idolatry in which our fathers lived from time immemorial—which turned us from being cannibals to be Christians and which has brought us from the depths of vice of every kind to sit clothed, in our right mind, at the foot of the Cross?" And another of them said, "I know that this religion comes from God because I have hinges in my body. If I want to move my foot, there is a hinge to move it. If I want to move my hand, there is a hinge to move that—there is a hinge for everything. Now, the God who shows so much wisdom in the making of my body, shows just as much wisdom in the making of the Bible to suit my case. I conclude, therefore, it comes from the same place as my body did—that is, from my God." This was not bad reasoning for a South Sea Islander!

The best way, I believe, to get men to believe that the Bible is true is to get them to read the Bible. Someone asked me what book he should read in order to put an end to his skepticism. My answer was, "Read the Bible." But he said, "No, I need to know whether the Bible is true." I said, "Then, read the Bible. The Bible is its own interpreter and its own evidence. And, while you are reading it, may God breathe His Divine Spirit upon it and may the good pleasure of the Lord prosper in Christ's hands! Though you began by being an opposer, may you end by being a friend!" There was a club of gentlemen who used to meet together to discuss literary and scientific subjects and, after a long discussion, they had agreed to burn the Bible—and one of them was about to do it. They had selected about the boldest of them to do it, but, as he was going to take it to the fire, his hands trembled and, laying it down, he turned round and said, "I think we had better not burn this Book till we find a better one." And I think we may say of those who, in these days, are trying to kick against Scripture, they had better leave it alone until they find a better one, or else they will be something like Voltaire, who, when two of his disciples came to see him to talk about atheism, said, "Hush,

hold your tongue till my servant has gone out of the room. I do not want to have my throat cut." This was a sure sign that he dared not talk about his own disbelief in the presence of those he thought not well instructed, lest they should by it become hardened to sin and made capable of any and every crime. Oh, you that oppose Jesus Christ, I wish you would just try Him! Take His Book and read it—search it through and through and if, after that, you still reject it, it is because you will do so, and on your head be your blood!

But there are some of us, thank God, who are on the side of God's good pleasure—on the side that prospers in Christ's hands! What, then, shall I say to such? Why, dear Friends, let everyone of us be doing something to make God's pleasure prosper! Mothers, I have told you one story which should excite you to earnestness to do your children good. Let me tell you another. In the old war between England and America, there was a son who received a Bible from his mother. It was brought to him by a comrade who said to him, "Your mother told me to say that, out of love to her, she hoped you would learn one verse every day." So he opened the Book and, with a laugh, he said, "Well, then, here goes." Strangely enough, the verse that he opened was the only verse he ever learned at the Sunday school, for he had been a bad lad, and could not be made to learn. And he read it and it fetched tears in his eyes. It was this—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And the mother's prayers were heard to a mother's joy! Go on, mothers, keep praying for your children, that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in Christ's hands!

And you Sunday school teachers, be more earnest than ever in teaching your classes, but mind you keep to this point—the conversion of your children as children. Do not be content to sow seed that *may* spring up when they are fifty, but pray to God that it may spring up while they are as yet perhaps under fifteen! Pray, O you Sunday school teachers, that God's pleasure may prosper in Christ's hands with you! My dear Friends in the catechumen classes, go on laboring with greater earnestness than before. Young men who go forth from us to preach the Gospel, we look to you and we trust that God will be pleased to give you tongues of fire and hearts of flame. You that stand at the corners of the streets, you that labor anywhere, be more and more determined—let others loiter as they will—that you will labor with both your hands for Christ!

I am often afraid lest, with such a Church as this, we should not do what the Church at large and the world expect of us. We number 2300 or more in church fellowship [in the year 1863] but if you are all idle, or if the most of you are idle, it would be better for me to have had a hundred or so of earnest workers! There is nothing one dislikes so much as to be reputed to have what we have not. Why, I read, I should think, in a dozen newspapers, some time back, the information that I received from America £1,000 a year! I should like to see it! I said, as I read it, "If it had been a thousand pence, I might have been better content than to read it there and know it is not true." But just that kind of feeling comes over

me when people say, "What a church there is there! What a deal they must do for Christ!" Ah, but if you do not, then what a poor man your minister is to have the reputation of being so rich in the efforts of his people, and then not to have them doing anything! Oh, don't do that! I know you may say I am not worthy of you, but I pray you, dear Friends, let us try to be worthy of one another! Let us fight side by side for Christ and for His cause! Let us proclaim Christ Crucified upon this neighborhood and let us make men know that there is a Church in London that does pray, that does wrestle with God, that does work, that does give to His cause and that will spend and be spent until the members are willing even to lay down their lives upon the altar of God for the promotion of His Kingdom!

May we all believe in Jesus and so be His friends! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," He says. May we all be led to believe in Jesus and, believing, may we be enlisted on His side—and, being enlisted, may we fight even to the end and so be partakers of His great reward! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 17:1-10.

Verse 1. *Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come!* Since the Fall, we are so constituted that there are sure to be differences and disputes. It is a great mercy when men dwell together in unity. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is." It is a work of Divine Grace! But nature has its lusting and lusting leads to striving. And so, as long as the world is as it now is, "it is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come." Let us not, therefore, be either offense givers or offense takers. When anyone offends us, let us say, "It is impossible but that offenses will come," and let us make light of it. And let us be very careful that we do not cause others to offend. As for him through whom the offense comes.

2. *It were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck, and he be cast into the sea, than that he should offend.* Or cause to offend—

2-4. *One of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If your brother trespass against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he trespasses against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent: you shall forgive him.* Perhaps someone remarks, "It looks as if he would do nothing else but keep on sinning and repenting." Well, suppose he does? That is precisely what you are doing, except that you do not go often to repent when you sin! So, possibly, the offender is rather better than you are, after all, and if God is gentle in His dealings with you, you may well be gentle in your dealings with your neighbor.

5. *And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.* They seemed so struck with the severity of this command that they asked for more

faith that they might be able to obey it. And, dear Friends, that is always the best thing to do! Do not refuse obedience to the Lord's precept, but say, "Lord, increase my faith that I may be able to obey it. It can be done, or else You would not have given me the command. I cannot do it as I am without an increase of strength, therefore, as faith is the medium by which strength is received, Lord, increase my faith."

6. *And the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, Be you plucked up by the root, and be you planted in the sea; and it should obey you.* Meaning that anything and everything should be possible to our faith. But we need much more of it than the most of us have. Remember how holy Bernard said, "If you have a hard task, ask God to give you a hard resolution." The diamond is difficult to cut, but it can be cut if you can find something harder. So if there is a very difficult task set before us, if we get faith that is more than equal to it, it will be accomplished. "With God all things are possible," which means not only that God can do all things, but that we also can do all things when God is with us!

7, 8. *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by-and-by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you shall eat and drink?* This world is the place of service—we are not to be expecting to have the festival here. The great supper comes at the end of the day. This is the time for us to serve, even as Jesus did when He was here—and we are to serve right on till the close of the day, even as Jesus did.

9. *Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.* When the servant has done his day's work, his master does not say, "I am very grateful to you, John, for what you have done for me." He will have his wages—they will be his master's thanks.

10. *So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you." Ah, but we have not come *anywhere near* that yet! Even if we had, we would still be "unprofitable servants." In our mind we should expect no thanks from our Master, but we should sorrow that we had not served Him better.

—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.

"TRUST IN THE LIVING GOD"
NO. 2964

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1905.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1875.

"We trust in the living God."
1 Timothy 4:10.

IF we are inclined to grieve because everything around us changes, our consolation will be found in turning to our unchanging God. If we lament the ills of mortality, it will be wise for us to turn to Him "who only has immortality." If our earthly joys fade and die, it is a blessed thing for us to be able to go to the fountain of undying joy and there to drink deep draughts of bliss which shall cause us to forget our misery.

Without any further preface, I ask you to follow me while first, in a very simple manner, I speak upon *the great truth of the existence of the living God.* And then, secondly, while I draw *practical inferences from that existence*. Before I close my discourse, I shall have a question to put to you.

I. First, for a little while, let us think of THE GREAT TRUTH OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE LIVING GOD. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God."

He meant, by that expression, first, *that God is truly existing and not like the dead gods of the heathen, which are no gods at all*—which, in fact, have no existence as gods. Vast multitudes have bowed down before images of wood, or stone, or ivory, or gold—but of them all it might truly be said, "Eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat." It is a sure sign that a man's understanding is dead when he can worship a dead god! But you and I, Beloved, "trust in the living God." He is the God who made Heaven and earth and all that is in them. He is the God who supports the whole universe by the power of His almighty arms. He is the God who rules and overrules in Nature, Providence and Grace. He is the true God, the only real God—no dream God, no phantom or myth conjured up by imagination, but a real God, the only living and true God! May we worship Him, then, with real worship, real adoration and true sincerity of heart! What a blessing it is for us that we are able to worship the true God! We might have been left, as our remote ancestors were, to seek after God, if haply we might find Him, or to worship gods that are no gods and be lost in the mazes of

superstition, unable to find the Most High. But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" and, therefore, "we trust in the living God," the real God!

A second meaning of this expression, I have no doubt, lies in *the fact of God's self-existence and independence.* "We trust in the living God," who is "living" in a very emphatic sense. You and I are living, but our existence is entirely dependent upon the will of God. Although He has given us immortal spirits, yet that immortality only comes to us by reason of the Divine decree. And the glorious immortality of Believers comes to them by virtue of their vital union with their ever-living Head, their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have no independent immortality—it is not inherent in us and it must be sustained by perpetual emanations of the Divine Power. It is a fire which could not maintain its own glow. It must be fed, or it would go out. But God is self-existent, the great I AM—and if all His creatures would cease to be, He would be just as completely God without them as with them—

"He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

His is a fire which burns without fuel—a sun which scatters light without itself diminishing! God is independent, self-existing, the only really "living" being in the entire universe in the fullest and most emphatic sense of the word, "living."

What a joy it is to worship such a God as this, because nothing can diminish His life, His force, His power! If His courts are sustained, not by the tribute of men, but by His own wealth. If His sovereign state stands, not by the might of armies, but by His own Omnipotence and if He, Himself, is All-Sufficient, not because He gathers up all things into Himself, but because all things are from Him, and are all in Him in their germ and seed—is He not a God whom we all ought to worship—in whom, worshipping, we may joyfully trust—and relying on whom we may be perfectly at rest, for He cannot fail us, neither can He fail Himself in any respect or degree?

A third meaning of the expression, "living," in Paul's declaration, "We trust in the living God," I have no doubt is to be found *in the fact of the existence of God through all eternity*. There was a time when you and I, who are now alive, were not alive. And there will be a time when, as far as this world is concerned, we shall be numbered with the dead. But there never was a period in which God did not live. He always was and always is and always will be "the *living* God." Let your thoughts fly back to eternity if you can—for, mark you, all our ideas of eternity are very shallow and superficial. We cannot form any clear notion of what, "eternity," means, and the very fact that we speak of a "past" eternity proves that we have to bring it down to our finite apprehension and to use inaccurate words to express our imperfect and incorrect ideas! But far back, when the sun, moon and stars—and the whole universe slept in

the mind of God, as a forest sleeps within an acorn cup—even then God was "the living God." Before the first ray of light had broken in upon the pristine darkness—yes, before there *was* any darkness—before anything was created—God was "the living God!" And He was just as great and as glorious as He is now. Without an angel to sing His praise, or a human being to look up to Him with holy reverence or with tearful repentance—yet still independent of them all, He was "the living God!" What a blessing it is for us that it was so! There was never a period in which Satan could plot and plan against us, but that God had eternally existed before him. That evil spirit is but the infant of a day compared with God, the Eternal of all the ages, the Everlasting Father who was always able to anticipate everything that could possibly occur, knowing beforehand all that might be detrimental to us, countermining every mine of the archenemy and baffling all the old serpent's cunning in such a way as, in the end, to add still more to His own Glory!

And as He was "the living God" in the past, so He is "the living God" in the present, and just as truly living as He was ten thousand millions of years ago—to speak of eternity after the fashion of men. Dr. Watts hit the mark when he sang—

"He fills His own eternal NOW,
And sees our ages pass."

Ages and years are past, or present, or future to us—but they are all present to Him. When a man looks upon a map, he can cover a whole country with his hand. But a traveler has to journey many weary miles before he can cross that country from one end of it to the other! But on the map your hand covers it all. And all eternity is under the hand of God like that country on the map covered by a human hand. God is "the living God" now as much as He ever was—as powerful, as wise, as loving, as tender, as strong as He ever was, blessed be His holy name!

And so He will be throughout the whole of the future. We cannot tell all that will yet happen in this world, but one thing we know—God will always be "the living God." It is probable that once powerful nations will be utterly destroyed and that there will be terrible disasters beyond anything that has yet been experienced. We know that the present dispensation will utterly pass away and that "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed." But this fact is sure, that He who has been the dwelling place of His people in all generations, will be the dwelling place of His people in all the generations that are yet to come. There will never be a funeral knell to tell us that our great Lord is dead. There will be no need for weeping among the blessed spirits above because He who was their Creator, Protector, Preserver, and Friend has ceased to be, for He will always be "the living God." So, because of His eternal existence, He is right worthy to bear this title—yes, and to monopolize it, for it belongs to Him alone—

"Great God! How infinite are Thee!
What worthless worms are we!

Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to You.
Your Throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made.
You are the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.
Eternity, with all its years,
Stands present in Your view.
To You there's nothing old appears—
Great God! There's nothing new."

The fourth meaning of the text seems to me to be this. *God is called "the living God" as being always Himself really and truly God in the full capacity of His Being.* Sometimes we say of a man that he is "all alive." At another time, he does not appear to be fully quickened. He has life to some extent, but not in its fullness. We say of the man, by-and-by, that he is dead—not that he has ceased to exist, for man will no more cease to exist than will God, Himself, but we speak of him as dead because his body, which is part of his being, lies moldering in the tomb. But God is all life and only life. No portion of Him, (I must use human language, though the words are incorrect which I am using, as our words always must be when we speak of God), no faculty, no power, no attribute of God can be smitten by any paralysis, or can, in any degree, or in the slightest measurer, be subject to any failure which is at all akin to death. God is all alive and altogether life and nothing but life. God's wisdom is always Infallible, His power is always almighty, His energy is at all times efficacious for everything that needs His attention. There can never come a time when He will be bowed down with age, or wearied with toil, or affected by suffering. "The living God" is the whole God, or, as the holy beings in Heaven call Him—and it means the same thing—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come." He is the whole God! Whatever the word, "God," means—and we do not know, nor shall we ever know all that it means—it is too vast to be conceived by anyone but God, Himself—but, whatever that is, that is what God always is to the full measure, never in any degree diminished by what we call, "death." He is evermore "the living God."

I like to think of this Truth because God, Himself, speaks of it again and again. The Lord said to Moses in the wilderness, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" In the prophecy of Isaiah we read, "Thus says the Lord, Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?" And, a little later, this Prophet was Inspired to write, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." And today He is as mighty as He was in those glorious days when, in the van of Israel's host, He led His people in safety through the depths of the Red Sea and delivered them forever from the iron bondage of Pharaoh. Yes, blessed be His holy name, He is still "the living God" as full of life and power as He ever was!

Another meaning of this expression is that *God is active and energetic and not a mere name*. There are plenty of people who are willing to believe in a god of a certain sort, but I hardly know how to describe their god. They are not atheists—they would be horrified if we called them by that name—but their notion is that everything is regulated by what they call, "the laws of Nature." If you ask them what, "Nature," is, they give you some curious answers. One man says, "I do not go into your places of worship and sit there, and hear you talk about God. I like to walk about and worship Nature." If it is in London that a man talks like that, I should like to ask him what he calls, "nature." Does he mean these miles of brick walls and the dark lanes and alleys at the back of them? If he means that, I should not like to worship his "Nature." Or does he mean the grass in the meadows and the flowers of the field? If so, I hardly think that I should like to worship what cattle eat—it seems a degradation for a man to stoop as low as that! But they will say and do anything to get rid of the idea of the living and true God. "Nature"—"Providence"—and so on, are the expressions they use, just as if "God" did not enter into their calculations—or as if He had gone out of the business and left the whole concern to go on by itself! I should not like to be the child of a father who, the moment I was born, had me washed and dressed by machinery—and had a cradle ready for me to be rocked by machinery and fed me by machinery—who, all the while that I was under his roof, dressed me by machinery, fed me by machinery and taught me by machinery—but I never saw him. In fact, I only knew that there was some mysterious force about somewhere, but I never saw him or it—and never knew anything about his personality. That is the kind of dead force that many men call, "god." But *our* God, in whom we trust, is a God with a great, warm, loving heart! He is a thinking God, an active God, a working, personal God who comes into the midst of this world and does not leave it to go on by itself. Although He is a stranger in the world, even as His people are also strangers and foreigners by reason of the revolt that men have made against their liege Lord and Sovereign, yet it is still His world and He is still in it!

I like to think of "the living God" being in this world which He created, for, now when I look at the cowslip or the daffodil, I know that it is God who paints these flowers of the spring so delicately. When I gather the geranium or the fuchsias, I know that it is God's pencil which has been at work and I love to look at the blossom and feel that I am near to God—just as I should feel if I were to go into a friend's studio and see there some of his sketches and paintings. I know that he has been there and that no other hand than his could paint that picture so well. And, in like manner, I know that no other hand but that of my God could paint these pictures of Nature so beautifully. Thus I am brought very near to "the living God." O dear Brothers and Sisters, it is such a joy to me to remember that God is not a mere dead force—an abstract something or

other which gives energy to the world, or which did give energy to it ages ago, but has now gone away and left the old energies to work till they wear themselves out! Oh, no. I believe that the Lord God still walks among the trees of this garden—that the Lord God, like a shepherd, still watches over His sheep—that the Lord God still speaks to us in the thunder, smiles upon us in the sunlight, scatters His blessings down in the dew and the rain—that He gives us the fruitful fields of harvest and the golden days in which the sheaves can be gathered into the garner—yes, and that He is just as truly at work for us in the winter months, sweetening the clods by the winds and the frost, and so preparing the earth to bring forth food for man and grass for the cattle. We delight to think that in all these ways, God is still "the living God."

Yet once again, God is "the living God" in that *He is the Source of life, the Giver of life and the Sustainer of life*. We are living creatures, but He is the living Creator. We are living dependent, but He is "the living God" upon whom we all depend. He spoke us out of nothing and He could speak us back to nothing if He pleased to do so. We are the creatures of His will, living on His estates as tenants who may, at any moment, be dismissed at His pleasure, receiving the very breath that is in our nostrils at His absolute discretion! But God is Life, itself, and after all the streams which have flowed from Him to His creatures, there is as much life in Him as at the first. And when He says, "Return, you children of men," and we go back to Him, He will have no more life than He has now, but He will be as He has always been, "the living God."—

"Let them neglect Your Glory, Lord,
Who never knew Your Grace.
But our loud songs shall still record
The wonders of Your praise.
'Twas He, and we'll adore His name,
That formed us by a word!
'Tis He restores our ruined frame—
Salvation to the Lord!"

Now, in the six ways I have brought out only one thought—which I want to impress on your minds because it has been such a sweet thought to me. I have, in imagination, looked upon all whom I know upon the earth and I have said of them all, "They are dying creatures." This is always true, but it is often forgotten. Yet, when one is taken away who has been very precious to us, we begin to realize this truth. Thinking over this matter, I seem to see a procession going past me. I can remember many of those who have passed me. They have gone by while I have remained here and I shall never see them here anymore—a long array of my Master's servants, some of them bearing His banner aloft and others marching with their swords drawn because of fear in the night. Some of them were weak and feeble folk who had to be guarded on both sides by sturdy champions. And now, those of you who are before me as I speak, are also passing away—and there are more coming on, but they are only coming that they may go! I said, just now, that I was

looking on at this procession, but that was a mistake, for *I am in the procession and I am passing on with the rest!* What shadows we all are! What fleeting things! What mists—what paintings on a cloud! We can scarcely say that we live, for, the moment we begin to live, that moment we begin to die and—

"Every beating pulse we count,
Leaves but the number less."

This earth is not "the land of the living." This world is a dying world! The living world is beyond Death's cold river. Here are graves innumerable. What part of the globe is there that has never yet been a cemetery? Every particle of dust which is blown in your face in the street may have once formed a portion of some living being! O Death, you rule over all! No, you do not, for there is One who rules over even you, O Death! You can have no power over "the living God." You are His servant, permitted to work out His purpose, for it is through death that we pass into life. By the death of our redeeming Lord, we have been redeemed from destruction and, therefore, we can turn away from everything that wears the aspect of death and change, and turn to Him who is always the same and of whose years there is no end—the Eternal, in whom we trust!

II. Thus have I set forth, as best I could, the great Truth of the existence of "the living God." Now, in the second place, LET US DRAW SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH.

And the first inference is this—*an inference of reverential awe and holy trembling*. What a great God He is whom we have professed to worship! When a poor pagan bows down before his wooden god, I should not wonder if what little sense he has should make him loathe and ridicule himself. But we have gathered here to worship "the living God." Moses tells us, in the 5TH of Deuteronomy, verse 26, that the Israelites said, when the Law of God was given to them, "Who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" Well might they stand there trembling because "the living God" had come down and touched the mountains so that they smoked like great altars of incense. This is the God whom we worship! Far from us be all trifling! Vain thoughts, be gone! Before "the living God" we should prostrate ourselves in the very dust. "O you who profess to serve the Lord, mind that you serve Him faithfully, for it is "the living God" whom you serve, the God who is not to be mocked with hypocritical service! O you who know that you are not reconciled to Him, remember that it is to "the living God" that you are not reconciled! And recollect that solemn and true declaration, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And that other, "Our God is a consuming fire." So I say that our first inference should be that of reverential awe and holy trembling.

The next should be, to God's people, *an inference of holy courage*. Are we on the Lord's side? Then, my Brothers and Sisters, let us never fear, for we are on the side of "the living God." Who can successfully defy Him?

Who dares to throw down the gage of battle against Him? You remember what young David said to Saul concerning Goliath of Gath, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." It was grandly put, as though he had said, "This big fellow is only the servant of a dead god and he and his god may both come out against me, and I, little as I am, yes, less than nothing in myself, will go to him in the name of the living God and bring back his head as the trophy of victory! Let no man's heart fail because of him." So now, if the biggest Goliath that ever lived at Rome or anywhere else should come stalking out against us, let us say, "Who is he, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" If the God of Israel is not now living, all is over with the cause of truth and righteousness. But we may say, as David did on another occasion, "The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock." As long as He lives, we may boldly say, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

This, too, should be *our great security in time of danger*. I like to recall that incident in the life of Hezekiah when he took that abominable Assyrian letter, "and spread it before the Lord." Do you ever take your letters to the Lord, Brothers and Sisters? That is the best thing in the world to do with them when they are evil ones. Hezekiah spread his letter before the Lord and said, "Lord, bow down Your ear and hear: open, Lord, Your eyes and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which has sent him to reproach the living God." That was the point and the king felt quite sure that Sennacherib would be overthrown because he had defied the living God. If God had been a dead god, Sennacherib might have done with Him as he did with other idol gods. He asked, "Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed?" He did not realize that they were all broken to pieces because they were mere idols. But this time, he was defying "the living God." If, Brothers and Sisters, "the living, God" is on your side, "no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." If you, Beloved, are walking before "the living God" in all sincerity, even if Sennacherib with a mighty host should come against you, the Lord your God would send His holy angel and smite your foes, and you should surely be delivered! Have no doubt or fear, if your God is "the living God."

And this Truth of God, Brothers and Sisters, *should always make us fearless of men,* for, after all, what are men? Remember what the Lord said to His servant, the Prophet Isaiah, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" The most powerful and most cruel man who ever dares to threaten you is only a man that shall die! And the Lord Jesus says to you, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Herod is soon eaten of worms. Persecuting monarchs soon disappear when God condemns them. Therefore, while "the living God" is your God, never be afraid of a dying man—

"Fear Him, you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear."

Another inference from this Truth is this. *It should bring relief to us in times of bereavement.* Sorrow is natural to us, but to push sorrow to an extreme is wrong. I have heard of a good woman who had lost her husband and who continued sorrowing over her loss for a very long time. Her little boy saw her weeping day after day and, at last, plucking her by the gown, he said to her, "Mother, is God dead?" "No, dear," she said, "but your father is." But that question made her stop her grieving, as it well might, for if God is not dead, our best Friend still lives! So let us be of good cheer. If people had to come here and say, "That good woman whom God so greatly blessed in the Church's work is dead. And that dear Brother whom we all loved, is dead. And the Pastor, too, is dead," who could help sorrowing? But even then it would still be true that "the Lord lives!" Always get back to that great fact, "the Lord lives." We shall have to put our Beloved ones into the grave, but, "the Lord lives," blessed be His name! And as long as God lives, we need never ask, "What shall we do?" It is true that we shall not do much, but God will. We must never say, "Oh, there is such a great gap, it cannot be filled." God is alive and He can fill it, so you must not give way to despondency or despair. We may grieve, for even Jesus wept, but let us never distrust the Lord, for as surely as He takes away one worker, He knows how to raise up another! And if the Lord should take your husband from you, He will, Himself, be your Husband. If He should let you be fatherless, He will be your Father. And if He should leave you childless, good woman, He will say to you, "Am I not better unto you than ten sons?" He can fill up every gap! Yes, and make your soul to overflow with supreme content—

"'Lo, I am with you,' says the Lord,
My Church shall safe abide,
For I will ne'er forsake My own,
Whose souls in Me confide.
Through every scene of life and death,
This promise is our trust.
And this shall be our children's song,
When we are cold in dust."

This truth ought also to keep us from grieving too much over our losses and crosses in business. You have had a great loss today, Friend, and your face looks very long over it. Or you have heard of someone who was the means of bringing you much business who has moved or is dead. Well, "the Lord lives." "Trust in the living God." There have been times in the little business I have had to do for the Lord in connection with the Orphanage and the College, when the funds have been very short and sometimes we have run quite out. I have scraped the bottom of the meal barrel a good many times and I have had to squeeze the cruse to get a drop more oil out of it. But we have trusted in the living God and, up till now, we have always found Him worthy of being trusted! And we believe we always shall. There have been failures and mistakes on our part and

on the part of our friends, but never any on God's part. We must all bear that testimony. Let us, therefore, all "trust in the living God." If an ill wind blows upon us, let us believe that somehow or other, it will blow us some good. And if a rough tide comes up, let us believe that it will in some way or other wash us nearer to our desired haven.

Once again, "we trust in the living God," and *this gives us the richest consolation concerning our departed Christian friends*. As "the Lord lives," and He is their God, they are not dead! You remember Christ's argument with the Sadducees, it was this—God has said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." So that the dead saints are not really dead. Whenever there comes out a new error, it generally breeds another, for errors are very prolific. Some people started the notion that the soul of man is not immortal—that the soul of the wicked would die. I was quite sure that when they got as far as that error, they would go still further and so the next notion was that every part of us will die when we die—that there is no soul that is immortal, or no soul at all—and that the righteous dead are all in their graves—souls and bodies and everything! That is the beautiful materialistic notion that after having received Christianity, we are expected to imbibe. But we are not such idiots, whatever they may think of us! We shall never believe that all our beloved friends, who, according to the Scriptures, have been with Jesus these many years, have never been with Jesus at all! In fact, do not exist at all, except whatever may be found of them in their coffins or in their graves! How could that be if God was their God and if Christ's Words are true—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"? They are alive, Brothers and Sisters—as much alive as they were alive here, with the exception of that mortal part which they have left behind to be prepared for immortality, as Dr. Watts truly wrote—

"Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh."

We go down to our graves, as Esther went to her bath of spices, to be prepared for the embrace of the great King! And, in the morning of the Resurrection, this poor body of ours, all fair and lustrous, shall be reunited with our glorified spirit and we shall behold the face of the King in His beauty and be with Him forever and ever! "God is not the God of the dead" and, therefore, those of whom He is the God will never die! The inference is clear and forcible. Believe in it, hold to it and rejoice in it, for it will comfort you to know that as He is your God, you will never die. "God is not the God of the dead." Then, blessed be His holy name, I am not dead, though once I was dead, for He has quickened me into life! And I shall never be dead any more, for Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also." "The living God" is not the Father of dead souls, but He has an innumerable host of living children to be His heirs and to dwell with Him

forever! Did you ever notice that passage where Joshua tells the people to be ready to go over the Jordan and says that when the priests' feet shall touch the river, it shall divide and the Ark shall be carried across? "And then," he said, "hereby you shall know that the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites." The joyful triumphs of Believers in death, when they metaphorically cross the Jordan are proofs to us that God is with His people, that He will drive out all our enemies before us and give us a triumphant entrance into the promised land above! Glory be to the name of "the living God" forever!

III. Now I finish with the question which I said I might ask. It is this—IS "THE LIVING GOD" YOUR GOD?

If so, *then remember how near He is to you*, for Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:16, "You are the temple of the living God." I will not dwell on that sentence, though I am tempted to do so, but what a wonderful thing it is that "the living God" should be willing to dwell inside our bodies! Oh, let us keep these bodies pure and let us see to it that we never fall under that terrible curse, "If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy." But may our body, soul and spirit be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, if "the living God" is really ours, *let us thirst after Him.* Let us say, as did the writer of the 42nd Psalm, "As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." He is "the living God," so thirst after Him and keep on thirsting after Him—and do not be content to try to live without Him, for, to live without "the living God" is to have death in life and not truly to live at all! Think, child of God, "the living God" dwells within you! Seek to realize His Presence, long and pant to realize it more and more!

Are any of you obliged to answer my question truthfully by saying, "No, the living God is not mine"? Then I must repeat to you those two texts that I quoted earlier in my sermon—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "For our God is a consuming fire." That latter text has often been spoilt by being misquoted. I have many times heard it quoted, "God, *out of Christ*, is a consuming fire." That is *not* the text at all. It is "*our* God"—the Christian's God—God *in* Christ "is a consuming fire"—and if He is a consuming fire to His own people, what will He be to the ungodly? That is a wonderful question that is asked in Isaiah 33:14. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" And the answer is, "Nobody can except the man that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly," and so on. The Prophet goes on to describe the man who has been renewed by Grace, for he is the only man who can live in the everlasting burnings of the Divine majesty and purity. He can live there

because the devouring fire will only burn up everything in him that is unlike God—but the new life that is in the Christian, the Grace that the Holy Spirit puts into us will endure the fire. Everything that appertains to man and to man's work must be tried by fire, and if God has built into us the gold, silver and precious stones of His Grace, and if we have built upon them our life work, both we and our work will endure the trial by fire!

But, Sinner, you will also have to go through that fire! And seeing that there is nothing in you but the wood, hay and stubble of self and sin—nothing in you but that which it foul and obnoxious to God, unholy and unrighteous—or self-righteous, which it really unrighteous—the fire will consume it! All your glory, your peace, your happiness, everything that makes life to be life will be taken from you and there shall remain for you nothing but existence! And this is the description of that existence—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Oh, may the Lord who alone can give you life, give it to you now! For, if not, there will remain nothing but an everlasting death to be your portion! From that may you now be delivered by His infinite mercy, through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

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PREPARED TO MEET GOD
NO. 2965

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1875.

"Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."
Amos 4:12.

THERE is a peculiar solemnity about the language of our text because, albeit that the whole of Scripture is the Word of God, yet very much of it is given to us by the Prophets, Apostles and other Inspired writers. But here, it is *God* Himself who is speaking and out of Heaven He addresses His erring people and says to them, "Because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel." If ever every mortal ear should be earnestly attentive, it is when God's voice is heard. Shall not the creature listen to its Creator? Shall not man give heed to the voice of the God of the whole earth? O Lord, give to us hearing ears and let not your words merely reach our ears, but may the inward meaning of them penetrate our souls through the effectual working of Your almighty Spirit!

I. I am going to use the closing words of the text—"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel," as AN ADDRESS TO ALL WHO ARE NOW PRESENT.

You have come here, but for what purpose have you come? If you have come rightly, you have come to meet your God. The Israelites often came together to bow down before their engraved images, or professing to worship God with rites of their own inventing. They forgot that all true worship must be *spiritual* and though they did not and could not meet with God in such a way as that, yet they went back to their homes perfectly satisfied with what they had done. They had performed the external rites of their religion. They had gone through all its ceremonies correctly and they were content. But now God calls upon them to prepare to meet HIM—no longer to be satisfied with the visible and the external, but to get to the Invisible and the Eternal—and that is the call of God to everyone who is now here present.

"What did you go out to see?" What did you come here to hear? Too many attend even the House of God with the notion of merely going to listen to the preacher. He is a thoughtful man, profound, philosophic. Or he is an eloquent man, oratorical and fluent. Is it for this reason that you go to your churches and your chapels, simply to be charmed by the voice of man? If so, let me remind you that God abhors this mockery of worship! As for myself, I have long ago despised the tricks of oratory and the gaudy displays of eloquence. I would sooner be dumb than merely speak so as to exhibit my own powers. If you have come here aright, you

have come that God may meet with you and that you may meet with God—that your consciences may be awakened and that the Truth of God may enter your hearts.

O my Hearers, have you come with any such design? Are there not some of you who have almost come out to meet God as Michal went out to meet David—that she might scoff at him? Have not some of you come almost as Goliath went to defy Israel—that you may fight against God and contend against the Truth? Or, possibly, to despise it in your hearts and to mock at it? God speaks to all such persons and says to them, "Cease you from your evil ways and prepare your heart to meet ME." Oh, if we always went up to the assemblies of God's people with prepared hearts, we would not go there in vain! If sinners came up to hear the Gospel with their hearts breaking all the way, and crying from their very souls, "Oh, that we might find Christ!"—if they came up with earnest, believing prayer—if they gathered together with a sacred expectation of blessing—what meetings there would be between God and them! There would be for them no more wasted Sabbaths, no more sham profession, no more formal religion without any effect upon the conscience and the life! Then would our solemn services be streams of blessing—water would again leap out of the rock and the thirsty congregation would indeed be refreshed! O God, will You not touch men's hearts so that when they gather together in Your House, they will come prepared to meet You there and to worship You in spirit and in truth?

II. A second application of the text which I shall make, without insisting upon its being the one designed, is this—it may be looked upon as AN ADDRESS TO GOD'S OWN PEOPLE.

Sometimes the Lord's people get out of the way of communion and fellowship with Him. It was so with Israel in the day of Amos, yet here the Lord avows Himself to still be their God, for He says, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." As for you who are His people, He is still your God and though you may have fallen into a cold condition of heart, and are now walking in darkness and seeing no light, yet He calls you to meet Him, for He desires to have your company! He has been chastening you, again and again, because you would not walk near to Him, and He is prepared to chasten you yet more. But He will stay His hand if you will now come near to Him. Remember what Eliphaz said to Job and obey the injunction, "Acquaint yourself now with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you." Child of God, permit me to point to you with my finger and say to you, "Prepare to meet your God!" Were not those blessed times when the sound of His feet made music in your ears? Have you forgotten the Hermonites and the Hill Mizar where the Lord appeared to you and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you"? Oh, blessed were those days when we retired to a private corner and communed with God! Hallowed was that study, that kitchen, that bedroom, that hay-loft, or that ditch under the hedge where we were accustomed to meet with the Beloved of our souls and to talk with Him as one talks with his friends. We have had many blessed occasion when Heaven's gate has seemed to be set wide

open—and if we did not pass right through, yet we did sit down as upon the doorstep of Glory and Jesus showed Himself to us—and we poured out our heart before Him! There have been times when we have received those kisses of His lips of which we love to speak even now, when the company is select, and there have been love-tokens between our soul and our Savior which have made us feel that, whether in the body or out of the body, we could hardly tell—only God knew! Then, by all your sweet recollections of the past, come, you children of the living God, and prepare to meet Him again!

If you ask, "What shall we do in order to get ready to meet Him?" I answer—Cast out the idols from your hearts! Let them all go! Love no one else and nothing else as you love Him, but give Him your whole body, soul and spirit! Humble yourself before Him at the very thought that you should ever have wandered away from Him and played the wanton towards your Best-Beloved! Come, also, with a firm reliance upon His unchanging mercy, believing that though you have often forsaken Him, He has never forsaken you. Believe in that gracious declaration of His which says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you." Look again to the precious blood of Jesus—which is the only way of access to the Father—and come sprinkled with it even now. Why should you not come to Him at once? God has most delightful ways of blessing His people on a sudden. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Personally, I know what it is to rise from the deeps of despair, right away from the place where I was distracted with a thousand cares, sorrows and sins and to soar straight away into the serene ether of perfect reconciliation with God and conscious fellowship with Him!

"Behold," says the risen and glorified Jesus, "I stand at the door and knock." It is at the door of Laodicea, the door of that Church which was lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, and it is at your door, O lukewarm Christian, that Christ is now knocking! What is the cure for your lukewarmness? It is Christ's standing at the door and knocking, and saying to you, "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." This will lift you up out of your lukewarmness and, instead of Christ spewing you out of His mouth, as it looks as if He must do, He will come and feast with you—and you shall feast with Him! Open your hearts to Him, now, Brothers and Sisters among us who profess to love Him! How can we keep our hearts closed against Him? "Come in, you blessed of the Lord," we cry to our Beloved and, as we gaze upon Him and see that His head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, our hearts yearn towards Him and with heartfelt love we pray to Him, "Abide with us, O blessed Savior, and go no more out forever, but let our fellowship with You be perpetual!"

III. I should have liked, if I had had time—but I have not—to have applied this text to any professors here who have gone beyond the

negative loss of communion with God—who have backslidden into sin. This is THE LORD'S ADDRESS TO BACKSLIDERS— "Prepare to meet your God." Prepare to come back into His loving arms and to be reconciled to Him again! There are some of you, perhaps, who were not only members of this Church, but who were also members of the class so long presided over by that godly woman for whom we have hung up these memorials of our grief. [Mrs. Bartlett. She had been "called Home" during the week preceding the delivery of this sermon. (See Sermon #1249, Volume 21—*Saints in Heaven and Earth One Family)*—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.] She wept over you when you turned aside. And, among the many things which have made it hard work for you to sin is this one—that you knew you were grieving her gracious and gentle spirit. Hear her voice calling to you from the grave! No, more than that, listen as she speaks to you out of the excellent Glory, saying, "My Beloved Sister, come back to your Lord!"

You have had to suffer already for your backsliding. God has sent you, as the Lord says He sent to idolatrous Israel, "blasting and mildew." He has also withheld from you the rain in a spiritual sense, so that you are near unto famishing. And there is something even worse coming upon you. God does not tell you what it is, even as He did not tell the guilty Israelites all that He would do to them—it is something so terrible that He seems to hesitate to describe it! But He says, "Because I will do this unto you." I know not what it is, nor can you guess, but it is something that will destroy all your joys and lay you prostrate in the dust of sorrow. Because He threatens to do this to you, return to Him, return to Him now! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." I wish I could come round to each one of you backsliders and beseech you to remember that we have not ceased to love you, nor to pray for you, nor to hope that you may yet be led to prepare to meet your God!

IV. Now, coming to my principal objective on this occasion, I want to take the text and use it as A MESSAGE TO THE UNCONVERTED. O Spirit of God, apply it to them with Your almighty power!

I think the text may be applied to the unsaved in three ways. First, *as a challenge*—"Prepare to meet your God." Secondly, *as an invitation*—"Prepare to meet your God." And, thirdly, *as a summons*—and it will, one day, come in that form to everyone of us—"Prepare to meet your God."

First, this sentence comes to the ungodly *as a challenge*. At the time referred to in the text, God had been punishing the idolatrous Israelites again and again, and again, and again, with the view of bringing them to repentance. But none of His chastisements had, so far, moved them to yield to Him. The more God smote them, the harder they became, so He seemed to say to them, "Well, then, since you will not submit to Me. Since nothing appears to make you bow down at My feet, I will now put on my armor of wrath and come out against you with sword and buckler! And I throw down this challenge to you—prepare to meet Me." Now, my dear Hearers, you who have long heard the Gospel but who, until now, have rejected it, I ask you—Do you hope to be able to withstand God

when He comes forth against you in the majesty of His righteous wrath? Already, when He has but touched you, He has made every bone and nerve in your body to tremble. You know how near to the gate of death He has brought you—do you imagine that when He comes out against you in His might, you will be a match for Him?

There are three things you may try to do and I will ask you whether you are prepared to meet God in reference to them. The first will be to justify yourself for remaining His enemy. Are you prepared to do that? When the Lord God says to you, "I created you, I have kept you in being, I have fed you and cared for you until now—why have you not obeyed Me?" When the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, "I loved sinners so much that I died for them—why will you not believe in Me?" And when the Spirit of God says, "I strove with men. Why did you resist Me?" What answer will you give? Will you be able to make it clear that you were perfectly justified in choosing the pleasures of this world rather than yield obedience to God? Will you be able, with all your logic, to make it seem right for you to have lived a wrong life, right to have despised the Law of God and right to have rejected the Gospel of Christ? Come, Man, Woman—set your wits to work and see whether you can expect, in the Great Assize which will soon be held, to be able to justify yourself before the bar of God! Prepare, in that way, to meet your God.

Or, secondly, do you expect to be able to resist Him? Come, you brave men, gird on your armor and come out to battle against the Lord God Almighty! Better let the thorns contend against the fire which licks them up with its flaming tongue! Better let the wax contend against the furnace heat which makes it run like water than let the sinner try to contend against the Omnipotent God! His faintest breath would suffice to scatter the ungodly and drive them like chaff before the wind. Can you stand up against the Most High, O you that despise and forget Him? Did Pharaoh triumph over Jehovah at the Red Sea? Did Sennacherib overthrow the God of Israel on that dreadful night when his vast host was cast into a deep sleep from which there was no awakening? No—and you cannot successfully stand up against God! But if you mean to fight with Him, count the cost, understand what it means and so prepare to meet your God.

There is a third course open to you and that is, are you able to endure what He can lay upon you? I have read of a prisoner insulting the judge by whom he had been sentenced by telling him that the punishment he had awarded was a mere trifle! Can you say this to God? O unconverted men, will you be able to endure the terror of His ire in that day when He comes forth against you! Oh, no! The very joints of your body shall be loosed in that day. Your hair shall stand erect with horror! That bold spirit of yours shall despair and all you bravado with which you said, "There is no God," shall have departed from you and you will crouch, tremble, weep and wail in His Presence! You say today, "There is no Hell," but you will not say that when you get there! You defy God today, but you will not defy Him in the day when He reveals Himself to you, for

then you will cry to the mountains to fall upon you to hide you from His angry face! O Sirs, the challenge of the living God is this—if you will not yield to Him, be prepared to fight the quarrel out with Him! If you will not submit to His mercy, if you cannot justify yourselves for your wrongdoing, then take up your arms and contend with Him, or harden yourselves like adamant and prepare to endure the fierceness of His wrath! But neither of these things can you do, so let that terrible challenge bring you to your knees and cause you to—

"Seek His Grace
Whose wrath you cannot bear."

So, in the second place, I will use the text *as an invitation.* And the note at once changes from the thunders of Sinai to the still small voice of Calvary—"Prepare to meet your God." Have you heard these tidings, ungodly men? God is coming out against you, armed with His dreadful two-edged sword—that very sword of Infinite Justice with which He smote His only-begotten Son in that day when He stood as the Substitute for sinners! What can you do? Will you run away from Him? To whom or where can you run? The utmost ends of the earth are in His hands! Should you fly to the far-distant seas, He will arrest you there. Should you plunge into the thickest shades of darkness, His eyes will still behold you—

"Lord, where shall guilty souls retire,
Forgotten and unknown?
In Hell they meet Your dreadful fire,
In Heaven Your glorious Throne.
If winged with beams of morning light
I fly beyond the West,
Your hand, which must support my flight,
Would soon betray my rest.
If o'er my sins I think to draw
The curtains of the night,
Those flaming eyes that guard Your Law
Would turn the shades to light.
The beams of noon, the midnight hour,
Are both alike to Thee—
Oh, may I never provoke that power
From which I cannot flee!"

God is coming forth to meet you and there is no way for you to escape from Him! Will you stay where you are? Then He will soon overtake you and when He does, then shall come your terrible end. Your wisdom is to give heed to the advice of the text and go meet Him! You cannot escape if you remain where you are, so go meet Him! "How?" you say. Well, go to meet Him thus—with humble confessions and petitions on your lips and with ropes on your necks, adjudging yourselves worthy of death and yielding yourselves up entirely into the Lord's hands. Confess that you deserve any punishment that He pleases to put upon you. It is thus that a rebellious subject should meet his King—confessing guilt, praying for mercy, pleading for forgiveness, asking for Grace. Thus David met his God. Read the 51st Psalm, note how he prayed and go and do likewise. You must also go with repentance in your hearts. The sins you have loved in the past must be hated and forsaken. You must go to God

abhorring yourselves and making a full surrender of your souls to Him. Yield yourselves thus to Him and do it at once, seeing that since you have rebelled against Him, His Justice can seize you at any moment—and execute upon you His hot displeasure!

But let me tell you that you have a stern task before you if you are to prepare yourselves in this fashion to meet your God—a task which you will find impossible to perform in your own strength! Our rebellious heart will not readily yield. Our stubborn spirit will not easily bow. Our pride will not let us confess our sin. The dumb devil within us will not permit us to pray. I will tell you what to do. Go to God, just as you are, in the Mediator's name, or go first to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, give me repentance. Give me faith, give me hatred of sin, give me a yielding spirit, give me a heart of flesh, give me a pliant mind." And when you have thus yielded yourself up to Jesus, you are prepared to meet God, for the place where God meets sinners is at the Cross of Christ and it is the only place where it is safe for a sinner to attempt to meet his God! If, then, you would be prepared to meet your God, go to that Jesus who met His Father on your behalf and who, as the result of that terrible meeting, died for your sins, if you are truly trusting Him. Go to Christ and He will wash you in His precious blood and clothe you in His spotless robe of righteousness! Go to Christ and He will breathe the perfume of His merits over you and then, when you meet God, He will not merely see in you a sinner, but a saved sinner! He will smell the fragrant odor of the garments of His Son which will have such a sweet savor to Him that you will be acceptable to Him for Christ's sake! There is no other way to God than this. How I wish that every unconverted person here would heed this message and obey it—"Prepare to meet your God." Go and meet Him in the way I have pointed out to you—go and meet Him this very hour.

"Where shall I go to meet God?" asks one. Well, meet Him just where you are. Trust Jesus and yield yourself to God and the great transaction is done. Or get away into some quiet corner and pour out your grief before the Lord and ask Him, for Jesus' sake, to meet with you that you may be reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.

It is scarcely a week ago since our good Sister, Mrs. Bartlett, fell asleep, and I do not know of anything that would so well keep her in our memories—especially in the memories of those of you who have often heard her loving invitations, but have not yielded to them, as for me to speak on her behalf, as well as on my Lord's behalf, and say to you, "Come and meet the Lord! Come and meet Him now, prepared to meet Him through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord." Happy day, happy day, would it be if many were led by the gracious Spirit to meet with God now! I remember well the time when I first met Him thus. I thought that I was a lost soul. I judged myself to be upon the brink of Hell. I had no merit and no native goodness to bring me to God—I was a mass of corruption and sin, but—

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad"—

and in Jesus I met my God and, meeting God, my soul was set at liberty! And tonight my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior! The door that was open to me is open to you, my Friend, so enter it, and enter it now! May the Holy Spirit graciously enable you to come!

And, lastly, if the invitation of this text is not accepted, it will soon be heard *as a summons*. I am not the officer to bring the summons to you. I have no authority to do that. I am sent to invite you to meet your God and I have done that. But there will come a day, my Friends, when the authorized officer will deliver this message to you, "Prepare to meet your God." You will be sitting at the work-table, young woman, and you will feel a strange pain in your side and you will ask yourself, "What is this?" It will be a message saying to you, "Get you home to your bed, for, thus says the Lord, 'from that bed you shall come down no more till you are carried down in your coffin.' 'Prepare to meet your God.'" That message will come to you, also, my aged Friend, before very long. You have almost completed the full period of your life and, very soon, you must retire to your room and sit still and wait, for you also must prepare to meet your God. This summons may come to me as I stand here, or to you as you sit there—it may come to the strongest young man or young woman among us. Even while we are at this service, the dart of death may reach any one of us!

What a flurry some people are in when that summons comes to them, "Prepare to meet your God!" As a rule, they have not the hardihood to put it aside. A few do, but many say, "Send for the minister, call in some praying friends and let us prepare to meet our God." They go about that solemn business in quite the wrong fashion! Their harvest is past, their summer is ended and they are not saved and, even now, they do not go the right way to be saved—they are relying upon men! They are relying upon prayers, for they have not yet learned to look alone to Jesus! I do not know any more dreary work than to be called, sometimes at dead of night, to see a dying man or woman who has lived a careless, godless life. I often feel as if it would be better to refuse to go, for, when one gets there, frequently the person is insensible and what their friends imagine we, who are ministers, can do with insensible people, is more than I can tell. Why, we cannot do much with you while you have your senses! Even while you are sitting here, much that we say glides off you like rain off the roof of your house. What can you hope that we can say to you when you are either unconscious, or distracted with pain—with your head aching and your mind confused—and your soul amazed by the near prospect of the world to come?

God's Grace can work miracles, I know, but I fear that this miracle is seldom worked—that the man who has neglected all his life to prepare to meet his God should be able to light his lamp all of a sudden—and go forth to meet the King just when the trumpet voice is sounding through the streets, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him." For the most part, there is a piteous appeal, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," but that we cannot do. And, while they go to buy for

themselves, the Bridegroom comes—and when they clamor for admittance at the closed door, the answer is, "Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now." The old Rabbis used to say that every man should prepare to die one day before his death-day and, since he did not know whether he might not die tomorrow, the wisest plan was for him to prepare today. And so it is. Through this assembly, then, let this Truth of God run—that there will come a summons to death and that summons will run thus, "Prepare to meet your God."

But when you die, in an instant your soul will be before the bar of God. There will be held what I may call the petty sessions before the Last Grand Assize, but at that session your soul will stand alone and God will bid you go to the house of detention where you must wait till your body shall rise to be united with your soul! When the day of Resurrection arises, louder than ten thousand thunders will ring out the blast of the archangel's trumpet, startling Heaven and earth, and echoing over land and sea, "Awake you dead, and come to judgment!" Then shall the cemeteries heave and toss like seas when lashed into fury by the tempest! Then shall the battlefields of earth grow rich with living men as the harvest field is rich when the reaper goes forth with his sickle! Then shall earth, from her teeming womb, yield the unnumbered myriads that have slept within her bosom—and they shall stand, covering earth and sea, a countless multitude like the leaves of the forest or the sands of the seashore! Then again shall the trumpet sound o'er all the gathered throng, "Prepare to meet your God!" And HE shall come, the Man, Christ Jesus, whom they would not have to be their God and King and, sitting on the Great White Throne, with all nations before Him, "He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." And "the books" shall be opened and whoever, of all our fellow creatures and of ourselves, also, shall not be found written in the Book of Life shall be cast into the Lake of Fire!

O Sirs, O Sirs, in the name of the living God, I ask you—Are you prepared for that great day? Some of us can say, with humble boldness, "Yes, we are prepared for it." I hope that many here can truthfully say, with Count Zinzendorf—

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress!
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
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."

But if you have not been absolved by the blood of Jesus, how can you stand there? The very light of His Countenance would scare you into abject terror! And, if His face alarms you, what will His voice do when He says, "Depart, you cursed"? And what will His hand do when He grasps His rod of iron and breaks you in pieces like a potter's wheel? Beware, you that forget God, lest you loiter and linger and procrastinate until that last trumpet summons sounds, "Prepare to meet your God." May He

graciously grant that you may be prepared now, instead of standing unprepared in that dread day!—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there!"

Crouch at His feet! Bow down before those dear feet that were nailed to the Cross! Look up to the hands that still bear the nail prints! Gaze upon the face that once was stained with spittle, but now shines beyond the light of the sun! Look upward to that brow which once was crowned with thorns! Hide yourself in that cleft in His side where the spear made an open way to the heart of Jesus! In a sentence, rest in His atoning Sacrifice, for there is nothing else in which you can rest! May the Lord enable you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
AMOS 5:4-27.

Verse 4. *For thus says the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek you Me, and you shall live.* And that is just the message of God to professing Christians now—"Seek you Me." Get away from your mere ceremonies, from trusting in your outward performances—and get to God Himself. Get beyond your fellow worshippers and your ministers, beyond your sanctuaries and your supposed holy places—and get in spirit and in truth to God Himself! "Seek you Me, and you shall live."

5. *But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal and pass not to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nothing.* These were the places where the calves and other idols were set up for the worship of God by means of visible symbols. That was the Romanism of that day. Pure spiritual worship was ordained by God, but that was not enough for the idolatrous Israelites. They must set up the image of an ox, the emblem of power—not that they would worship the ox, they said, but that they might worship the God of Power through that symbol. And that is the plea of Papists today—"We do not worship that *cross*. We do not worship that *image*. These things help us! They are emblems." But they are absolutely forbidden by God—"You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them." The First Commandment forbids us to have any other God than Jehovah. The Second forbids us to worship Him through any emblem or symbol whatever.

6, 7. *Seek the LORD, and you shall live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el. You who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth.* Here you have another great Truth of God—that in order to seek God aright, we must turn away from sin. All the Ritualism in the world will not save us, or be acceptable to God! There must be purity of life and

holiness of character. Justice must be done between man and man, and we must seek to be right before the righteous and holy God.

8. *Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion.* The Creator of the spring-bringing Pleiades and of the winter-bringing Orion.

8, 9. *And turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is His name that strengthens the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.* The God of the weak, the Defender of the oppressed! You that oppress the poor and tread down the people, seek you Him and wash your hands from the stains of your past injustice!

10. *They hate him that rebukes in the gate, and they abhor him that speaks uprightly.* There is still a generation that cannot bear to be told of its faults—and it shows its venom against everything that is right.

11. *Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and you take from him burdens of wheat: you have built houses of hewn stone but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine of them.* God has often shown how He can overthrow those who oppress the poor!

12-17. *For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their rights. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that you may live: and so the LORD, the God of Hosts, shall be with you, as you have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of Hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. Therefore the LORD, the God of Hosts, the Lord says thus, Wailing shall be in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas, alas, and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skillful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through you, says the LORD.* National sins bring down national judgments and when God grows angry against the people, He makes the places of their feasting, the vineyards where their choicest vines grow, to become the places of their sorrow, so that wailing and distress are heard on all sides. Oh, that nations knew the day of their visitation and would do justly! Then would such judgments be averted.

18. *Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.* "The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light," for such as you impenitent, unjust, graceless sinners. "The day of the Lord" will not bring blessings to you! It will be—

19. *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.* From bad to worse do they go who think to escape from present misery by plunging into the Presence of God. The suicide is, of all fools, the greatest, for he goes before God with his own indictments. No, with his own sentence in his hand. He needs no trial—he has condemned himself!

20-22. *Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it. I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept these: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.* See how God speaks about public worship and formal sacrifices when the heart is not right with Him? When the moral conduct of the offerer is wrong, the Lord will not accept his offering.

23, 24. *Take you away from Me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.* This is what God asks for—righteousness, not sweet music! Have they not, at this very day, turned what were once houses of prayer into music halls, set up their idols in our parish churches and adorned their priests with every kind of Babylonian garment which they could find at Rome, the mystical Babylon? Are they not turning this nation back again to that accursed Popery, the yoke of which our fathers could not bear? Therefore, the Lord is angry with this land! There are storm clouds gathering over it because it is not sufficiently stirred with indignation against those idolatrous men who are again seeking to come to the front among us!

25. *Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?* "Did you worship Me? Did you offer sacrifices to Me?" "No," said God, "you did not."

26, 27. *But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is The God of Hosts.* Oh, for pure worship! Oh, for pure living! Oh, for hearts that spiritually worship the Lord, for Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him." "But unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—364, 529
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TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

RESISTANCE TO SALVATION
NO. 2966

A SERMON
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"What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"
Mark 5:7.

WHEREVER Jesus comes, there is a commotion. No sooner does He set His foot on the shore at Gadara than He is at once assailed by the powers of darkness! And it is not long before the whole population of the district is affected by His Presence. However uninfluential other people may be, Jesus is never so. He is always either, "the savor of death unto death" or, "the savor of life unto life." He is never a savorless Christ! Virtue is always going out of Him and that virtue stirs up the opposition of evildoers so that, straightaway, they come forth to fight against Him.

You remember that when Paul and Silas preached at Thessalonica, the unbelieving Jews cried out, "These that have turned the world upside down are come here also!" Was that an amazing thing? No, rather was it not exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ had prophesied when He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword"? He said that because of Him, there would be division even in families, so that a man would be at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a man's foes would be those of his own household! Christ must make a stir wherever He comes and His Gospel must cause a commotion wherever it is preached. Stagnation is inconsistent with life. Death-like slumber is the condition of those who are dead in sin, but to be awakened to action is the sure consequence of the Gospel coming with power to anyone!

Yet Jesus Christ's actions were, as a rule, very quiet and, on this occasion, He merely landed at Gadara. He had no trumpeters to herald His arrival and no squadron of cavalry to escort Him. In fulfillment of the ancient prophecy, He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. He was so gentle that a bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench. Yet, wherever He went, there was always a stir. Well, we might have expected that it would be so—the analogies of Nature would teach us to look for that. When the morning sun arises, without sound of drum, or tramp of armed men, straightway it causes confusion among the doers of darkness! With a roar the lion goes back to his den and the wolf and the hyena flee before the eyes of light. I daresay, too, that the owl and the bat have a very strong aversion to the rising of the sun. If they could speak their minds, they would hoot or hiss out their opinions which would probably be

found to be very much opposed to anything like daylight and noontide glory! "Oh, if all the passing hours could be one long night," says the owl, "then I could continually seek my prey. But these long summer days are obnoxious to me." And the bat would gladly pursue his tireless flight, but the light of the sun is too much for him, so he must get back to his hiding place till again the evening shades prevail. But the sunlight is only objectionable to creatures that delight in darkness—and so it happened that Christ's landing at Gadara was like the sun rising upon the thick darkness in which that poor tortured demoniac was dwelling—and like the sun rising upon the dense darkness of ignorance and sin in which the swine-keeping Gadarenes were dwelling! So there was quite certain to be a stir, and a commotion, and an opposition!

I trust that the Lord Jesus Christ will be with us here in the preaching of His Gospel. And if so, there will be a stir here! And if some opposition should be awakened, we shall not wonder at it. And if others should find their opposition to the Truth of God disarmed by the power and Grace of the Holy Spirit, we shall not marvel at that, for it is God's habit thus to overcome His adversaries!

I. The first point that I shall speak upon in connection with the demoniac's question is this—THE DEVIL DREADS ALL CONTACT WITH CHRIST, for he moved the poor man to cry out, with a loud voice, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"

The devil dreads all contact with Christ and he does so because, first, *Christ's Nature is so contrary to his own*. "Can two walk together, except they are agreed?" And these two, so far from being agreed, are absolutely opposed to each other in every respect. There is a very ancient warfare between them—a warfare which, as far as this world is concerned, was proclaimed in the Garden of Eden when God said to the serpent, "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." Christ loves light, Satan loves darkness. Christ works life, Satan works death. Christ is Love, Satan is hate. Christ is Goodness, Satan is evil. Christ is Truth, Satan is falsehood. Christ is God and Satan labors to supplant God—to set himself up for an antichrist, exalting himself above all that is called God. It is not possible that those two should dwell together in the same universe without continually coming to hand-to-hand conflicts. They are as much opposed to each other as water is to fire and, therefore, Satan cannot endure the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Moreover, in the next place, *Satan is well aware that the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world is not for his good*. He has no share in Christ's Incarnation, nor in His atoning Sacrifice. This is one of the amazing results of the Election of Grace. Those persons who stumble at the election of some men rather than others ought equally to stumble at the fact that Christ did not redeem the fallen angels, but only fallen men—for why God chose to save men and not to save angels, who among us can tell? The only answer I know to that question is this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." It appears to me to be an

instance of pure Sovereignty in harmony with the Lord's own declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Paul tells us that Christ took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham. He passed by the seraph when he had fallen into sin. He passed by that mighty spirit, Satan, when he had fallen—and took up men. One naturally thinks that if any ruin should be restored, it should be the choicest of buildings and that if any fallen being is to be restored, it should be the one with the most colossal intellect that God ever made—but it was not so. The great and mighty angels were passed by and we, who are but worms of the dust, were looked upon with eyes of favor and love! And Satan, knowing this, and being jealous of the love which lights upon men, cannot endure the Presence of Christ.

Moreover, Satan knows that not only is there nothing for his good in the mission of Christ, but *he understands that the whole drift of Christ's mission is against him*. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." What horrible work the devil has already done in the world! Behold how the Garden of Eden is withered, blighted and burned into a desert. See the fertile earth bringing forth thorns and thistles and see man, who was made in the image of God, reduced to the position of a toiling sinner, earning his bread by the sweat of his face! See war, famine, pestilence and all kinds of evil and woe thickly spread over the whole earth! And remember that all this has come as the result of that one disobedience into which man was led by the temptation of the Evil One. But the Evil One has little room to glory in the mischief that he has worked, for Christ has come to undo it! He has come to lift man up and, in His own Person, He has lifted him up and made him to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." In the Person of the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, man is lifted up from all the sin into which he fell through the first Adam. And, as to this poor world, itself, sin-blighted as it now is, it travails in anticipation of the new birth which yet awaits it. And the day shall yet dawn when new heavens and a new earth shall prove how completely Christ has cancelled the curse and made the earth fragrant with blessings! It is for this reason that Satan hates the Presence of Christ because Christ is to destroy his evil work and, therefore, he dreads that Christ should come near to him.

The whole wish of this particular legion of devils was concentrated into the one request that they might be left alone—and Satan wishes to be left alone—to be allowed to work his evil will and to do whatever he pleases. He did not, at that time, want to come into conflict with Christ. He did not wish that Christ should be assailed, nor did he have any hope that Christ might be caused to suffer any sort of defeat—he was too cowardly to aspire to any such thing as that! That had been his dream, in earlier days, when he had met Him in the wildness, but now he only asked to be left alone—just to be allowed to skulk off and hide and keep himself out

of Christ's notice. That is very much what the devil wants nowadays when Christ's power is manifestly working in His Church! In past times the devil has moved his minions to say, "We will overthrow the Gospel! With sword and stake, and rack, and dungeon we will destroy the people of God!" But when the Lord has, in His gracious Providence, given peace to the persecuted and, by His Spirit has given power to the preaching of the Gospel, then the devil whines out that he only wants to be left alone! Just leave him alone and all things will go on comfortably and pleasantly. He would have a kind of truce proclaimed between himself and Christ—he wants a little respite and desires to be left alone.

One reason for this is that *he knows his own powerlessness in the Presence of Christ*. In the presence of man, Satan is great and strong, and crafty. But in the Presence of the Christ of God, he shrinks into utter insignificance. He knows that he cannot resist even a word from Christ's lips, or a glance from His eyes, so he says, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?" The question appears as if Satan pleaded with Christ not to put forth His power—not to touch him, but just to leave him alone as too insignificant to be noticed! Such is the craft of Satan, that he will whine like a whipped cur and crouch at the great Master's feet, and look up to His face, and entreat to be left alone, for he knows well enough the power of the Son of God! On a later occasion, one of Satan's imps said, "Jesus I know," and there was such power in that name that the evil spirit added, "and Paul I know." Paul was only a humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet the devil knew him and linked his name with his Master's! Yes, the name of Jesus has wondrous power over all the hosts of Hell! So, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be discomfited nor dismayed by all the armies of Satan, but let us with holy courage contend against all the powers of evil, for we shall be more than conquerors over them through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

Satan also fears the Presence of Christ *because he dreads the doom which awaits him*. Those fallen spirits at Gadara were afraid that they were about to begin to endure the dismal fate which, certainly, will be theirs, by-and-by. There will come a day when the arch-traitor and all the multitudes of fallen spirits whom he dragged down with him from Heaven shall have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The saints of God will take part in that judgment, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" And then the devil shall receive his final sentence and be forever banished to Hell. There he will be bound, no more to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none—no more to tempt and beguile the sons of men by putting on the garb of an angel of light—no more to intrude into the assemblies where the sons of God come before the Lord—no more to dare to accuse the brethren—no more to be able to molest the children of God and disturb their devotions—no more to be able to lay traps for the ensnaring of the feet of God's elect—no more to dress out his antichrists and to work with his puppets, the Pope of Rome and the false prophet, Mohammed—no longer able to beguile the multitude and lead them

astray—no longer able to go through Christ's fields by night and to sow his tares in the midst of the good wheat—but kept in prison, forever bound in chains, to continue as an eternal and awful evidence of the wrath of God against transgression! It is no wonder that in anticipation of his ultimate fate, in Hell, the very shadow of the Lord Jesus, as it falls upon him, makes him tremble! And, although he cannot repent and cannot turn from the evil in which his heart indulges, yet is he cowed as he feels how awful goodness is and how majestic is the supremacy of Christ over all who oppose His almighty will! It is for this reason that Satan so dreads to have Christ come near to him, that he says, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, that You torment me not."

II. There will, perhaps, be more practical teaching in the second part of my subject which is this—WHEN SATAN GETS MEN INTO HIS POWER, HE ALSO LEADS THEM TO OPPOSE THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THEM.

When they submit to Satan's sway, they cry out, in various ways, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?" I wonder whether there are any now in this house who are saying that in their hearts, if not with their voices. They do not oppose Christ *actively.* They do not persecute His followers. They would let everybody do and think just what he pleases, but they do not want religion for themselves and, above all, they do not want the religion of Jesus Christ. All they want is to be left alone, and the reasons for that desire—which, perhaps, they would not state in words, but which are really in their hearts—are such as I will try to set before you.

First, *conscience is feared by them.* They have not quite lost all knowledge of right and wrong and, sometimes, Mr. Conscience, though drugged with Satanic opiates and very hoarse with the cold that he has taken in this sinful world, does cry out at such a rate that they cannot sleep at night and they cannot feel comfortable by day. So they say to themselves, "If we begin to think of Jesus and His Gospel, this conscience of ours will grow still more troublesome and we shall not have any peace or enjoyment at all. Even now we cannot indulge in our cups and our merry dances as we used to do. And we cannot go with our former jolly companions. If our conscience should once become thoroughly alive and active, it would follow us at our heels like a dog and we should not know how to get away from it. We do not want to have that state of things—we just want to be left alone." So they carefully avoid attending a place of worship where there is likely to be anything to trouble and alarm their conscience. They do not object to go to a sort of Sunday music hall, or to a place where there is very fine oratorical preaching where they can get an intellectual treat. But they do not want Jesus Christ and His Gospel. They try to keep clear of preaching that is plain and outspoken against sin and if, perchance, they happen to hear a sermon which might come home to their conscience, they are all the

while planning how they can keep out of its way! They even think how applicable it may be to other people, but they avoid, as much as they can, any idea that it is applicable to themselves, for they do not want conscience to the disturbed. They say, "Hush, Conscience, hush! Lie still and slumber. Do not cry out at such a rate—we shall get all right, by-and-by, and no doubt everything will be squared up at the last. But, for the present, keep quiet, Conscience, and do not trouble me, for I do not want to think." There are some men who seem as if they would not mind six months imprisonment if, thereby, they could escape six months thinking about their character and their state before God! May the Holy Spirit graciously save all of us from getting into that terrible condition! That is one reason why men cry out, as this demoniac did, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"—because conscience is feared by them.

Then, next, *change is dreaded by them.* They are content to remain as they are. In certain stages of a sinner's life he feels as if he does not want to be anything but just what he is. He has succeeded in business, he is merry of heart, he is enjoying himself. No doubt there is a worm at the root of all his self-satisfaction, but he does not want to think about that worm. The tree looks all right—why do you want to interfere with it? The apple is beautiful, look at its fair rosy cheeks—suppose there *is* a maggot in the very core that will destroy it—why do you not let us look at the apple as long as we can be pleased with it? People who talk like that have built a very pretty house, but it is all cardboard—nothing more! But then, see how nicely it is painted and how very beautiful it looks! It is true that the first storm that arises will destroy it, but, possibly, there will not come a storm just yet, so why not let us be easy while we can? There are, alas, many of those easy-going souls. I pity the man who never has any troubles. I believe that there are some people who never will have the heartache till they have known what it is to be hungry almost to starvation. It was so with that poor prodigal—he never thought of going back to his father till, "he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: but no man gave any unto him." Poverty, sickness, bereavement and sorrow of heart are often God's angels that come to smite men on the side and wake them up, as the angel awoke sleeping Peter and delivered him from prison, where he was to have been led forth to die on the morrow! Some of you ought to thank God that He does not let you have a very easy or merry time. He does not let you settle on your lees, but keeps on emptying you from vessel to vessel. The reason for this is that He has designs of love for you and He means that you never should rest till you rest in Him! But it is often because of the pride which comes of fullness of bread and the fatness of heart which grows out of worldly prosperity that many a man says to the Lord Jesus Christ, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"

And then, if you try to probe such people a little deeper and begin to talk to them about death and judgment, they probably turn upon you

with great indignation, for *they claim the right to be left alone*. "Surely," they say, "this is a free country, so we ought to be left alone and not to interfered with." You will hear them say concerning a certain preacher, "Why does not that man preach his own religion and leave other people alone?" Perhaps one of them says, "I liked that sermon very well, on the whole, but I did not like that part of it in which the minister attacked such-and-such an error, as he called it. Why cannot he leave other people alone?" Yes, that is the old cry, "Leave us alone! Leave us alone!" If you will only let the devil alone, the devil will let you alone—but if you once attack him, he will be certain to attack you! But just think for a moment what this foolish sinner claims—he claims the right to live in blindness! You who can see must not tell him that he is blind! If you do so, he says you are infringing his rights. He says that he has a right to lie in prison if he chooses to do so! And if you come and hammer at the door, or shout to him through the iron bars that there has come One who can let loose the captives, he complains that you are disturbing him!

Here is a man on the verge of destruction, asleep on the edge of a precipice! If you wake him, he tells you that he has a right to sleep there if he likes and that he does not want you to awaken him in that rough way and talk to him about his imminent danger! Here is another man lying down on the railway track and the engine and train are coming along that line. If you try to move him, he says that he has a right to lie there if he likes. What is it to you if the engine goes right over his body and cuts him in pieces? You cry to him, "Madman, escape for your life! The engine will be on you directly." If he does get up, he abuses you and says, "Mind your own business! You go your way and leave me alone." That is the style in which sinners talk when they claim the right to be left alone. But everybody who has any sense knows that such talk is the language of a fool, for a man has not the right to be damned! He has not the right to destroy himself eternally. Our law very properly withholds from a man the right to commit suicide—if he is caught in the act of attempting to take his own life, he is punishable as a criminal. The act of suicide is a grave offense against the Laws of God and man, and no man has the right to damn his own soul and so to commit spiritual suicide. So we mean to interfere, by God's help, with such a foolish and wicked man—and cry to him to escape from the wrath to come and, in doing so, we are only obeying the highest instinct of Nature—and the Law of Love, which is the Law of God.

What a blessing it is, dear Friends, that although some of us were once of that way of thinking, our Lord Jesus Christ would not leave us alone! We were sheep away on the mountains and we did not want the Good Shepherd, but He came after us! And even when we saw Him coming, we wandered further and further away from Him, yet He would not let us wander away from Him altogether. He followed us in all our devious tracks and, at last He found us and laid us on His shoulders, rejoicing—and carried us back to the fold where He still watches over us!

Once again, some of these people who entreat Christ to leave them alone *do so because they fear that He will torment them.* The demoniac at Gadara said to Christ, "I implore You by God that You torment me not." Many people seem to think that it is a very sorrowful thing to be a Christian, that believers in Christ are a miserable, unhappy lot of folk who never enjoy themselves. Well, I must admit that I do know some little communities of people who reckon themselves the very pick of Christians and who meet together on a Sunday to have a comfortable groan together, but I do not think that the bulk of us who worship in this place could be truthfully charged with anything like that! We serve a happy God and we believe in a joyous Gospel—and the love of Christ in our hearts has made us anticipate many of the joys of Heaven even while we are here on earth! "The peace of God, which passes all understanding," keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And "the joy of the Lord is our strength." Perhaps if we were to let the ungodly know more about this joy and peace, they would throw down the weapons of their rebellion and say, "We did not know that the religion of Jesus Christ was so blessed as this! We did not know that there was such music as this in the great Father's House. We did not know that there was a fatted calf waiting to be killed for us and that the whole household would begin to be merry over us! Now that we know what joy there is, we will enter and go no more out forever." O beloved Friends, if you have never believed that there is joy in coming near to God through Jesus Christ, His Son, believe it now! May the Holy Spirit graciously draw you to Him, so that you may no longer ask, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"

III. Now I turn to the third part of the subject. We have seen what the devil's views concerning Christ's Presence are and how he makes sinners share those views. Now, thirdly, I want to show you that SANE MEN MAY TAKE THE DEMONIAC'S QUESTION AND ANSWER IT. "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"

First, *what have I, whoever I may be, inevitably to do with You?* This is a question which concerns every person here. Suppose, my dear Hearer, that you are a stranger to these things of which I have been speaking and that you only came in here tonight by what you call, "chance"? I beg you to give me your earnest attention, for, whether you believe in Jesus Christ or not, you cannot escape from having some connection with Him, because, first of all, He has come into the world to save sinners and that good news has been made known to you! And everyone who hears that Gospel message and refuses to believe it, is responsible to God for that rejection!

Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ said concerning those cities in which His mighty works had been worked, that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than it would be for Capernaum and Bethsaida where He had so often been. Christ has been near to you and you have heard His Gospel which many poor heathens have not heard. Now that you have heard the Gospel—the

Gospel of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ—His blood will cry out against you, as the blood of Abel cried out against Cain, if it is not applied to you to cleanse you from sin! You cannot escape from the Lord Jesus Christ! You are caught in the meshes of the great net which He has cast over all those who have heard the Gospel! "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." If you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you resolve not to be saved by Him, but to remain in the condition in which you now are, that is, "condemned already." If you believe not in Christ you do despite to Him! You bring dishonor upon His love and His blood! You cannot get away from that connection with Christ.

There is another connection between you and Christ which you cannot get away from, for there is a sense in which you belong to Christ whether you believe in Him or not. In one of the last prayers He offered before His death, He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You: as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." For the special purposes of His Grace to His own elect, Christ has received from His Father power over the whole human race! And it is in this sense that it is said "that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man," for, although the full saving results of His death will come only to His chosen and redeemed people, "even to them that believe on His name," yet that wondrous work of His upon the Cross has a relation to all the sons of men! All mankind is put under His mediatorial government, "for the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son." You cannot, therefore, get away from some connection with Christ even though you refuse to believe in Him. So I put the definite question to you—Will you receive Him, or will you reject Him? Will you be His subject, or will you be His foe? The marriage supper is spread and you are bid to come to it! You are not in the position of those who never were bid, so beware lest this sentience should be applied to you, "I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper." If you refuse to accept the great King's invitation, He will declare that you insulted Him by doing so—and on your own head shall rest all the consequences of your refusal!

Remember, too, that all here, whether they receive Christ or reject Him, will have to stand before His Judgment Seat. The day comes when not only the sheep, but the goats shall be gathered before Him, so you must all be there. There is no way of escape for any of you! It used to be said of the whole world, under the Roman Empire, that it was one great prison for any man who had offended Caesar, for, wherever he might go, the officers of Caesar could follow him and arrest him. And, in a similar sense, the whole universe is, to an ungodly spirit, but one great house of detention where that spirit is awaiting the Last Dread Assize. In that day

the ungodly shall know that they cannot escape from Christ! Oh, that they would be wise enough not to want to escape from Him, but would rather run to His open arms and find salvation there!

It is much more sweet to turn to the other form of the question, *What connection is there between me and Christ by way of Grace?* I believe my text might be read in two ways and that in either sense it would be equally true to the original, for the Greek runs something like this, "What to me, to You?" And that may mean, "What have You to do with me?" Or, "What have I to do with You?"

Put it the first way, "What have You to do with me?" O my blessed Savior, what have You to do with me? Why, since I have believed on You, You have had everything to do with me! And I now know that even before I believed in You, You had everything to do with me! Did You not choose me before the earth was created? Did not Your Father give me to You? Did You not enter into Covenant with Him on my behalf? Did You not, in the fullness of time, redeem me with Your precious blood? Did You not call me by Your Grace and renew me by Your Holy Spirit, and intercede for me in my times of temptation and upheld me in my hours of trials? What have You to do with me, dear Savior? If there is anything good in me, You have put it there! If anything evil has been eradicated or weakened, You have done it! What have You to do with me? Why, You have had everything to do with me!

And, then, what have I to do with You? Why, I have everything to do with You! I have to receive my life from You, my food from You, my drink from You! I have to receive my cleansing from You, my keeping from You and everything else that I need in time or in eternity! You are now my Example and You are forever to be my exceedingly great Reward. What have I to do with You? I find in You my All-in-All. I am to sit at Your feet and learn of You. Or I am to wash Your feet with my tears. What have I to do with You? I am to serve You all my days, glad to be Your servant, and then I am to be forever with You where You are, that I may behold Your Glory! "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?" You have taken me to be Your spouse, for You are married to me and You will bring me to the wedding feast before long!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ I am tempted to go on with this wondrous theme. What a subject it is! Yet I think you can work it out better in your private meditations than I can in this public assembly. The connection between us and Christ is very near, and very dear, and very strong—blessed be His holy name! We do not want to snap that connection, nor will it ever be snapped, for nothing in the whole universe "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

IV. I can only refer very briefly to my last point which is this. WHEN MEN ARE BLESSED BY JESUS, THEY CHANGE THEIR MINDS WONDERFULLY WITH REGARD TO HIM.

Can you picture to yourself the change between that poor demoniac, as he was when he first spoke to Christ and the same man when he was

clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus? If I were able to give you a graphic sketch of that man in all the agony of his delirium, you would be sick at heart as you looked upon the picture. See him there, with unkempt locks, beard all matted and grimy, face covered with filth, eyes starting out of their sockets, limbs twisted with hideous contortions and the whole man a picture of horror! If you have ever had the misery of looking into the face of a man when he was in a delirium, you know what an awful sight it is! How glad you were to get away from that fearful spectacle! But this man had a whole legion of devils within him and must have looked a frightful object! He fell down before Jesus, crying, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"—speaking with all his might in horrible tones which must have seemed terribly sad to all who were near.

But Jesus has said, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." And now look at him! He has been washed, he has put on some garments, though he has not worn any for years, and he sits down at the feet of Jesus, calmly, collectedly. And when he gets up, he falls on his knees to pray! And what is his petition? "Lord, let me be with You. Do not send me away from You. You have done so much for me, let me always abide with You. Let me loose the laces of Your shoes. Let me wash Your feet. Let me be the servant of the servants of my Lord. Let me do what You will, only let me stay with You." Is not that a wonderful change? It is just the same with us who have come to Christ! Once we wanted to get away from Him, but now that we know Him, we cannot get near enough to Him! And, sometimes, we even carry that prayer of ours too far, as this man did, because he wanted to be near to the Person of Christ as to the flesh. And, at times I am afraid that our desires concerning going to Heaven savor a little of that spirit. When we are saying—

"Let me be with You, where You are
Your unveiled glory to behold"—

we must remember that, possibly, it is not the right thing for us, or for the Kingdom of God at large, that we should go to Heaven just yet. There is something more to be done by us down here and we ought to be just as happy to have Christ with us in spirit as we would be if we were actually with Him in Heaven. However, this man's petition marks the change which had been worked in him, for, instead of begging Christ to leave him alone, he pleaded that he might always be with Him.

Notice, also, that this man promptly obeys the Lord Jesus Christ in something which must have been very unpleasant to him. In answer to his petition, Christ said, "No, you must not stay with Me. Go home to your friends." That looked, on the face of it—did it not—rather a harsh answer? It seemed such a beautiful desire on the man's part, "Let me abide with You." And it seemed in opposition to the finest instincts of his newly-created nature to send him away. But it was not for this man to judge what was best for him and nor is it for us to judge what is best for us—

"Ours not to reason why,

Ours not to make reply,
Ours but to do and die"—

if so our Lord ordains! We are to do *what* Jesus tells us, *as* Jesus tells us, *because* Jesus tells us! That is what this man did.

And that led, in the last place, to this man's glorifying Christ, for he went home to his friends and told them what great things the Lord had done for him! And then he went throughout all Decapolis—the ten cities—and told, wherever he went, the story of the Savior's power and love! That is just what we will all try to do—and what we *must* do if the love of Christ has been shed abroad within us! We shall begin by telling the story to our friends, the members of our own family. We shall interest them in our account of what we have heard and seen and handled of the Word of Life. And when we have done that, we shall need a wider sphere, and our sphere of service will widen continually, for we shall keep on seeking fresh opportunities to publish the name, fame and Gospel of Jesus to others! "Ah," we shall each one say, "this was not a pleasant theme to me, once, any more than it is to you now. You will think I am intruding upon your privacy now that I begin to talk to you about Christ, but the fact is, I once thought Christ was intruding Himself upon me and I actually said to Him, 'Leave me alone.' But He would not leave me alone. He cast sin out of me and now I cannot leave you poor sinners alone! I must win you to Christ if I can! I must pray you to Christ or I must pray to God for you until you are saved! As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God!"

Thus have I set before you the teaching that I find in this text. May God bless it to you, dear Friends! May His gracious Spirit put into the hearts of His people the prayer that if any sinners want to be left alone, Christ would, in His great mercy, come and deal with them this very hour, casting out the spirit of unbelief and bringing them to trust in Him!" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Amen, and Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—385, 611.

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

THE CHURCH'S PROBATION
NO. 2967

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1905.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

"You, O God, have tested us."
Psalm 66:10.

THE Psalmist, who spoke these words in his song, told forth the experience of the godly in all generations. In the Patriarchal age, when Abraham was called to leave his kindred and go forth from Ur of the Chaldees, he was constrained to sojourn as a stranger among a people that he knew not, told to wait with patience for a son whom God would give him in his old age and, at length, commanded to take that son to the top of a mountain and offer him as a sacrifice! He might well say, "You, O God, have tested us." Isaac could say the same when he tabernacled in the Land of Promise, having not so much as a foot of it that he could call his own except his father's sepulcher. Jacob learned the same stanza when he was tested in Laban's household, when he wrestled with God in Peniel and triumphed over the Angel at Jabbok! This he knew when he went down into Egypt and, dying, blessed the sons of Joseph. All the Patriarchs, as they fell asleep, could say, "You, O God, have tested us." And this was the song of the Church during her sojourn in Egypt when she was lying among the pots—and during her wanderings in the wilderness when she passed through a desert land by a way which she had not traversed before. And this, too, was the voice of the Church under the conduct of Joshua when Israel came through Jordan and began to defy the hosts of the Canaanites—when they drew the sword against mighty adversaries who dwelt in cities fenced with high walls, gates and bars and came forth to battle in chariots that had scythes of iron—"You, O God, have tested us." With such a word as this in their mouths, the judges fell asleep after they had avenged Israel and done mighty deeds for the Lord of Hosts! This David could well say, for he had seen affliction. This the kings who walked in his steps and this the Prophets who spoke in God's name might all have said, "You, O God, have tested us."

And God's dear Son, the Captain of our salvation, was, Himself, tested and tested in all things, too! He was thrust into the hottest part of the glowing coals and tested as you and I have never been tested—tested to such an extent as our heart has not conceived! And among the professed followers of Jesus, all the sons of God are witnesses to this Truth, "You, O God, have tested us"—whether they were tested in dungeons where

they lay victims of damp and mildew, or on racks where every bone was dislocated and every muscle snapped—or at the stake where they mounted in chariots of fire to Heaven, or on the rocks where they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—in all these temptations and trials God tested them! And even to this day, though by less severe methods, yet by other tests, as I shall have to show, the Church has still the same song to sing and each dying saint must still subscribe his name to the long list. Yes, and every bright spirit around the Throne of God, in looking back upon his experience on earth, will have to swell the great chorus, "You, O God, have tested us." There is not an ingot of silver in Heaven's treasury that has not been in the furnace on earth and been purified seven times! There is not a gem of purest serene ray which that Divine Jeweler has not exposed to every sort of test! There is not an atom of gold in the Redeemer's crown which has not been molten among the hottest coals so as to rid it of its alloy! It is universal to every child of God—if you are a servant of the Lord, you must be tested—you shall never enter Heaven unproved! You must be tested in the fire—the test, the assaying must take place upon every one of us. Nor do I think we ought to shun it. Perhaps it may happen that in the feeble words I speak tonight, some reason may be given which shall reconcile your hearts to the sternness of the test and even make you kiss the hand of the Refiner when He puts you into the fire!

I. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU, O GOD, HAVE TESTED IN YOUR PEOPLE?

I think we may answer, *He has tested everything*. If we have anything that has not been tested, it either is to be tested or else it is so bad that it is not worth testing. Everything we have that God has given us will have to be tested. There is not a grain of Grace that will escape the probation—He is sure, in some way or other, to test and exercise it. We have no manna to lay in the cupboard to breed worms—the manna is given us to eat. The Rock that follows us with its refreshing streams flows that we may drink—when we shall cease to thirst, the river will cease to flow—we only have Grace given to us that it may be tested.

I think we can say, looking back upon our lives, those of us who are in Christ Jesus, that *the Lord has tested our sincerity*. Ah, how many put on the harness when we first put it on—and where are they now? In our little Gospel experience, how many have we seen who have turned their backs in the day of battle? Yes, the young knights went out gaily enough to the field—but say nothing about their return! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," how their shields were broken, their lances splintered and their plumes trailed in the mire! When any turn from Zion's way, our best method of using their apostasy is as Cowper used it, for self-examination—

"When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me too?'"

But, up to this time, one way in which God has tested our sincerity has been to keep our leaf green and, through Divine Grace, that sincerity has kept its hold, while some who, in the first flush of religious excitement, promised well for Heaven, afterwards withered and faded. While many who were like the fair blossoms of the spring upon the trees were blown down by the East wind, or fell with a shower on the ground, we have been left, by Divine Grace, to bring forth some little fruit, though not as much as we could desire! O Brothers and Sisters, it is a great mercy when God tests our sincerity, if, notwithstanding the defection of man and the fickleness and instability of our own hearts, we are able to say, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

It is a privilege to have our sincerity tested, but it is one which must be purchased at a sharp cost, for we cannot know our sincerity for God without being put where we are much tempted and troubled. I believe many young people think they have the Grace of God in their hearts, who, if they were really put in temptation's way, would soon discover that it is only a sort of hereditary profession and not the true Grace of God they possess. I have a great suspicion about buying hothouse flowers in the street. All summer long you see people with their barrows with the finest flowers you ever saw, but most of them have been forced to bloom. And if you take them home and put them in your garden, on the first cold day they look pale and begin to droop, for they cannot bear the change of climate because they are forced. So I cannot doubt that there are many who join Christian Churches who have been forced—they have been in the hothouse of godliness in association with the saints—and when they are put away from Christian association, where is their piety? Where is their religion? Some of you, I know, have had to suffer this chilling trial. You have been shut up among blasphemers. You have been made to live among the ungodly and profane, or you have had temptations from the polite and the godless—yet, thanks be to God, you have been enabled to retain your hold on Christ! You can say, with the Psalmist, "You, O God, have tested us." And if you are sincere, mark you, as surely as ever you have true godliness, it must and will be put to the test!

And God has also tested *our vows of fidelity*. Perhaps the fewer vows we make, the better, but when we do make them, how jealous should we be to keep them! What a mass of vows we once made when our blood was hot with the novelty of our new discovery of the beauty of religion! We think we will do we know not what! Our love laughs at impossibilities! We could leap like Curtius into the chasm and sacrifice ourselves for Jesus! Would to God that we were always in that frame of mind! But then we get to promising what we will do if we are put in certain positions—and our promissory notes are not written on stamped paper—they are only written on some common stuff of our own. And we put our signature, but still we dishonor the note when it comes due! We never pay our vows. God did not prompt us to the vow, but our own self-confidence and, therefore, it gets broken. When I look back upon what you and I

promised we would do when we first began the Heavenly warfare, and how little we have really done, I think we can mournfully say, "O Lord, You have tested us." Some people talk about the older Christians as being so dull and so lifeless, but let me put it to yourselves, how much better are you? And I, sometimes, in the early days of my preaching, was known to speak of the cool, freezing lips of some ministers and of the dilatory way in which they discharged their duties—but I have had, in looking at my text, to say of myself, "Lord, You have tested me." And some of these vows that I made—to wit, how I would be the pillar of fire in His cause, and lead the souls of men, and win them to the foot of the Cross—how signally have they been broken, for, "You, O Lord, have tested us." All those fine visions, like potters' vessels when smitten with a rod of iron, have been broken into vile potsherds!

And how the Lord has been pleased, dear Friends, to test *our professions and pretensions to eminence!* Do you recollect—with some of you, it will not be very difficult to look back, certainly not with me—do you remember how you thought, when first you knew the Lord, how different you would be from that nervous Mrs. Much-Afraid? You went to see her when you were first converted and sat down and talked with her. And as you came away, you said, "That woman is a bag of nerves! If ever I live to her age, you will not find me so desponding." You have been tested since then and how has it been with you? Do you remember how, when you came one evening from a Prayer Meeting, when some friend had prayed so long and so drearily, you said, "Please God, if ever I have the privilege of praying aloud at a Prayer Meeting, there shall always be life and earnestness in my prayer"? How has it been with you, Brother? I question whether any man ever attained to the eminence in piety that he once marked out for himself and whether we have not all had occasion to eat our words. Have I not said many things about what I would do if I was in somebody else's place—and what I am sure I would do if I had that man's ability and that man's opportunity? We used to brag about the lofty heights which we would climb and the mighty summits on which we would stand—and here we are, still creeping along in the valley! Do not make this confession to lull your conscience, or to comfort yourselves for being in the lowlands. We ought to be on the mountains—we ought to be all we hoped to have been—it is wrong in us not to have gained what we longed for. We must cleanse ourselves for this. Oh, how it ought to humble us to think how God has tested us and brought us down!

My pastoral experience, which, if you call it short, has, nevertheless, been very, very broad and bears witness to this. Whenever I have seen a Christian talking large things about his loftiness in Grace and his attainments, I have always seen him, sooner or later, brought as low as the dust. I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have said that they never had a doubt of their acceptance—and I have thanked God for them and have hoped they never might—but I have seen some of them in such a condition as I pray I never may be in. I believe there are such

things in the world, to this day, as those bullocks that pushed with side and with shoulder, and that fouled the waters with their feet where the trembling ones came to drink. Such professors as those will find that the Lord will bring them down before long. Those big saints will one day be glad enough to creep into a mouse hole and feel themselves thrice happy if they are permitted to be numbered among the meanest of the Lord's people. As surely as we ever make these high pretensions to great things, we shall be brought down and we shall have to cry, "O Lord, we did exalt ourselves, we did promise high and great things, but you, O Lord, have tested us. And when it came to the test *results*, what insignificant, what worthless, what despicable worms we turned out to be!"

But, Beloved, we have not only been tested in our sincerity, and in our vows, and in our lofty pretensions, but *have we not also been tested in our strength?* How strong we are sometimes! As my friend, Will Richardson, who, though he is a poor laboring man, is a Divine I like to quote just as some people would quote St. Augustine, said to me one day, "Brother Spurgeon, if you and I ever get one inch above the ground, we get that one inch too high and the Lord will bring us down again." How true that is! And the old man said, "O Sir, you know, in winter time, I feel as if I could do such a deal of mowing, and as if I could reap the fields at such a rate! But when the hot summer comes on, poor old Will wipes the sweat from his brow and he thinks it is hard work, reaping, after all, and he will be very glad when he can get home and lie down, for he is getting to be an old man. O Sir," he said, "If I could reap in the summer as I think I can in the winter, then I should do all right."

And is not that the way with us? When there is no trial to bear, we can do all things, or can bear all sufferings! When there are no duties to be performed, then our strength runs over and we have too much and some to give to our neighbors! But when we get into the work and the struggle, and begin to reap and to mow, the sweat of weariness is such that we long to be away from it! Our strength, when tested, is found to be less than nothing and vanity! "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You"—the man who can sing with the Psalmist, "All my springs are in You."

You know, dear Friends, many streams that run in winter become dry in summer, but they tell us that those wells that sap the mainsprings *never* get dry. How happy is the Believer who has sapped the mainspring, who has got deep enough down in his faith and confidence in God not to be dependent on the land springs and the upper waters, but has got down to the mainspring, for then weeks of drought may be followed up by months without rain, but still his soul shall go on bubbling up and his fountain shall always flow!

Moreover, *the Lord has tested our faith as well as our strength.* Our faith is indeed our real strength because our faith is that by which we lay hold upon God's arm. Has not your faith been tested, Brother? An untried faith is no faith. At least, I mean if a man has had faith for some considerable length of time and that faith has not been tested, I question whether it ever came from God. I may truly say of faith what the old

naturalists used to falsely say of the salamander—that it lives in the fire. The natural element of faith is fire—it never gets on well unless it has some fire to try it. What do you think faith is given us for unless it is to be tested? Did you ever know a man build a house—and then shut it up and let no one live in it? Houses are built to be inhabited! So God does not give anything without a design. Do you know a man who keeps his wheat year after year and never puts it through the mill? Let me tell you that my God puts all His wheat through the mill—and you must all go between the big stones and you must have your crushing! You will never come out fit to be offered unto the Lord unless you have been between the stones—there must be "the trial of your faith." We know that our friends in Australia, when they are panning gold, stand up to their waists in water, shaking the earth to and fro to get the golden grains out of it. And you and I, like spades full of earth, must be shaken to and fro that the earth may run away and that the pure gold may remain. Your faith is much more precious than gold, so it also must be tested in the fire. You, Mr. Greatheart, must prepare for a great many battles. And you, "Valiant-for-Truth," depend upon it, you will have to fight until your arm bleeds and your sword grows to your hand, cemented with your own blood! "Father Honest," there is warfare for you before you enter Heaven. You "Little-Faiths" and "Despondencies" and "Much-Afraids" may go on with but comparatively few trials, for God does not sail His small ships on the sea, but puts them in the shallow waters. But the great ships must cross the Atlantic and big waves may sometimes dash over you, to let the angels in Heaven see how well God can build His saints so that they can stand every storm that earth, or Hell, or Heaven, itself, can send against them! Your faith must be tested!

To sum up all in one, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, depend upon it there is nothing that you have that is good for anything which will not be tested. *Your religious principles will be tested.* Why should they not be?

There is a certain sort of Christian—I do not know whether I shall think them Christians soon—who profess to be better than anybody else. They are non-sectarians. They have left all sects to make a snug little party to go comfortably to Heaven by themselves. And instead of seeking the conversion of sinners, they seduce the members of our churches and compass sea and land to make one proselyte! And the more useful our church members are, the more do they seek to pervert them to their disorders—and the more industrious they are in every way to show their perfect hatred of the Church of the living God! I sometimes meet with persons who are afraid of them. They say, "What shall we do?" I can only say, if they are right, God prosper them! And if they are wrong, we are not afraid to meet them! We are not afraid that God's cause will suffer by their attacks. I had hoped—there was a time when I was fool enough to hope so—that these were men who really meant what they said. But now they show themselves in their true colors—as the destroyers of every order in the Church and as special enemies of God's ordained servants!

Of course we can only bid them the defiance that they bid to us and, in God's name, stand upon our bastions and our bulwarks, as our forefathers did aforetime, fearful of nothing they may do because our cause is God's—and He has delivered us out of the hands of many a confederacy before and He will do so even unto the end!

Never fear, my Brothers and Sisters, any attacks from nominal Christians, or proud, conceited persons who think themselves too good to join with other churches who, in truth, are Babylon! They are the men of wisdom and say, "Stand by, for we are holier than you." But what of the Pharisees of modern times from the South of England? What shall we say of them? Let them do their best and their worst, and fight as they will. If our course is right, we can bear to have it tested. I like to see breezes spring up—those fresh blasts that every now and then beat upon the good old ship. If she is all right, she will outlast them—and whether it is from disorders within or quarrels without, she will come out of the trouble!

If we have an ordinance, it ought to be tested—may Baptism be tested! Let the Lord's Supper be tested! The Church can never be reformed except by these trials. I always court the trials if they are sent by a Brother in friendliness of spirit. It is only the bitterness with which they come that sometimes makes my blood boil about it. But I must look to the God that sends it and not to the man who may happen to be the second cause! Whether as individuals, or as a Church, or as a denomination, we shall have to say at last, "O Lord, *You* have tested us. Blessed be Your name that You have, for—

"'Our silver bears the glowing coals
The metal to refine.'"

II. And now let us turn to the second question, HOW HAS GOD TESTED US?

Dear Friends, the Lord has tested us in a thousand ways. Many men think that the only test that God gives to His servants is that of trial. He often tests them by trials, by bereavements, by temporal losses, by sickness in body, by personal infirmity, by slander, by persecution—all these are, therefore, tests to a Christian. And a man who can go through all these and find his faith still keeping its hold and that he is able to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord"—such a man may thank God for the test! And, after all, dear Friends, the only Grace that is worth having is that which shall be with us when we go through fire and through water, and when men ride over our heads. Do not tell me of your sunshiny religion! Do not tell me of your summer-day godliness! You may sometimes see, on the Mediterranean, when the waters are calm and still, a little fleet with fair and beautiful sails floating gaily there—it is the nautilus coming up in the sunshine to float. But there is a black cloud yonder and at the first breath of wind that comes whistling across the waveless sea where is that fleet? Where is the nautilus? Every little creature has drawn itself into its shell and fallen to the bottom of the sea! Oh, there are too many

of this kind, too many Christians who are with us when everything goes well—but where are they when the times have changed? To use John Bunyan's expressive metaphor—they walk with Religion when she goes in her silver slippers. But when she is barefoot and men laugh at her through the streets, then where are they? Affliction does try men!

But mark you, Believers, there are many others trials! Let me mention some of them that I often think severe. *There is a very sharp trial which some Christians have to bear when they have fresh light given them* and they shut their eyes against it. There are plenty of things that we never dreamt of in our philosophy that, after all, are true. Am I like a man who, whereunto he has attained, walks by the same rule but is still ready to advance further if the rule is more fully revealed? Hold on to the old and tested truth of the Grace of God which brings salvation, as with a death-grip, but still, you are not yet perfect—there is a height beyond. Sometimes when you are reading a passage of Scripture, you say, "Ah, yes, yes; it must mean that!" You pray over it. "Yes, it must mean that! But if it means that, what about that text our minister preached from last Sunday week, what about that?" And you are apt to say, "Well, now, I won't believe that, for it does not fit in with my system of theology."

Is there not many a good "Hyper" Brother who has a full knowledge of the Doctrines of Grace, but one day when he is reading the Bible and he finds a text that looks rather wide and general, he says, "This cannot mean what it says! I must trim it down and make it fit into Dr. Gill's Commentary"? That is the way many a Brother does. But is not this the right thing to say? "Now, this does mean what it says. The Lord knows better how to write than I do. There may be faults in my reading, but there cannot be any faults in His writing. Then, if such-and-such a thing is true, I will not doubt it. And if that other thing is true, I will not doubt it. And if they seem to contradict one another, I will believe them both. But I can never entertain a thought that they really do contradict one another—I believe that there is some fault in me—not in the Truth of God."

You sometimes go to the stationer's and you ask for a picture of such-and-such a church. "Yes, Sir," he says, and brings you out a picture. And you say, "There are two pictures here." "Oh, no, Sir," he says, "that is only one." "But," you say, "there are two and this one takes the view a little further to the right and that, apparently, a little more to the left. I do not understand your giving me two pictures." "O Sir," he says, "that is only one! And if you look at it correctly, you will find that the two will melt into one and stand out very clearly and beautifully—much better than in an ordinary print." You look and look again, and say, "There seem to be two, as far as I can see—and I cannot make them to be one." "Stop," he says. He opens his drawer and fetches out a stereoscope. "Now," he says, "just put your eyes there." "Oh, yes," you say, "I see it is only one now! The two pictures *have* melted into one!"

I believe there are many Truths in Scripture that are just like two pictures on a stereoscopic slide—they are really one—only you and I have

not the stereoscope! When we get to Heaven, we shall get a stereoscope and then they will appear to be one. And we shall see that conflicting Truths of God, such as free-agency and Divine Sovereignty, were only different views, after all, of the same Truth taken from a little different angle. And we shall see how God gave us both the Truths and how foolish we were to go against them.

Now that man, I take it, is tested to be right who, when he is thus tested with superior light, says, "Well, yes, I have been wrong in many of my thoughts and reasoning. The more I learn of God's Revelation, the more I will open my heart to receive it." I like a Brother or Sister who is ready to advance. I think, as a Church, we ought to always be advancing. It strikes me, for instance, that the breaking of bread should be every Lord's-Day. The more I read the Scripture, the more I feel that it is an ordinance that should be commemorated every Sabbath. "Well," says somebody, "but it has been usually observed once a month and anyway, what does it matter?" If it is *Scriptural* to have it *four times* in the month, be it so, and let us get the benefit of the alteration and do it, saying, "If ever a Truth of God starts up, and fresh light comes, I will follow. Whatever You have to say to me, speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." This is by no means a very small trial to a Christian man, to be tested by fresh Light of God!

Don't you think it is a very sharp trial to be tested by other loves? You have an only child. How fond you are of that girl! How your heart is knit to that boy! You have a dear husband—properly enough you love him, but ah, improperly enough you idolize him! Or, alas, it is a brother, or sister, or some other Christian, and your heart is set on that object. Do you know what Jesus says to you? He has said, "There is a disciple who loves Me—he says he does. I will see if he does—I will give him that child and I will see which he loves the better. I will give him that wife, I will give her that husband—I will see, now, whether I really am King in that heart or not." And in how many ways have we mournfully to suspect that Jesus Christ was not King? O dear Friends, it is sad to think of how it would be if some of us were tested by that test—"If any man loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." If some are tested in that way, what a trial it must be to them! And there are many who fail here. And many more Christians would fail, perhaps, only that God, on a sudden, comes like a great iconoclast and breaks their images in pieces and utterly spoils their false gods—and then they are compelled to go to Christ and say, "Yes, we do love You." But perhaps that was hardly true while the idol was in the way. It is a hard trial to have these fair things put in competition with Jesus—happy are you if you have been tested and yet have stood the trial!

I believe that *God often tests His servants by opening up to them fresh fields of labor.* It has been my lot, when I have been busy about my Master's service, here and there to come to a certain corner and see before me what I had never seen before—a great field ripe for the harvest! And perhaps flesh and blood have said, "Well, you have enough to do

here—this is your lot." I believe, then, God is trying the man to see whether he is willing to begin that new work which is opening to him. Perhaps it is a work in which nobody else has ever engaged. And when you begin it, some excellent friend shrugs his shoulder and says, "O dear Brother, how imprudent you are!" I think there is no word in the English language that deserves more of my esteem and yet for which I have a greater and more insufferable contempt from the misuse of it than the word, "prudence." Oh, the many times I have it whistled in my ears, "Prudence!" And this is the meaning of the word, "prudence," according to the translation I have given of it by these Brothers and Sisters—never act upon faith. If you can see your way clearly, that is to say if you are strong enough to do it yourself, do it, but never go beyond your own strength! Do not attempt anything in which other people would differ from you in opinion! Along the cool sequestered vale of life keep the tenor of your way even.

If there is a giant Goliath, go to bed and let giant Goliath defy the hosts of Israel as he likes. If there are nations that need help—Macedonians that cry, "Come over and help us"—tell somebody else what the Macedonians said and say, "What a pity it is that nobody will go!" If Jesus calls, and duty, too, just mind that you are so far off that you cannot hear the call! Like some militiamen I have heard of, who always say, when the bugle sounds for them to come to drill, that they never heard it because they take wonderfully good care to be always so far away that the sound cannot reach them! And there are many such Christians as that—who always get out of the sound of the bugle! "Oh, yes, of course, Lord Shaftesbury presided at the meeting and the Bishop of London, and this member of the privy council, and that member of Parliament were present! And it must be the right thing to do, therefore I will go and do what I can to help, but I do not desire new work.

Some woman who has discovered the missing link, or somebody or other, is going to try some absurd, Quixotic scheme for the conversion of the people, but I could not think of giving a shilling for *that*, because, you see, that is a work of prayer and faith! But the other has a committee, treasurer, vice-presidents and innumerable patrons—almost as many as the lords, governors and counselors that came to Nebuchadnezzar at the door of the burning fiery furnace."

Most people like those things in which there are plenty of great armies. But there *are* chosen men who always stand where there is nothing to rest upon but the bare arm of God. This seems to be the test of the Christian when he can dare to say, "This is the field of usefulness which God has put in my way. Though my strength is not sufficient, I have faith. Here I am, and I will do it." "Who are you, O great mountain! Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam." "Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem! Loosen yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!" For your God is in the midst of you and if you will but

do and dare for Him, when tested in the day of trial, you shall have His blessing upon you—and that right early and abundantly!

III. Multitudes of other tests suggest themselves, but our time flies. Let us come, therefore, to the closing question—WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF ALL THOSE TESTS THROUGH WHICH WE HAVE PASSED?

Well, I think, dear Friends, *we have lost a good deal by our tests*. We have gained much, but we have likewise had our heavy losses. "What," says one, "lost anything by God's testing me?" Yes, Brother, I will tell you one or two of the things you have lost. I think you have lost that habit of putting your trust so much in earthly things. So many trees have been cut down that you had built on, that you begin to wish to build somewhere beyond the stars—you find that this world is not your rest. If you have lost that, you have lost something. Have you not also lost that habit of talking so positively about what you mean to do? A good thing if you have! You do not glitter so much, but there is more gold in you. You do not flash and sparkle, and make as much noise, but the waters run stiller because they are deeper. You have lost that habit of boasting in an arm of flesh!

As the result of your being tested, you have lost that disposition to invite trial. I know a Christian woman—I think she is here this evening—who had not any trouble, for some time, and she was very troubled about having no trouble. She prayed to God to send her some—she will never pray that prayer again! She was like a child whom I heard crying in the street and his mother opened the window and asked him what he cried for. And when he said, "Nothing." She said he should have something to cry for before long. There are many children of that sort—they think they cannot be children of God because they are not always living in hot water. But when they get the trial, they never think that again—never! Those are some of the things we have lost. We go through the Red Sea of trial—some few things we leave in the Red Sea along with the Egyptians—may they never be washed up again!

One has learned, by being tested, to lose that habit of treading quite so hard on the ground as we used to do. Sometimes we used to tread on other people. By being tested, we tread more gently. We used to push and say, "If the man is in my way, I cannot help it." Now we walk a little more carefully. We do not wish to touch other people's sore places because we know our own. I heard a dear Brother say, the other night, that I comforted the doubters a great deal too much. I thought if that dear Brother had to go through some of the deep waters we have known in connection with this Church, he would find the doubters need a great deal more comforting than he thinks, for when one has been in the dungeon and has not been able to read his own title clear—and when there have been times when sin and Satan have so prevailed over Grace that one could only say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" then we have needed something very sweet and very comforting. I do not think that a Christian knows much of doing business on the great waters if he does not feel, sometimes, as if he

would give all he has to have as good a hope as the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold has. And, dear Friends, we lose that habit of being so hard and speaking so loftily—and these are blessed losses. Lord, send us many such losses!

Then, *we also gain much by being tested*. I cannot tell all that we gain. I never read a list of the earrings and the bracelets that the Israelite women gained from the Egyptians. And I cannot, therefore, give you a category of all the golden jewels, all silver bracelets and the rich ruby tiaras that Christians get from the depths of their tribulation. We get all sorts of choice things. Was it not Rutherford who said that he drank many sorts of God's wine, but the wine which was the sourest of all was the sweetest when it was down? And so it assuredly is. There are many sorts of bread that we eat that are very delightful—many breads of Heaven. But that which is baked on the coals, just as the bread which Elijah ate was baked—that is the meal that makes us go in the strength thereof for 40 days! All bread that comes from God is good, but that which the black ravens with their hoarse throats bring to us—that is the bread which is most fit for God's prophets. All our passages through the fiery furnace make us like swords when they are well annealed—they are ready to cut right through the bone—it makes us true Jerusalem blades thus to be put through the fire again and again. Well, Brothers and Sisters, you and I will not cease from being tested until we get to Heaven and then it will be all over. And we shall sing and this shall be the sweet note of it, "You have tested us, O God, and blessed be Your name for it! Before we were afflicted, we went astray, but now have we kept Your Word."

There are many here who, I fear, if they were tested, would be found to be dross. Let such remember that God, by His Grace, can transmute the vile metal into the purest gold. One touch of the Cross of Christ, one drop of His precious blood can turn a sinner into a saint! "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And however great and vile your sins may be, "there is life in a look at the Crucified One." One glance at the bleeding Savior and your sins are forgiven. A simple act of trust in Jesus, and you are saved and then, from that time forth, though you will have trials, you shall bless God for them! And we shall meet in Heaven to praise the name of the Most High, world without end! Amen.

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

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END OF VOLUME 51.