"HIS GREAT LOVE"
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"His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." Ephesians 2:4, 5.

You notice, in this chapter, the remarkable change of subject which commences at the 4th verse. Paul had been giving a very sad description of what even the saints are by nature and of their conduct before conversion. And then, as if he was quite weary of writing upon that painful topic, he says, "But God"—and goes on to tell what God has done. What a relief it is to turn from ourselves and from our fellow men, to God! And I do not know when God, in His rich mercy, ever seems so lovely in our eyes as when we have just gazed upon our own abundant sins. The diamond shines all the more brilliantly when it has a suitable foil to set off its brightness—and man seems to act as a foil for the goodness and the mercy of God! Perhaps you remember that the Psalmist, when he had said in his haste, "All men are liars," turned abruptly from that theme and said, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" It is as if he had said, "I will not have anything more to do with man. I find him to be only like a broken cistern that can hold no water—but as for my God, He has never failed me and He never will—so, 'I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.'"

I want, at this time, to intertwine these two subjects—ourselves in our fall and God in His Grace—ourselves in our sin and God in His love—"His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." I shall not need so much to preach as just to refresh your memories—to revive your recollections of the great tidings which the Lord, in His Grace, has done for you. I want you who know the Lord to remember what you were—and what God has done for you. Those two themes will bring out the greatness of His love, so they shall be our two objects for meditation. First, *what we were.* And secondly, *what God did for us.*

I. First, then, WHAT WE WERE. The text says that "we were dead in sins."

O Believer, whatever life of a spiritual kind you have in you, today, was given to you by God! It was not yours by nature. Before God looked upon you in love and pity and said unto you, "Live," you were dead! That is to say, as far as spiritual things are concerned, *you were insensible*—insensible alike to the bearers of Divine Wrath and to the melodies of Divine Love. You could even lie at the foot of Sinai and not shake with

fright, although Moses did exceedingly fear and quake. And you could lie at the foot of the Cross and yet not be melted by the death-cries of Immanuel, although the earth did quake and the rocks were rent and the graves were opened at that doleful sound! Do you not remember, Beloved, when you passed through such a time as that? I do—when utter callousness and coldness of heart reigned supreme within us, when the world—painted harlot as she is—could attract us, but we were insensible to the inexpressible beauties of Him who is altogether lovely, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

And as we were insensible to spiritual things, being dead, so *we were, at that time, without power to do anything*. We were preached to, called and bid to come, but, as far as all goodness was concerned, we were like a corpse—unable to hear the sweetest music, or the crack of doom resounding overhead! Do you not remember, dear Friends, when it was so with you? You thought then that you could do something good in your own strength, but it was a dreadful failure when you attempted it! Your resolutions, when you got as far as resolving, all fell to the ground, for you were, in the emphatic words of Paul, "without strength." Yes, you were insensible and powerless.

And, what is worse still, we were then *without will or desire to come to God*. We had no disposition to move towards the Lord, no aspirations after holiness, no longing after communion with our Creator. We loved the world and were content to fill our treasury with its paltry pelf. This seemed to be the only portion for which we cared. If we could have become rich and increased with goods, we would have said, "Soul, take your ease—there is nothing more for you to desire."

That was our state by nature. We were dead. And did the Lord love us *then*, when there was nothing whatever in us to commend us to Him—nothing by which we could possibly rise into a condition that would be estimable in His sight? Did He love us then? Yes, He did—and there must have been surprising Grace in that "great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

While we were dead as to spiritual things, *there was, alas, a life in us of another kind*. If you read the chapter from which our text is taken, you will find that the dead people are described as walking. They were walking corpses—a strange commingling of metaphors, and yet most certainly true with regard to all ungodly men. They are dead to goodness, but, as for the evil within them, how full of life it is! The devil within them and the flesh within them were active and, as the corpse gives forth corruption and fills the tomb with putridity, so did our sin continually give forth evil emanations which must have been most nauseous to God! Yet, notwithstanding all this, "He loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

Let me just mention some of the unlovely and unlovable things which God saw in us while we were in that dead state. One of the first was this—*we were ungrateful*. It is very difficult to continue to love ungrateful persons. If you seek to do them good and yet you receive no thanks from them—if you persevere in doing them good and yet, for all that, they are

unkind to you—it is not in flesh and blood to continue to love them. Yet, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what ingratitude to God was once in our hearts! What favors the Lord bestowed upon us—not merely daily bread and temporal blessings, but there were real spiritual gifts of His Grace presented to us—yet we turned our backs upon them all and, still worse, we turned our backs upon Him who gave them to us! How sad it is that many people live year after year without ever recognizing the God who gives them so many mercies and blessings! Perhaps, now and then, there is a "thank God" uttered in idleness or as a compliment—but there is no heart in it. The ingratitude of some of us was greater even than that of others, for we were born of godly parents, we were nurtured in the home of piety, we heard scarcely a sound in our infancy that was not mingled with the name of Jesus and yet, as we grew up, these very things we regarded as restraints! And sometimes we wished that we could do as other people's children did and half regretted that we had godly friends who watched so carefully over our conduct. The Lord might have said to us, "I have done so much for you, yet you exhibit no gratitude. I will, therefore, leave you and give these favors to others." But, in His great mercy, although we were so ungrateful, He did not act like that.

What is even worse, *we were complaining and murmuring*. Do you not remember, in your unconverted state, my Friend, how scarcely anything seemed to please you? This thing happened quite contrary to your wishes and that was not at all to your liking—and the other was not according to your notion of what should be. The Prophet Jeremiah asked, "Why does a living man complain?" But we seemed to ask, "Why should we *leave off* complaining?" We murmured against the Lord notwithstanding the great mercies that He gave us. We rebelled against Him and waxed worse and worse. It is a difficult thing for us to love a murmurer. When you try to do a man good and he only grumbles at what you do for him, you are very apt to say, "Very well, I will take my favors where they will be better appreciated." But God did not act like that towards us—"His great love with which He loved us" was not to be turned away from us even by our murmuring and complaining!

And all that while, dear Friends, *we were trifling with spiritual things*. Like those people mentioned in the parable who, when they were invited to the marriage feast, "made light of it," so did we. We were warned to escape from Hell, but it seemed too like an idle tale! We were bid to seek after Heaven, but we loved the things of this world too well to barter them for joys unseen and eternal. We were told that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and it seemed to be a story that we had heard so often that we called it "a platitude." We were earnestly entreated to lay hold on Christ and to find eternal life in Him, but we said, "Perhaps we will tomorrow," proving that we did not care about it, but would make God wait at our beck and call when it should be convenient for us! You know that if a man is in an ill state of health and you, as a doctor, go to help him, but he merely laughs at his illness and says that

he does not care about it, you are very apt to say, "Then, why should I care? You are sick and I am anxious to heal you, but you say that you do not care to be healed. Very well, then, I will go to some other patient who will entreat me to use my best skills on his behalf and who will be grateful to me when I have used them." But the Lord did not act like that with us. Notwithstanding our trifling, He was in earnest. He meant to heal our soul-sickness and He did heal it! Determined to save us, He would not heed the rebuff of our carelessness and callousness, but still persevered in manifesting toward us that "great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

To make the deformity of our character still worse—*we were all the while proud*—as proud as Lucifer! We had not any righteousness of our own, yet we thought we had. We were far off from God by wicked works, yet we stood before Him like the Pharisee in the Temple and thanked Him that we were not as other men! We were quite content though we had nothing to be content with. We were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," yet we said that we were "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing." As for shedding penitential tears, we left that work to those who had sinned more deeply than we had, for we imagined that we had kept all the Commandments from our youth up! Thus we despised the Savior because we exalted *ourselves*. We thought little of Christ because we thought much of ourselves. And so, in our pride, we dared to strut before the eternal Throne of God as if we were some great ones, though we were but worms of the dust! I think that it is one of the most difficult things in the world to love a proud man. You can love a man even though he has a thousand faults if he is not proud and boastful—but when he is very proud, human nature seems to start back from him. Yet God, in His "great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins," loved us although we were proud and loved us out of that sinful state.

If worse could be, there was something even worse than pride in us, for *we were deceptive* as well as proud. "No," says one, "surely you cannot truthfully lay that to our charge." Well, I have to confess that it was so with myself. I remember that when I was ill, I said that if God would only spare my life, I would live differently in the future. But my promise was not kept, though God did spare my life. Often, after hearing a stirring sermon, I sought a place where I could weep in secret and I said, "Now I will be decided for the Lord." But it was not so. Oh, how many times have we broken the promises and vows we made to the Lord! Child of God, before your conversion, how many vows and covenants you made—yet your goodness was like the morning cloud or the early dew which soon passes away. Who can love one who is not to be trusted? Yet, God, in "His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins," loved us while we so many times deceived Him!

These things which I have mentioned have appertained to all the children of God, but there are some of them whose sins have been even greater than these. I ask every converted man here to look through his own biography. Some of you were, perhaps, converted while you were

young and so were kept from the grosser sins into which others fall. But there were some who were allowed to go into drunkenness, or into uncleanness and all manner of iniquity. God has forgiven you, my Brothers and Sisters, and has washed all that evil away in the precious blood of Jesus, but you feel that you can never forgive yourself. I know that I am bringing some very unhappy memories before you, of which you say, "Would God that night had never been, or that day had never passed over my head!" The Lord grant that as you look back upon those sins of yours, you may feel deeply humbled and, at the same time, may be devoutly grateful to God for "His great love" with which He has loved you!

There have been some who seem as if they had gone to the utmost extremity of sin—as if they dared and defied the Most High. And yet, notwithstanding their atrocious sins, Free Grace has won the day! There has seemed, in some cases, to be a stern struggle between sin and Grace, as if sin said, "I will provoke God till Grace shall leave Him," but Grace has said, "Provoked as the Lord is, yet still will He stand to His purpose of mercy—He will not turn away from the decree of His love." Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I ask you to think this subject over in your own private meditations. There are some things that it would not be right to mention in any ear but the ear of God, for it certainly was a horrible pit out of which He took us, and miry clay, indeed, out of which He drew us—so we may well praise "His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins."

II. The second subject for our meditation is WHAT GOD DID FOR US "even when we were dead in sins."

Well, first of all, *He remained faithful to His choice of us*. He had chosen His people before the earth was and He did not choose them in the dark. He knew right well what their nature would be and also the practice which would grow out of their nature—so that nothing that has happened has ever surprised the Lord concerning any one of His people. He was well aware beforehand of all their corruption and filthiness. So, when He saw them acting as I have described, He did not turn from His purpose to save them. Blessed be His name for this! It is one of the wonders of His Grace that God proves the greatness of His love.

Then, next, as He did not repent of His choice, *so neither did He repent of His redemption of His people*. You will find it recorded in Scripture that "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart," but you never read that He repented of Redemption! Nowhere in Scripture is there such a passage as this, "It grieved the Lord at His heart that He had given His Son to die for such unworthy ones." No, my Friends, He had bought us with a price beyond all calculation, even the heart's blood of His only-begotten Son, so that, although we went from sin to sin and, for a time resisted all the calls of the Gospel, He did not turn from His purpose of love and mercy, nor make His Atonement for us null and void.

Then, further, in His great love for us, *God would not let us die till He had brought us to Christ*. We possibly passed through many perils and had many escapes. John Bunyan, you will remember, was to have stood as sentinel one night, but another soldier took his place, and was shot. John Bunyan did not know, at the time, why the exchange was made, but God had ordained that he should not die till he had been brought to Christ. So fool-hardy was he that on one occasion he plucked the sting out of a viper with his bare hand, yet he was unhurt, for God would not let him die while he was such a desperado! And what amazing escapes from shipwreck, from murder, from fever, from "accidents" in a thousand forms some men have had simply because God will not let them perish, for He means that they shall yet be brought as sheep into His fold! I told you, some time ago, that I once talked with a gentleman who was in the famous charge at Balaclava—and I felt moved to say to him, "Surely God had some designs of love toward you, or He would not have spared you when so many were being taken away." Well, in whatever way our lives have been spared, we ascribe it to the great love with which God loved us even when we were dead in sins.

We see that great love also manifested in *the way in which God restrained us from many sins*. There have been times in our history when, if it had not been for a mysterious check that was put upon us, we would have sinned much worse than we ever did. Something of that kind happened in the case of the well-known Colonel Gardiner. He had made an appointment for the commission of a very gross sin, but the Lord had chosen him unto eternal life—so that night, which he intended to spend in sin—became the time of his conversion to God! And you know what a devout and earnest Christian he became. The Lord knows the right time to say to anyone, "Thus far shall you go, but no farther." He makes men's minds and hearts, like the sea, to know His will and to move or be still at His Divine command. Cannot some of you, my Brothers and Sisters, recollect the way in which God thus restrained you from going to an excess of riot?

And, then, His great love was seen *by the way in which He kept on calling us by His Grace*. Some of us can scarcely tell when we were first bid to come to the Savior. A mother's tears and a father's prayers are, however, among the fondly-cherished memories of that early call. Do not some of you remember that loving Sunday school teacher and the earnestness with which she pleaded with you? And that godly minister and how he seemed to throw his whole soul into the work of entreating you to yield yourself to the Savior? Others of you cannot forget how with good books, letters, entreaties and persuasions from Christian friends, you have been followed as if the Lord had hunted you out of your sins by all the agencies that could possibly be used—yet you dodged, twisted and doubled this way and that way, trying to escape from your gracious Pursuer! You were like a bird that the fowler cannot take for a long while, or like a wandering sheep that the shepherd cannot find for many a day!

But the Good Shepherd never gave up the search—He meant to find you and He did. He had determined to save you—and from that

determination He would not be turned aside, do whatever you might! And, at last, there came the blessed day when He subdued you unto Himself! The weapons of your rebellion fell from your hands, for Christ had conquered you! And how did He do it? By "His great love"—His Omnipotent Grace. You were dead in sins when His Spirit came to work them upon you, but the Spirit came, in the name of the risen Savior, with such almighty force of Irresistible Love that you were carried captive—a willing captive—at the chariot wheels of your Divine Conqueror! Shall we ever forget that blessed time? We sing "Happy day! Happy day!" and well we may, for that conquest is the chief and foremost token of "His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

I will not say more about this precious Truth of God, but I will use the few minutes still at my disposal in making a practical application of my subject.

If, dear Friends, the Lord loved us with such great love even when we were dead in sins, *do you think that He will ever leave us to perish*? Have you indulged the notion that under your present trial, whatever it may be, you will be deserted by your God? My dear widowed Sister, do you fear that the Lord will forsake you now that your husband is dead? My friend over there—you who have had heavy losses in business—do you not believe that the Lord will help you through? Did He love you when you were dead in sins and is He going to desert you now? Do you think you will ever have to ask, with the Psalmist, "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?" If you do talk like that, then ask yourself why the Lord ever began His work of love upon you if He did not mean to finish it, or if He meant, after all, to cast you off? Do you think, if that was His intention, He would ever have begun with you? He knew all that would happen to you and all that you would do, so that nothing comes unexpectedly to Him! Known unto the Lord from the beginning, were all your trials and all your sins so that, as He still loved you, in the foresight of all that was to happen to you, do you think that He will now, or ever, cast you away from Him? You know that He will not!

Again, if He so loved you even when you were dead in sins, *will He deny you anything that is for His own Glory and for your own and other's good*? You have been praying, but you have feared that the mercy you asked would never come. Think for a moment—He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for you centuries before you were born—will He not freely give to you all that you ought to ask of Him now that you are alive unto Him? George Herbert speaks of the dew that falls upon the grass, although the grass cannot call for the dew—but you do call upon God to give you His Grace—so shall not His Grace come copiously to you as the dew falling when God sends it? Does He water the earth when its dumb mouth opens? Does He provide food for the "dumb driven cattle?" Then will He not attend to your cries and prayers when you call

upon Him in the name of His well-beloved Son? If He loved you when you were a man of corruption, will He not answer your supplications, now that He has made you to be an heir of Heaven and formed you in the likeness of His Son? O, Beloved, be of good comfort and let no thought of despondency, or of unbelief ever cross your mind!

Further, if the Lord loved you thus even when you were dead in sins, *ought you not now love Him very much*? Oh, the love of God! The Apostle does not say that God pitied us, though that is true. He does not say that the Lord had compassion upon us, though that is also true. But Paul speaks of "His great love." I can perfectly understand God's pitying me. I can perfectly understand God's having compassion on me. But I cannot comprehend God's *loving* me—nor can you. Think what it means—He loves you! Sweet above all other things is love—a mother's love, a father's love, a husband's love, a wife's love—but all these are only faint images of the love of God! You know how greatly you are cheered by the earthly love of one who is dear to you—but Paul says that God loves you! He that made the heavens and the earth, before whom you are as an ant, has set His heart's affection upon you! He loves you so much that He has made great sacrifices for you. He is daily blessing you and He will not be in Heaven without you! So dear, so strong is His love to you—and it was so even when you were dead in sins! Oh, then, will you not love Him much in return for His "great love" to you? Is anything too hard for you to bear for His dear sake, or anything too difficult for you to do for Him who loved you so? Dear Lord, we give *ourselves* to You—'tis all that we can do!

Another reflection for you, my Christian Friend, is this. If God so loved you even when you were dead in sins, *ought not you to love those who treat you badly*? There are many people in this world who seem as if they could not do anything but ugly things. They have not a generous spot in their nature. They are cross-grained, always quarrelling and he who would gladly live peaceably with them sometimes finds it very hard work. I know some gentle spirits that are deeply wounded by the hard and cruel things that are said or done to them by their relatives or companions. Well, dear Friends, if any of us are treated thus, let us love these cruel people! Let us cover their unkindness over with our love, for, if God loved us even when we were dead in sins—when He could not see anything in us to love—we also ought to love others for His sake! Even when we see a thousand faults in them, we must, say, "As God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, so do we forgive you." It is a grand thing to be able to bury in eternal forgetfulness every unkind word or act that has ever caused us pain. If any of you have any thought of anger in your heart against anyone—if you have any feeling of resentment—if you have any recollection of injuries. If there is *anything* that vexes and grieves you, come and bury it all in the grave of Jesus—for if He loved you when you were dead in sins—it cannot be half so wonderful for you to love your poor fellow sinner whatever ill treatment you may have received at his hands!

My last word is to the unconverted and it is a very sweet and precious word. Do you see, unconverted man, that you need never say, "I dare not

come to God through Jesus Christ because then is nothing good in me"? You need never say that, for Paul speaks of "His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." Now, if all His people were loved by Him when they were dead in sins, how can you think that God requires anything good in man as the cause or reason for His love? Of all the saints in Heaven it may be said that God loved them because He would do it, for, by nature, there was nothing more in them for God to love than there was in the very devils in Hell! And as to His saints on earth, if God loves them—and He does—it is simply because He will do it, for there was no goodness whatever in *them* by nature! God loves them in the Infinite Sovereignty of His great loving Nature. Well, then, poor Soul, why should not God love *you*? And since He bids you come to Him, however empty you may be of everything that is good, come to Him, and welcome! Let the text knock on the head, once and for all, all ideas of *doing* anything to win the love of God! And if you feel yourself to be the very worst, lowest and meanest of the human race, I rejoice that you feel that, for the Lord loves to look upon those who are self-emptied and who have nothing good of their own to plead before Him! These are the people who will value His love and upon such people as these it is that He bestows His love. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." The hospital is for the man who is diseased, not for the one who is in health. And the Lord Jesus Christ has opened a Hospital for incurables—for those who cannot be cured by all the medicines of human morality and outward religion! Christ bids them come to Him that He may make them whole!

I wish I had the power to speak of the love of God to the sinner in such a way that he would come to the Lord Jesus Christ, but I will try to put the brush very plainly and simply—and then I will close my discourse. My Hearer, whatever you may have been up to, to this moment—if you have been a despiser of God, an infidel, a blasphemer—if you have added sin to sin, if you have made yourself black as Hell with enormous transgressions—yet all this is no reason why God should not have chosen you and loved you! And all this is no reason why He should not now forgive you and accept you! No, He puts it thus in His Word—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Come then, you blackest of sinners—you who feel yourselves unfit to be found in a House of Prayer—you who, like the publican in the Temple, scarcely dare to lift up your eyes to Heaven—you condemned ones who fear that there is no hope for you—let me assure you that in you there is space for God's mercy to be displayed! There is elbowroom for His Grace to work! Come to Jesus just as you are! Accept the Atonement made by His own blood and be saved here and now, for He waits to be gracious and He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

I recollect the time, many years ago, when I would have given both my eyes to hear such Truth as I have preached tonight! It would not have

mattered to me who had told it to me. If it had been a man of stammering tongue and faulty grammar, if he had but said to me, "Salvation is of God's Grace, not of your merit. It is of God's goodness, not of your holiness—you have nothing to do but to rest on what Christ has done, for God loves even you who are dead in sins"—if I had known that, I think I would have found peace with God long before I did. Does anyone say, "But I need to *feel* and I need to *do*, and I need to find out this, and that, and the other?" You need nothing of the kind, Sinner! Christ has done it all! To take any merit of your own to Christ would be worse than carrying coals to Newcastle! Come just as you are—an empty-handed sinner, a bankrupt sinner, a starving sinner, you who are at the very gates of Hell, for—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 30.

May the Holy Spirit who inspired the writer of this Psalm now lead us into its inner meaning! It is entitled, "A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David." Or, rather, "A Psalm; a song of dedication for the House. By David." It was a song of faith, since David did not live to witness the dedication of the Temple for which he had planned in his heart and for which he had laid by in store. Though he knew that he would not be permitted by God to build it, he took delight in writing a Psalm which might be sung at the opening of the Temple. Thus it begins—

Verse 1. *I will extol You, O LORD; for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foe to rejoice over me.* "I will exalt You, for You have exalted me! I will lift up Your praise because You have lifted up my spirits. I will bless You, for You have blessed me." Our song of praise should be the echo of God's voice of love. "You have not made my foes to rejoice over me." You remember that this was one of the three things put to David as a chastisement for his great sin in numbering the people—"Will You flee three months before your enemies while they pursue you?" He here praises the Lord that such calamity as that did not come upon him. "You have not made my foes to rejoice over me." Sorrows averted should be the occasion of grateful songs of thanksgiving!

2. *O LORD my God, I cried unto You, and You have healed me.* The king and the people had been sorely smitten with sickness on account of his sin, but the Lord, in mercy, bade the destroying angel sheathe his sword when he "was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite"—the very place which afterwards became the site on which the Temple was built! It was well, therefore, at its opening, to praise the God who heals His people. We ought to praise the Lord more than we do for our recovery from sickness. Employ the physician if you will, but, when healing comes

to you, magnify the Lord for it and ascribe the glory of it to His holy name!

3. *O LORD, You have brought up my soul from the grave: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the Pit.* Here is a double mercy to sing of—not dead and not damned! Life spared is something for which to praise the Lord, but to have the soul saved from going down to the Pit is a cause of still greater thanksgiving! Oh praise the name of the Lord, you who love Him and trust in Him, for He has delivered you from going down into the Pit!

4. *Sing unto the LORD, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.* David seems to say to the saints, "Do not let me sing alone, but all of you join in the chorus." He does not invite reprobates to praise the Lord, but He says, "Sing unto Jehovah. O you *saints* of His." I think it is very wrong to have the praises of God sung in public by ungodly men and women, as they sometimes are. The singing should not be left to a godless choir. Oh, no—"sing unto the Lord, all you *saints* of His," for you, only, can sing sincerely unto Him.

"Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness"—at the very memory of Him—at the remembrance of the whole of Him, for that is His holiness, His wholeness, the entire, perfect Character of God. O saints below, sing as they do in Heaven, for their song is "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

5. *For His anger endures but a moment.* Notice that the words, "endures but," are inserted by the translators and very properly so. But see how the passages reads if you leave them out—"For His anger a moment." That is long enough for Him to display it, for it is His strange work—and long enough for us to endure it—for it might crush us if it lasted longer!

5. *In His favor is life.* Life came to Jerusalem, in David's day, as soon as God smiled upon it. And life comes to us as soon as we taste of His favor, even though we have been ready to die of despair.

5. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.* As the dews are appropriate to the night, so is weeping seemly for us when Jesus hides His face from us. The children of the bride-chamber may well mourn when the heavenly Bridegroom is taken from them, but it is only for a night. Morning will end our mourning. Our night-sorrow is for the night, but our joys are for a day that will know no evening!

6. *And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.* It is a pity to say too much. Very few people fall into the opposite fault of saying too little. It is always a pity to be counting with certainty upon the future and presuming, because of the hopefulness of the present, that this state of things will last forever. David was not wise when he said, in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

7. *LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong: You did hide Your face, and I was troubled.* When God is at cross purposes with His people, they are troubled at once. There is no need for blows, no need for angry words—"You did hide Your face, and I was

troubled." That is enough for a child of God—let him but miss the light of God's Countenance and it breaks him down at once.

8. *I cried to You, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.* What should the child of God do when he is in trouble, but cry? And to whom should he cry but to his Father?

9. *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the Pit? Shall the dust praise You? Shall it declare Your truth*? So his prayer was an argument—and that is the very bone and sinew of prayer—to reason and argue with God. He seems to put it thus—"Lord, if I lose my soul, You will be a loser, too, for You will lose a singer out of Your choir, one who would be glad enough to praise You and whose very life it is to magnify You. Oh, do not cut me down! When I am dead, when I am lost, there can be no praise to You from me, so spare me, my gracious God!"

10. *Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be You my helper*. What a handy prayer this is, a prayer to carry about with you wherever you go! "Lord, be You my Helper." That is a minister's prayer when he is going to preach. That is a Sunday school teacher's prayer when going to the class. Is not that a prayer for the sufferer when the pain upon him is very severe? "Lord, be You my Helper." Are you working for Him? Are you cast down in soul? This prayer will suit you—"Lord, be You my Helper."

11. *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing: You have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness*. What a transformation scene in answer to prayer! Notice that David does not say, "I hope that you have," but he puts it thus, "You have—You *have.*" He is quite sure about it and, being sure of this great mercy, he gives God all the glory of it. What a wonderful change it is! Not merely from mourning into peace, but into delight—delight expressed by dancing! Not merely from sackcloth into ordinary dress, but from the sackcloth of sorrow to the satin of gladness! God does nothing by halves. He not only chases away the night and gives us twilight, but He goes on to gladden us with the full glory of noontide—and all this He does with a definite end and purpose!

12. *To the end that my glory.* Or, "my tongue"—

12. *May sing praise to You, and not be silent*. God ought to have praise from us. It is the quit-rent which we pay as tenants to the great Lord of All—let us not rob Him of His revenue.

12. *O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto You forever.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—716, 711, 30.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—39.

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

ANGELIC PROTECTION IN APPOINTED WAYS
NO. 2969

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1875.

"For He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways."
Psalm 91:11.

OUR subject this morning was the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb upon the lintel and the two door-posts of the houses of the children of Israel and Egypt. As soon as that was done and the lamb had been eaten, they had to start upon their journey to Canaan. They knew that they had to go and they were prepared to go. They had their loins girt and each man had his staff in his hand and his sandals on his feet. After being prisoners so long, they were set free in order that they might become pilgrims to the land which the Lord their God had given to their fathers.

We who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, are in a similar condition to theirs, for the Lord has redeemed us and we can sing the new song, "He has brought us up out of the house of bondage and with a high hand and an outstretched arm He has made us free." And now we are pilgrims and strangers in this world, for we are on our way to a better land than the earthly Canaan ever was—a land that flows with something richer than milk and honey and where there is an eternal and abounding portion appointed for each one of the redeemed! We are pressing on, through this great wilderness, towards the land into which the Lord will surely bring us in His own good time. Our text is a promise to pilgrims. It most appropriately follows the text of this morning—"The blood shall be to you for a token." You have set out upon the road to Heaven. You have entered the narrow way by Christ, who is the Gate at the head of the way, and now you are wondering how you will get on while you are on the road, and whether you will be proved in the right way so as to endure unto the end. This promise comes to you with much of real heart-cheer—"He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."

I. My first remark is rather by way of implication from the text than in direct exposition of it. It is this—THERE ARE SOME WAYS WHICH ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PROMISE because they are not our ways and they are not God's ways. They are ways into which we may be tempted by Satan—and which we are to jealously avoid.

You know how, when the devil professed to quote this text to our Lord, he left out the latter part of it, "to keep you in all your ways," because it would not have suited his purpose to mention that proviso. We, however,

will begin with the words which the devil omitted since the very fact of his omission of them seems to show how essential they are to a right understanding of the meaning of the text! O Christian, if you keep to the King's Highway, you will be safe! But there are byways and, alas, crooked lanes which you must not go down. If you do go there, you will go at your own risk. He who travels on the King's Highway is under the King's protection—but he who takes to byroads must protect himself—and the probability is that he will meet with robbers who will make him rue the day that he ever turned to the right hand or to the left!

So first we must take care that we never go *in the ways of presumption*. This is what Satan would have had Christ do. "Cast Yourself down," he said, "for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You." This temptation to presumption is by no means an uncommon one. I have heard of it from the lips of men who were evidently not the children of God, or they would have resisted the temptation and not have yielded to it as they did. They have said, "Well, we are God's children, so we may do as we like. We are saved, therefore we may live as we please"—a dreadful inference from what, to other men, might be a precious Truth of God. O dear Friends, beware of tempting the devil to tempt you! Beware, too, of tempting the Lord, your God, as some do who venture a long way into evil company, or into doubtful paths under the mistaken notion that they are so prudent that they will not be overtaken as others might be—that they are so sage and withal so experienced that they may go where young people must not venture, and may do a great many things which less-instructed Christians had better not do. Where you think you are perfectly safe, there you are often most in danger! Horses frequently fall just at the bottom of the hill, when the driver thinks that it is unnecessary to rein them up any longer. When you are so foolish as to say, "Now I am out of the reach of temptation," you are in the very midst of temptation! And when you think you are not being tempted at all, you are being tempted the most by the very fancy that you are not being tempted!

O beloved Friends, beware of presuming! Some have been so favored in the dispensations of Providence, so prosperous in everything they have undertaken, that they have thought they might speculate as far as ever they pleased and, at last—well, they've had very shady characters at the end of their lives. They have done once what they never ought to have done and, because it succeeded, they have been tempted to do it again and yet again. But, I pray you, Sirs, never gather from the success of a wrong action, that God is willing for you to repeat it! Rather say, "God was very gracious to me in not punishing me that time, but I will never run such a risk as that again." I do not believe that Jonah, after having been once thrown into the sea and been cast forth upon the shore by the whale, ever wanted to be flung into the sea again. He might not have felt certain about another whale coming along to carry him to land! If you have been miraculously delivered once from the great deep, do not put yourself into such a position again. If you do, you may find that the next great fish is a shark—not a whale—and, instead of being brought to land,

you may be destroyed. In brief, beware of all presumptuous ways, for God has not promised to keep you there.

And, Brothers and Sisters, you scarcely need to be told that you cannot expect to be preserved *if you go into sinful ways*. I trust that you watch against the more coarse and vulgar sins to which others are prone and that you will not be allowed to fall into them, but there is such a thing as falling little by little. Mind, I pray you, the little evils. A man never falls into the great, unclean sins of lust all at once—it is usually by a long series of little familiarities that he reaches that terrible end. He is indecorous first, indecent next and then, at last, criminal! Oh, keep back, keep back from the beginnings of evil! If you keep back at the very first, you will go no further. But if you slide just a little, you will find that this world is such a slippery place that you will surely fall, and fall frightfully, too. I trust that no Christian would practice dishonesty in his business, yet you know that it is very easy for one to do a wrong thing because it is "the custom of the trade." "They label this 100 yards, though it is only 90—but if I label it so, I will not sell it and in the next shop it will probably be marked 110—so I must label mine a little more than it is."

Well, if you do, remember that you are a thief! Though it is the custom of the trade, you are a liar if you conform to it and you cannot expect God's blessing upon you in doing it! Do you think that in the Day of Judgment, God will say to men, "You are not guilty, for that deception was the custom of the trade"? By no means! What does the Lord care about the customs of your trade? Do right, at all costs. If you do wrong, you do it at your peril, for you have no promise from God that He will keep you in such a way as that. I need not enlarge upon this point because you know as much about such things as I do and, therefore, you can make the application to your own particular case. But, O Christian, do keep altogether clear of every evil way! May God's Grace preserve you from straying into Bypath Meadow!

The man who professes to be a Christian must not expect God's angels to keep him if he goes *in the way of worldliness*. There are hundreds, and I fear thousands, of church members who say that they are the people of God, yet they appear to live entirely to this world. The great aim is moneymaking and personal aggrandizement—just as much as it is the aim of altogether ungodly men. The Kingdom of Christ, the needs of His Church, the needs of perishing souls, have a very slender place in their hearts—they live wholly for themselves—only they try to conceal it under the plea of providing for their families. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," is a text from which we need to preach to professing Christians throughout London, and throughout the whole world.

There is also the *way of pride* which many tread. They must be "respectable." They must move in "Society"—with a big "S"—and everything is ordered with a view to display. To be great, to be famous, to be esteemed, to keep up a high repute—it is for this that they live! And some grow very strong, in a Christian sort of way, in that line. They

profess to have attained to a "higher life" than ordinary Christians ever reach. I am not at all anxious to get up there, for I do not believe there is any higher life in this world than the life of God which is given to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ! The highest life I aspire to is to live as Jesus Christ lived and to walk as He walked—and that is the lowest kind of life with which any Christian ought to be contented! When we get such fine feathers as these, they do not make us fine birds.

There is also *the way of willfulness* which I have known some follow. Very grievous is it to see some whom we really think to be good men, shift their quarters apparently without any reason. They were doing very well, yet away they rush, for they cannot let well enough alone. Some Brothers seem to be afflicted with a kind of perpetual fidgetiness. They are rolling stones and gather no moss. They move from one position to another, not because there is any need for them to move, but just because they cannot stay still! They go away from their nest and away from their home—and very often act in direct opposition to the order of God's Providence! Oh, beware of that spirit of willfulness! We may get to be so very strong-headed that we may have to suffer there! It is often wise, as the old saying puts it, to take advice of our pillow. He who does not sleep upon a thing may have to weep upon it. Better look before you leap. Always follow the cloud of God's Providence—don't run before it, for if you run before it, you may find it hard work to get back again. Many have acted thus to their cost and, of course, have had no blessing resting upon them in doing so.

One other way in which a Christian ought not to go is *the way of erroneous doctrine*. I know some professors who, as soon as a new heresy comes up, want to have taste of it. I confess that I never felt much temptation in that direction. I do not suppose if you went into a chemist's shop, you would say to him, "I have heard of somebody being killed at Norwood by taking such-and-such a poison—I would like a taste of it." You would not ask him to take down his big bottles and to give you a taste of all the deadly poisons he had in stock. "Oh, no!" You say, "we are in our right senses. We would not do such a foolish thing as that." Yet I know people who as soon as ever there is any teaching spoken of as being erroneous, say, "We must have a look at that. We must have a taste of that"—never satisfied except when they are tasting poison! There is a period in life when a Christian man should obey Paul's injunction to the Thessalonians, "Prove all things"—but let him get that done as quickly as he can and then let him get to the second part of the injunction—"Hold fast that which is good." Never hold anything fast till you have proved it to be good—but do not be everlastingly proving it! Some things do not need *any* proving—they bear upon their forefront their character. But others need to be proved, so, having proved the right things to be right, and the true things to be true, hold them fast and turn not aside from them!

About every six weeks there is a new doctrine promulgated. Sometimes there is a new sect started. It is simply because there is somebody away up there in his study who is sorely troubled with bile or

dyspepsia. He never went out to try to win a soul. He never did any practical work for Christ. But he edits a newspaper, or he writes for a magazine—and out of that wonderful brain of his, which is full of cobwebs, he excogitates a new doctrine! And as there are certain people who are always waiting for such novelties, straightway they run off with it and spread it wherever they can. These false-doctrine makers and their disciples are the curse of the age in which we live! I implore you, my Friend, to abide in the good old paths! What you know to be true, that hold fast! Forsake not your father's God and your mother's God. As for the Truths of God which God has taught you by His own Spirit, grapple them to you as with hooks of steel, for, if you go in the way of error, you cannot expect Divine protection!

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH SAFETY IS GUARANTEED. I shall only have time to mention them very briefly.

There is, first, *the way of humble faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. You know that way, Brothers and Sisters, so walk in it. Oh, to be nothing and to let Christ be everything—to confess our own guilt and to be clothed in His righteousness! Keep to that safe road, for it is the King's Highway of which it may be said, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there."

There is, next, *the way of obedience to Divine precepts*. Do what God tells you, as God tells you and because God tells you, and no hurt can come to you. The Lord told Moses to take by the tail the serpent from which he fled. He did so and he was not bitten, but the serpent stiffened into a wonder-working rod! Obey the Lord in all things. Mind the jots and the tittles, for whoever will break one of the least of Christ's commandments "and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." Oh, to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, step by step, and to keep closely to His footprints! It is in such ways that angelic protection will be afforded to us.

There is, also, *the way of childlike trust in Providential guidance*. Happy is that man who always waits upon God to know what he shall do—who asks the Lord to always guide him and who dares not lean upon his own understanding. Watch the Lord's Providential leadings. Wait for Divine guidance. It is far better to stand still than to run in the wrong road. Pause a while and pray for direction—and do not move until you hear the voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk you in it." In such a road as that, angels will certainly guard you!

There is, too, *the way of strict principle and stern integrity*. Travelling along that road will often involve a good many losses and crosses, much reproach and, sometimes it will even appear to destroy your usefulness. But I charge you—young men especially—never violate any principle which you profess to hold! I believe that it has been a lasting blessing to some whom I know, that they have scorned to trim their sails, even in

the smallest degree, to please any living soul. Do the same. "Be just and fear not." Keep to a cause that is despised if you believe it is a right one and love it all the more because it is despised! Ask not what it will pay. Care not for the flatterer's smile. Pursue Truth even though she may go along very rough roads—she will always repay you in the long run. Cling to her and win her smile—then the frowns of the whole world need not cause you a moment's thought! The way of principle is the way of safety. God's angels will keep you if you keep to that road.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, I am quite sure that *the way of consecrated service for God's Glory is another of these safe ways*. It is well when a man says, "I choose my path by this rule—how can I best serve my God? Having judged whether them is any principle involved and having a fair choice between this and that, I say to myself, 'In which way can I hope to be the more useful? In what course of life can I best glorify God?'" That is your way to Heaven, Christian—the way in which your Master can get the most glory out of you! And if you walk in that way, you may depend upon it that you will be protected by His Sovereign Power!

And once again, *there is the way of separation from the world and close walking with God*. No man ever suffered any real injury through keeping himself aloof from the ways of ungodly men and, on the other hand, no man ever failed to be a gainer by close and intimate fellowship with God. "Enoch walked with God" and he gained not only escape from the pangs of death, but also the testimony that "he pleased God." O Christian, could not more of us choose this blessed path and walk in it continually? If we did so, we "would have the fulfillment, in its deepest meaning, of the promise of our text, "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."

III. But I must pass on to note briefly, in the third place, that THESE RIGHT WAYS WILL LEAD US INTO DIFFERING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Sometimes *the right way will lead us into very stony places*, positions of great difficulty—yet here is the promise to meet that emergency, "They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." A way is none the less right because it is rough. Indeed, often it is all the more sure to be the right way because it is so displeasing to flesh and blood.

Sometimes, also, *the right way may be very terrible with temptation*. If your path is so beset, do not, therefore, imagine that it is a wrong way, because the Psalmist goes on to say, "You shall tread upon the lion and adder." Lions and adders will come to you—temptations will threaten to devour you even while you are in the right road—but then, you are promised that as long as it is the right road that you are in, you shall get the victory over the lion and the adder. The temptation may be of so mysterious a character that you cannot understand it. It may be like a dragon, but, if so, here is your comfort, "the young lion and the dragon shall you trample underfoot."

And remember, beloved Friends, that even if the road is not stony and if no lion attacks you, *you will be kept from the perils of the smooth and*

easy roads. You will always need Divine and angelic keeping, for God would not have charged His angels to keep His people in all their ways if they did not need protection in all their ways! Some of you are just now prospering in business, but your way is not any safer than the way of the man who is losing his all. Indeed, yours may not be as safe as his! To you who are in robust health, I venture to say that your path is more perilous than the path of the man who is always ailing. And to all of you I say, pray for angelic keeping. Ask the Lord to guard you with His celestial hosts, or else, in any of your ways, be they rough or smooth, you will fall to your serious hurt.

IV. Now we come to the fourth point which is this—WHILE WALKING IN ALL RIGHT WAYS, BELIEVERS ARE SECURE. "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."

O Christian, if you have not violated your conscience. If you have not forsaken the path of communion with your God, think what high privileges are yours! First, *God Himself concerns Himself about you*. He charges His angels to take care of you. David, when his soldiers went to battle against his rebellious son, Absalom, specially charged their leaders to deal gently with the young man, Absalom, for his sake. But he charged them in vain. In a far higher sense God charges His angels to guard His saints—but He does not charge them in vain! This is not a mere general command. It is a sort of imperative personal charge that God lays upon His angels—"Take care of My children. They are on My road—the King's high road of rectitude. Watch over them and do not allow them to be hurt." So you have God personally charging His angels to take care of you!

Next, *you have mysterious agencies to protect you*. "He shall give His angels charge over you." We speak of dragons, but we do not know much about them. And we do not know much about angels, but we feel sure that angels can overcome dragons, for they are more than a match for devils! And if mysterious temptations come to you, there shall also be mysterious defenders to thrust them back. You have more friends, poor Christian, than you know of. When you are fighting the battles of God, you may hear a rush of angels' wings at your side if you only have your ears Divinely opened. If all men forsake you, God can send His angels, though you see them not, to strengthen you in some secret manner that I cannot fully explain. "Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha," the Prophet who dared to be true to his God and to serve Him faithfully. God would sooner empty Heaven of all the angelic host, cherubim and seraphim included, than allow any *one* of His people who has walked in His ways, to suffer defeat. He charges all His angels to take care of His saints and to keep them in all right ways.

And as angels are on our side, *so are all things, visible and invisible*. Why Believers, the very stones of the field are in league with you and the beasts of the field are at peace with you! Wherever you go, you have friends ready to help you. It is true that you have enemies among the

wicked, but their weapons shall not prevail against you. And wherever there is a messenger of God—be it wind, or storm, or lightning, or hail—it is your friend! The very stars in their courses fight for you! The forces, terrific and tremendous, which at times shake the world, are only your Father's flaming swords unsheathed to protect you! If we are walking in the ways of God, we can truthfully sing—

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above."

Sing then, you saints of the Lord, for everything is on your side! "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."

What a very sweet thought is suggested by the word, "you," in our text! It teaches us that *each one of the saints is personally protected.* "He shall give His angels charge over *you*, to keep you in all your ways." God takes a personal interest in every traveler along the right road and charges His angels to keep them. Perhaps you say, "I do not read the text, Sir, as referring to me." Well, I think you should. When you read the precept, "You shall not steal," do you suppose that it refers to you? "Oh, yes!" you say, "I would not like to suggest that it did not mean me. I would not plead exemption from the precept." Well, then, my dear Brother, do not seek to be exempted from the promise! Just as you feel sure that the precept applies to you, so, as a child of God, feel sure that the promise applies to you—"He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."

This protection is perpetual as well as personal. God's angels are "to keep you in all your ways"—in your ups and your downs, in your advancement and your retiring—to keep you when you are asleep and when you are awake—to keep you when you are alone and when you are in company—to keep you if you have to preach and to keep you if you have to hear—to keep you if you have to serve and to keep you if you have to suffer. You always need keeping and you shall always have it, for the angels are charged "to keep you in all your ways"!

And how beautiful it is to remember that *all this keeping brings honor with it.* "He shall give *His* angels charge over you." Notice that—"He shall give *His* angels"—the very angels that wait upon God and see His face! The very angels that are the bodyguard of the Eternal! "He shall give His angels charge over you," "Mark you," says the Lord to Gabriel, or Michael, or whatever the angel's name may be, "I charge you to take special care of that poor girl, for she is a daughter of Mine. Take care of that poor man whom so many despise, for he is a prince of the blood imperial. He belongs to Me—he is an heir of God and joint-heir with

Jesus Christ." Oh, what amazing dignity this promise puts upon the very least and lowliest of the followers of the Lamb!

Note just one more point, that *all these privileges come to us by Jesus Christ*, for Christ is that mystic Ladder which Jacob saw, up-and-down whose wondrous rungs the angels came and went! The commerce between the saints and Heaven is kept up by way of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what joy is this! If Christ is yours, angels are yours, and all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places will delight to take care of you!

Now, if anyone here is going home to a lonely room, I should like you to feel that you are not going there alone. Father and mother are away in the country, perhaps, and some of you young people feel quite alone in London. But, if you are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not alone, for the Lord of all the holy angels is with you and an innumerable company of blessed spirits is round about you. Take comfort from this glorious Truth of God! God's mysterious angelic agency, which you see not and hear not, but which is most true and real, will form a cordon round you to protect you in the midst of the temptations of this great city! And if you are but faithful to Him and keep in His ways, nothing shall hurt you between here and Heaven! There may be many darts hurled at you, but the great shield of faith shall turn them all aside or quench them forever. You will have to encounter many temptations and trials, but you will be preserved amid them all. I heard a Primitive Methodist minister speaking last Friday night, make use of a very strong expression while describing what a man could do by faith. He said, "He can not only overcome a legion of devils, but he could kick his way through a lane of devils if he did but rest in God." I have had that idea in my mind ever since I heard him use that expression—and I am sure that it is true, for some of us have already had to do it. Those devils are great cowards. So when God once takes entire possession of a man, he need not fear even though all Hell were let loose upon him! One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep! And one man whom God makes strong, can put to route all the hosts of Hell—and he need not fear all the trials of life whatever they may be! "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

In closing, there are two or three thoughts which I think are worth remembering. The first is this. Dear Brothers and Sisters, we see, from this text, that *the lowest employment is consistent with the highest enjoyment*. The angels are our nurses—"they shall bear you up in their hands," just as nurses hold up little children who are not able to stand by themselves. Those angels continually behold God's face and live in the perfect bliss of Heaven, yet they condescend to do such humble deeds as these. Dear Brother, be like the angels in this respect—teach an infant class in the Sunday school, yet keep your face bright with the Light of God's Countenance. Give away tracts, go and visit among the poor, look after fallen women, or do any other work for the Lord that needs to be done. Never mind what it is, but remember that the employment is all the more honorable because it appears to be so commonplace. Never was

Christ grander, I think, than when He washed His disciples' feet. Certainly, never are we more like He than when we, also, are willing to wash their feet, or render any lowly service that they may need.

The next thought is *as angels watch over us, how cheerfully ought we to watch over one another*! How gladly you who are older in the Divine life, ought to watch over the younger ones of the Lord's family! If God enables you to have any of the joy of angels over repenting sinners, mind that you take some of the care which angels exercise over those who walk in God's ways. What can I, the pastor of this huge church, and my brother and all the elders, do by way of watching over 5,000 of you? You must pastor yourselves to a large extent! Watch over one another. "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Visit each other in their sickness. Seek to bring back to Christ and the church all the backsliders whom you can find. Labor for the good of one another, for, in only this way can our task be done—and you shall be like the angels if you bear up the feeble ones in your hands lest they trip up and fall to their grievous hurt.

Then next, *how safe and happy we ought to feel when we know that God has charged the angels to take care of us*! Do not be nervous, my dear Sister, the next time there is a little storm, or even a great storm. Do not be afraid, my dear Friend, when sickness comes into your house. Do not be alarmed, as perhaps you are, when you hear that there is fever next door to you. Remember the promise that precedes our text—"Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." But suppose it should seem right to the Lord to let the plague come to you? And suppose you shall die of it? Well, you will the sooner be in Heaven! Therefore comfort one another with the reflection that all is well with you as long as you keep in the way of duty.

And, lastly, *how holy we ought to be with such holy beings watching over us*! If the angels are always hovering round you, mind what you are doing! Would you, my dear Friend, have spoken as you did when you were coming in at that door, yonder, if you had seen an angel standing by your side, listening to what you were saying? Oh, no, you are wonderfully decorous when there is somebody near whom you respect! How often your glib tongue is checked when there is some Christian man or woman whom you highly esteem within hearing! How many a thing is done that would not be done under the eyes of one whom you love! It is not only true that "a bird of the air shall carry the voice and that which has wings shall tell the matter," but it is also true that there are angels always watching over us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that a woman in the public assembly ought to have her head covered because of the angels—a certain decorum was due because of the angels who were there. And I am sure that I may use the same argument concerning all our actions. Whether we are alone or in company, let us not sin because angels are always watching us. And, remember, the angels' Lord is also watching us!

May He graciously keep us in His holy way. And if we are so kept, we shall be preserved from all evil while we are here and, at last, we shall see His face with joy and live with Him forever! I would to God that all who are now present were in that holy way. I remind you once more that the entrance to it is by a door that has the blood-mark upon the lintel and the two doorposts—"The blood shall be to you for a token." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:25-32.

Verse 25. My *soul cleaves unto the dust.* "It sticks to it as though it were glued to it. My soul cannot be lifted up, at least by myself, out of its sadness and its earthiness." The Psalmist was not one who could boast of perfection. He had to lament that the earth which was in him by nature made even his soul cleave to Mother Earth. He did not like it. He was not content that it should be so and, therefore, he breathed this prayer—

25. *Quicken You me according to Your word.* "Lord, there is nothing but life that can bring me up out of the dust, for death lurks in the dust and the dust tends to death. Put life into me, Lord—Your life, the Divine life. You have promised to do this, therefore, do it, Lord, 'according to Your word.'" That is a prayer which is always sure to succeed, for it is based upon the promise of God. Has the Lord promised anything? Then He will surely perform it! And you cannot use a better argument in prayer than to say to Him, "Do as You have said." Or, as the Psalmist puts it, "Quicken You me according to Your word."

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me.* "I have made a full confession to You, my God. I have acknowledged my fault wherein I was wrong and I have thanked You for your Grace given to me in anything wherein I was right."

26. *Teach me Your statutes.* "O Lord, let me not have such a sorry tale to tell again. If my copy of Your handwriting has been badly written, set it afresh for me, I pray You. 'Teach me Your statutes.'"

27. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.* "Let me know, O Lord, what the way of Your precepts are. Get me into that way and then, oh help me to keep in it all my life!"

27. *So shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* A man never talks rightly of God's works till he knows God's ways. And it is idle to talk of them if there is no *doing* at the back of the talking. So the Psalmist prays, "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works." To preach and not practice is very bad preaching! But first to understand the way of the Lord, then to run in it—and then to speak of it—this is well!

28. *My soul melts for heaviness.* The Hebrew word is, "drops." The Psalmist's soul was like water dripping from the eaves of a house in time of rain. There are two sorts of sorrow—the sorrow that rushes like a

mighty torrent and the sorrow which is, perhaps, the worse of the two, which goes drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip—like the constant dripping which wears away stones—and which makes even the boldest heart to feel the attrition. "My soul melts, dissolves, drops, drips for heaviness."

28. *Strengthen You me.* The Psalmist does not ask to have the trouble removed. He prays, "Help me to bear it." Whenever there is a thing that is hard, the right way to cut through it is to get something that is still harder. If God will give us an adequate supply of His Grace, hard times will not wear us away! So the Psalmist prays, "Strengthen You me"—

28. *According unto Your word.* See how he clings to that expression, "according unto Your word"? He knows the power of that argument and, therefore, he uses it again and again!

29. *Remove from me the way of lying.* "Do not let me fall into any untrue habits. Do not let me profess to have had an experience which I have never felt, or talk about holy things of which I know nothing experimentally. Keep me from everything that has any trace of falsehood in it."

29. *And grant me Your Law graciously.* "For Your Law is truth, and when Your Grace brings Your Law home to my heart, all that is false will be banished from me."

30. *I have chosen the way of truth. Your judgments have I laid before me.* "I have laid them before me as a man puts his model in front of him that he may work to it." It is well for us to have God's way and God's judgments always before our eyes, that we may be duly impressed and rightly guided by them.

31. *I have stuck unto Your testimonies.* Just now the Psalmist said that his soul stuck to the earth, yet at the same time he was sticking to God's testimonies, for every good man is two men. There is a new-birth man who sticks to God's testimonies, and there is that old carnal nature in us which cleaves to the dust.

31, 32. *O Lord, put me not to shame. I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.* That is, "When You shall give me liberty of heart, then I will run in the way of Your commandments. When the impediments are removed—when the sin which does so easily entangle me is taken away—then will I run with delight in the way of Your commandments!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—91, 720.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—48.

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

GOD'S JEWELS
NO. 2970

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1906.

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

"And they shall be Mine, says the LORD of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."
Malachi 3:17.

THESE words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men, when they scoffed at God's altar and said of His service, "What a weariness it is!" and scornfully asked, "What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" Yet even those dark nights were cheered by bright stars. Though the great congregations of God's House were but a mockery, yet there were smaller assemblies which God gazed upon with delight. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who "feared the Lord" and who "spoke often, one to another," and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes! He "listened and heard" and He so approved of that which He heard that He took note of it and declared that He would publish it. "A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." Yes, and He valued so much these hidden ones, "faithful among the faithless found," that He called them His "jewels."And He declared that in the great day when He should gather together His "segullah," His regalia—the peculiar treasure of kings—He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls! "They shall be Mine," He said, "in the day when I gather up My jewels into My casket to be there forever."

We will try to work out this metaphor of jewels. Our first point shall be that *God's people are compared to jewels.* Our second, *the making up of the jewels.* And our third, *the privilege of being found among them.*

I. THE LORD COMPARES HIS PEOPLE TO JEWELS.

From the remotest antiquity, *men have thought much of precious stones.* Almost fabulous prices have been paid for them and there have been instances in which most bloody wars have been waged for the possession of a certain jewel renowned for its brilliance and size. Men hunt after gold, but the diamond they pursue with even greater eagerness. Five hundred men will work for a whole year in the diamond mines of Brazil when the entire produce of the year might be held in the hollow of your hand! And princes will give whole principalities, or barter the estates of half a nation in order to possess one peculiar brilliant of rare excellence. We wonder not, therefore, that the Lord, who elsewhere likens the precious sons of Zion to fine gold, should here compare them

to jewels. However little they may be esteemed by men, the great Jewel-Valuer, the Lord Jesus Christ, esteems them as precious beyond all price! His life was as dear to Him as life is to us, and yet all that He had, even His life, did He give for His elect ones. He counted down the price of His jewels in drops of bloody sweat in the gloomy Garden of Gethsemane. His very heart was set astir, streaming with priceless blood in order that He might redeem His people. We may compare our Lord to that merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when He had found the one pearl of His Church, for the joy thereof went and sold all that He had that He might make it His own!

Our God sets great value upon those whom He calls His jewels, as we may gather not only from their costly redemption, but from the fact that all Providence is but a wheel upon which to polish and perfect them. Those stupendous wheels, which Ezekiel saw, were but a part of the machinery of the great Lapidary by which He cuts the facets of His true brilliants and makes His diamonds ready for His crown, for is it not written that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"? The Lord values His people very highly—not only the rich among them, not alone the most gracious among them—but the very least and most unworthy among Believers are Jehovah's jewels! To fear the Lord and think upon His name are very simple indications of piety, yet, if we only come up to the standard which these evidences indicate, we are dear to God. What though we may possess no singular gifts or eminent graces. What though our voice may never be heard among the crowds of populous cities, yet still, if we "think upon His name," and our hearts are set towards the Lord Jesus, we are precious to Him!

Jewels well portray the Christian *because they are extremely hard and durable*. Most jewels will scratch glass. Some of them will cut it while they, themselves, will not be cut by the sharpest file. And many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acids. The Christian is such an one. He has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled and destined to endure forever! In Pompeii and Herculaneum, diggers have discovered gems in an excellent state of preservation, while statuary and implements of iron have been destroyed. Jewels will last out the world's lifetime and glitter on as long as the sun shines! Rust does not corrupt them, nor does the moth devour them though the thief may break through and steal them. The Christian is born of an incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. The world has often tried to crush or destroy God's diamonds, but all the attempts of malicious fury have failed. All that enmity has ever accomplished has only been, in the hands of God, the means of displaying the preciousness and brilliance of His jewels! The sham Christian, who is but a paste gem, soon yields to trial—he evaporates into a little noxious gas of self-conceit—and it is all over with him. A little heat of persecution and the man-made Christian—where is he? But the genuine Christian, the true gem, the choice jewel of God will survive the fires of time and, when the fast dissolving Day shall arrive, he shall come forth from the furnace without a flaw!

The jewel is *prized for its luster*. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. Certainly there is no light like that which is reflected from the sincere Christian! The renewed heart catches the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and reflects them—not without some refraction, for we are mortal—but still, with much of glory, for we are immortal and God dwells in us! Look how the diamond flashes and sparkles! It is of the first water when, with certain other conditions, it is also without cloudiness and without spots. And oh, when a Christian is truly what a saint should be—what a luster, what a brilliance there is about him! He is like the Lord Jesus Christ, humble yet bold, teachable yet firm, gentle yet courageous! Like his Master, he goes about doing the will of Him that sent him. And though the wicked world may not love him, it cannot but perceive his brightness!

Look at Richard Baxter, in Kidderminster—what a flashing diamond he was! He had some spots, no doubt, but his brightness was most surprising! Even swearers on the ale-bench could not but know that He was a Heaven-born spirit! We might quote honored names out of all Christian churches which would be at once discerned by you as God's flashing brilliants because there is about them so little of the cloudiness of Nature—and so much of the brightness of Grace that he must be blind, indeed, who does not admire them! Precious stones are the flowers of the mineral world, the blossoms of the mines, the roses and lilies of earth's caverns. Scarcely has the eye ever seen a more beautiful object than the breastplate of the high priest, studded with the 12 gems, each with its own separate ray melting into a harmony of splendor and, albeit that the trickeries of pomp have but little influence over men of sober minds, I scarcely believe that there exists a single person who is altogether impervious to the influence of a crown set with ruby, pearl, emerald and a bright array of other costly gems!

There is a beauty, a Divine and superhuman beauty, about a Christian. He may be humbly clad and miserably housed. He may be poor and his name may never be mentioned among the great. But jewelers value a rare stone, none the less, because of its ill-setting. Beloved, nothing so delights God, next to the Person of His own dear Son, as the sight of one of those whom He has made like unto the Lord Jesus! Know you not that Christ's delights are with the sons of men and that the holiness, the patience, the devotion, the zeal, the love and the faith of His people are precious to Him? The whole creation affords no fairer sight to the Most High than an assembly of His sanctified people in whom He sees the beauty of His own Character reflected. May you and I have much of "the beauty of holiness" given to us by the Holy Spirit! May the Lord look upon us with Divine satisfaction because He sees in us the rays of the solar spectrum of His own ineffable perfection!

Christians are comparable to jewels *because of their rarity*. There are not many precious stones in the world. Of the smaller sorts, there may be many, but of the rarer gems, there are so few that a little child might

write them. Only six very large diamonds (called paragons) are known in the world and God's people are but few compared with the unregenerate multitude who are as the pebbles in the brook. The Christian belongs, like the ruby, the diamond and the emerald, to the choicest of created things. These stones are the aristocracy of minerals and Christians are the aristocracy of men. They are God's nobles. The roll of Battle Abbey—have you ever looked it through? Well, it is of little consequence. There is a better roll by far—and if your name is written *there*, it will be of infinitely more consequence to you! In Doomsday Book—is there a name there at all like yours? Never mind whether there is or not. There is a Doom's Day Book which will be of more value in the day of doom than Doomsday Book has ever been among the sons of men. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many great and noble have their names inscribed there—but all who are written in Heaven are, in another sense, wise, and great, and noble—for God has made them so through His own Grace. Not many are the gems which enrich the nations and not many are the saints who shine among men. The way to Heaven is narrow, and the Savior sorrowfully says, "Few there are that find it." There is a city where pearl, jasper, carbuncle and emerald are as common things. O fair Jerusalem, when shall these eyes behold your turrets and your pinnacles?

It is worthy of observation, too, that *a jewel is the production of God*. Diamonds have been burned and other jewels have been resolved into their elements. But, after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian Knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade—they are the secret productions of God's own skill—and chemists fail to tell how they were produced, even though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, *but it cannot make one*. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the Heaven-born life! And all the so-called "sacraments," vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian! "Yes," says one, "we take a little water and we make an infant a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." Sir, you make yourself a liar—and nothing better when you so speak—for it is neither in your power, nor in the power of any other man to regenerate a soul by any performance, either with or without water! You may never wash a flint long enough before you can wash it into a diamond. To make jewels for Christ's crown is God's work and God's work alone! We might preach until our tongues grew dumb and men's ears grew deaf, but not a living soul would ever receive Divine Grace by our talk alone—the Spirit must go with the Word of God, or it is so much wasted breath! The Lord alone can create a child of Grace! And a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus where he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of Deity to create a Believer as it is to create a world!

It is worthy of remark, too, that *jewels are of many kinds*. Perhaps there is not a single ray in the spectrum which is not represented among them—from the purest white of the diamond, the red of the ruby, the

bright green of the emerald, to the blue of the sapphire. So is it with God's people. They are not all alike and they never will be! All attempts at uniformity must fail and it is very proper that they should. We need not wish to be one in the sense of uniformity, but only in the sense of unity—not all one jewel, but many set in one crown. It little matters whether we shine with the sapphire's blue, or the emerald's green, or the ruby's red, or the diamond's white, so long as we are the Lord's in the day when He makes up His jewels!

Jewels are of all sizes, yet they are all jewels. One is a Koh-I-Noor, a very mountain of light, but it is not any more a diamond because it is large, though it is more precious. The smallest dust of the diamond that comes from the lapidary's wheel is made of the same material as the richest jewel that sparkles in the monarch's crown and, even so, those Christians who have but little faith and little Grace, are still as much the Divine workmanship as the brightest and most precious in the believing family! And what is more, they shall be in the casket when the others are there, for it is said of them all, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

Once more, *jewels are found all over the world.* In the most frozen regions, on the tops of mountains and in the depths of mines, jewels have been discovered, but they are said to be most numerous in tropical regions. So, Christians are to be found everywhere. Blessed be the name of God, the Eskimos have sung the praises of Immanuel in the regions of eternal ice! And the children of the sun have learned to adore the Sun of Righteousness in the midst of the torrid zone! But in England, which is the tropical region of Divine Grace, the land where the Gospel is preached in our streets, we find the most of Believers, as also in a few other happy lands which, like our own fair island, lie upon the Equinoctial line of Gospel privilege, where the Grace of God has given the Gospel in its greatest purity!

Wherever the jewels have been found, though they differ in some respects, yet *they are all alike in others. Kings delight in them and are glad to use them as regal ornaments.* So, wherever the Lord finds His precious ones, East or West, or North or South, He sees something in them in which they all agree, and He delights in them. Our Lord Jesus counts them to be His true ornaments with which He arrays Himself as a bridegroom adorns himself with ornaments, and as a bride decks herself with jewels. God delights in Christians, come from whatever part they may. Although they may be of many tongues and though the colors of their skins may vary, yet are they still very, very precious in His sight—and they shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels!

II. In the second place, let us consider THE MAKING UP OF THE JEWELS.

We have not come to the day of the making up of the jewels, for *some of them are at this hour hidden and undiscovered.* There is no doubt that many precious stones will yet be found. Diamond hunters are, at this moment, looking for them in the caverns of the earth and washing the soil of the mines to find them. Many of the chosen of God are not yet

manifested. The missionaries in heathen lands are toiling to discover them amid the mire of idolatry. My daily business and calling is that of a jewel hunter—and this pulpit is the place where I try to separate the precious from the vile. Sunday school teachers and other workers are also diamond hunters. They deal with gems far more precious than millions of gold and silver. Oh, that all Christians were seekers of souls, for there is much need of all hands and it is a work which well rewards the laborer. All the chosen are not yet saved. Blood-bought multitudes remain to be gathered in! Oh, for Grace to seek them diligently! Because of the absence of so many of the Lord's gems, the "making up" of the jewels has not yet taken place—but the time for that is hastening on!

Many jewels are found, *but they are not yet polished*. They are precious gems, but it is only lately that they have been lifted up from the mine. When the diamond is first discovered, it glitters but little. You can see that it is a precious gem, but perhaps one half of it will have to be cut away before it sparkles with fullest splendor. The lapidary must torment it upon his wheel and many hundreds of pounds must be spent before perfection is reached. In some cases, thousands of pounds have been expended before the diamond has been brought to its full excellence. So it will be with many of the Lord's people—they are justified, but they are not completely sanctified. Corruption has to be subdued, ignorance removed, unbelief cut away, worldliness taken off before they can be set in the crown of the great King! For this also the King waits and His jewels are not "made up."

Many of the Lord's gems are but partly polished. Indeed, there are none on earth yet perfect. This is not the land of perfection! Some persons dream of it—their pretensions are but a dream. We have heard some say that they were perfect, but they were not perfect in the virtue of humility, or they would not have boasted after so vain-glorious a fashion! The saints are still in the Lapidary's hands. The Master is taking off first one angle and then another, and rending away much which we have foolishly cherished—but through this cutting process we shall sparkle gloriously before long, so that those who knew us on earth will be amazed to see the difference in Heaven! Perhaps it will be part of the joy of Heaven to perceive our conquest over sin, to see how the Divine hand has shed a glory and beauty upon the poor dull stones of earth!

The making up is delayed, too, because *certain of the gems which have been partly polished are missing*. "Oh," you say, "does the Lord ever lose any of His gems? "No, not forever, but for a time they may be missing. A certain blue diamond that was very greatly renowned was, by some means, lost at the time of the French Revolution and has never been heard of since. It is somewhere, however, and God knows where it is—and it is still a diamond. And so there are some of His people who go astray and we cannot tell where they are. But still, "the Lord knows them that are His" and, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Backslider, you were once a jewel in the church—you were put down in the book as a church member, but from the casket of the church, Satan stole you. Ah, but you did not belong to him and he

cannot keep you! You have agreed to be his, but your agreement does not stand for anything. You did not belong to yourself and so you could not give yourself away. Christ has the first and only valid claim to you and will yet obtain His rights by the Omnipotence of His Grace. Because of these missing jewels, the long-suffering of God waits. But the day is coming—its axles are hot with speed—when sardius, topaz and carbuncle shall glisten in the same crown with emerald, sapphire and diamond, nor shall ligure, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, or jasper be lacking—they shall all be "set in gold in their enclosing."

III. Upon THE HONORABLE PRIVILEGE of being numbered with the crown jewels of Jehovah, we will utter hardly more than a few sentences, and we will preface them with words of self-examination.

"They shall be Mine." This does not include all men, but only "those that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Standing in the midst of this immense assembly and remembering that a very large proportion of my Hearers are professors of faith in Christ, I am happy to be in such a great jewel house! But when I reflect that it is a very easy thing, indeed, to imitate a jewel so that the counterfeit cannot be detected except by the most skillful jeweler, I feel solemnly impressed with the desire that none of you may be deceived! It is not very long ago that a lady possessed a sapphire supposed to be worth £10,000. Without informing her relatives, she sold it and procured an imitation of it so cleverly fashioned that when she died, it was valued by a jeweler in order that the probate duty might be paid upon it—and the trustees of the estate actually paid probate duty upon it to our government on £10,000 for what was not really worth more than a few pence—for they imagined that it was the real sapphire.

Now if in examining material jewels, men well skilled have been thus deceived, you will not wonder if, in connection with the jewels of mind and spirit, it is so difficult to detect an impostor! You may deceive the minister, the deacons and the church—no, you may easily deceive *yourselves* and even pay the probate duty! You may be making sacrifices and discharging duties on account of true religion, as you think, but really for something which is not worth the name! Beloved in the Lord, be zealous for vital godliness! Hate hypocrisy, shun deception and watch against formality! I will make a pause and give you time, in a few minutes of silence, to pray that ancient and necessary prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." All paste gems and all the glass imitations will surely be detected in the day which will burn as an oven! May we be found among the Lord's genuine jewels in that dread testing day!

If we are the Lord's, then what privileges are ours! Then are we safe. If we really pass the scales at the last, there will be no more questioning, suspicions, beatings, weighing, or cutting. If the Great Valuer accepts us as being genuine, then we shall be secure forever!

Nor is this all, Beloved. We shall also be *honored*. Remember where the jewels are to shine forever. Jesus Himself shall wear them as His

glory and joy! Believers will be unrivalled illustrations of the Glory of Divine Grace throughout all ages. Can you see our glorious Well-Beloved? There He sits—adored of angels and admired of men! But what are the ornaments He wears? Worlds were too small to be signets upon His fingers and the zodiac too poor a thing to bind the sandals of His feet. But, oh, how bright He is, how glorious! And what are the jewels which display His beauty? They are souls redeemed by His death from going down into the Pit! Blood-washed sinners! Men and women who, but for Him, would have been tormented forever in the flames, but who now rejoice to sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever." So then—once acknowledged to be Christ's, you are not only safe, but you will be in the closest communion with Christ throughout eternity! It is a bliss, the thought of which may well flash with vehement flame through your hearts even now, that you are, one day, to display the Glory of Immanuel that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God! You are to be His "gold rings set with the beryl." With you as His reward, His Person will be "as bright as ivory overlaid with sapphires." You are so dear to Him that He bought you with His own blood because you could not be "gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price thereof." Your redemption by His death proves that your soul could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire! And when the ever-glorious God shall exhibit your sanctified spirit as an illustration of His glorious Character and work, no mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for your worth will be above rubies! The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal you, nor shall the precious crystal be compared to you.

But I hear a mournful voice crying, "All this is concerning the precious ones, but there is nothing for me. I was in hopes that there would have been something for a sinner like me." Well, what are you, then? Are you not a jewel? "No," you cry, "I am not a jewel. I am only a common stone. I am not worth the picking up—I am just one of the many pebbles on the shore of life—and the tide of death will soon wash me into the great ocean of eternity! I am not worthy of God's thoughts. I am not even worth His treading upon—I shall, with multitudes of others, be swallowed up in the great deep of wrath and never be heard of again!"

Soul, did you never hear this text? "I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." What stones were they? They were ordinary loose stones in Jordan's bed. John was standing in the river baptizing and pointing to those worthless pebbles not worth picking up. He said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Even so, this night, God is able of these stones around me in this vast throng to make gems which shall be His treasure in the day when He makes up His jewels! You cannot thus exalt yourselves, nor can I do it for you, but there is a secret and mysterious process by which, by Divine art, the common stone is transmuted into the diamond! And though you are a stone black with sin, or blood-red

with crime—though you are a flinty stone with jagged edges of blasphemy—though you are such a stone as Satan delights to throw at the Truth of God, yet God can transform you into a jewel! He can do it in an instant!

Do you know how He can do it? There is a wondrous rod with which He works matchless transformations. That rod is the Cross! Jesus Christ suffered that sinners might not suffer! Jesus Christ died that sinners might not die, but that "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"! Sinner though you are—if you come beneath the Cross and trustingly look up to God's dear Son, you shall be saved! And that salvation includes a complete change of nature by which you shall fear the Lord, think upon His name and mingle with those who speak often, one to another, with the certainty of being the Lord's when He makes up His jewels!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MALACHI 3; 4.

Malachi 3:1. *Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me.* The name Malachi means "my messenger." The reference here is, of course, to John the Baptist who was to prepare the way of the Lord.

1. *And the lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple.* Now, the Temple at Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, so how can the Jews still think the Lord, whom they profess to seek, will suddenly come to His Temple? He must have come there already—so we know He did—for there is not one stone of the Temple left standing upon another—"The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple"

1. *Even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the LORD of Hosts.* Christ was the great Messenger of the Covenant, the Messenger of mercy. And the Lord's own people, even in that ancient time, delighted in anticipating the coming of the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed Messenger of the Lord of Hosts!

2. *But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.* All that only looked like religion, but was not real and genuine was purged away at His coming. He was like a refiner's fire, consuming the false pretensions of the Pharisees and the vain boastings of the Scribes. There is, in the religion of Jesus Christ, a power that is a great purgative and a great refiner!

3. *And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.* Christ comes suddenly, but He comes to stay. "He shall sit." If He comes into our heart at this moment—and He may come there suddenly—He will come to stay there and He will sit there "as a refiner and purifier of silver."

3. *And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.* Those men called to holy service shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness after He has cleansed and purified them. You cannot

worship God rightly until you have been cleansed by Christ. Till then, you are like priests with defiled feet, unfit to come into the sanctuary of God. But when Christ has purified you, fail not to draw near to God and to present your thanks offering to Him.

4, 5. *Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, says the Lord of Hosts.* See how hard taskmasters are put, by Divine Inspiration, with sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers? They do not think badly of themselves, but the Lord thinks badly of them! And His judgment is always just.

6. *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.* This is their comfort—even the Immutability of God is on the side of His people! He is just and always just! He hates sin and always hates sin! Yet that unchangeableness of His is always on the side of the people of His choice!

7. *Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the LORD of Hosts.* You wanderers from God, take this invitation home to your hearts and act upon it! Arise and return unto your Father, for when you are yet a great way off, He will see you and will run to meet you, and have compassion upon you—"Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the Lord of Hosts."

7. *But you said, Wherein shall we return?* God takes notice of what men say to Him after He has spoken to them. He will take notice of what you say when you go out of this House of Prayer. Erring men usually have something to say for themselves. The self-righteous can always invent some excuse, or ask some question, as they did here—"Wherein shall we return?"

8. *Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me.* They were always ready to deny or question a just accusation, instead of letting it operate upon their conscience, so they asked about this charge.

8. *But you say, Wherein have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings.* They had kept back from God's service the money which was necessary for the carrying on of the worship of His house. We read, in Nehemiah 13:10, that "the Levites and the singers that did the work, were fled, everyone, to his field," for they could not live at Jerusalem because "the portions of the Levites had not been given them"—their supply of provisions having been stopped through the meanness of the people who had thus robbed the Lord "in tithes and offerings."

9. *You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.* They could not make out why they were so poor and why they could not get on! The real reason was that there was a curse resting upon all that they did because they had robbed God.

10. *Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of Hosts, 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.* They had kept themselves poor by their own meanness! If they had behaved rightly towards God, He would have enriched them with the bounties of His Providence. The very windows of Heaven would have been thrown open to give them abundance for all their needs.

11. *And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the LORD of Hosts.* The locust and the caterpillar came up and ate their harvests—all because God was angry with them—and He alone could change their miserable circumstances.

12. *And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the LORD of Hosts.* God is able, simply with a turn of His hand, or a glance of His eyes, to enrich or to impoverish. He gives in a thousand ways that we cannot control and He takes from us in as many ways which perhaps we cannot understand. It is always best to be right with God.

13-15. *Your words have been harsh against Me, says the LORD. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against You? You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness are set up; yes, they that tempt God are even delivered.* Those were indeed bad old times when the mass of the people looked only to their own temporal comfort! When they saw the wicked become rich, they wished that they were wicked, too, in order that they might be rich. They thought that it was of no use to serve God! But happily there was another set of people in the land, as there always is, more or less. God never leaves Himself without witnesses—and when the wicked are proudest, God's people are often boldest.

16. *Then.* At that very time—

16. *They that feared the LORD spoke often, one to another.* They could not bear to hear their God thus spoken of, so they went to one another's houses. They found one another out and talked to one another.

16. *And the Lord listened.* He loves to listen to the holy talk of a holy people. "The Lord listened."

16. *And heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.* That is a very precious expression. You cannot, perhaps, speak much for the Lord, yet you think the more about Him—and God remembers those who think upon His name. Yet, often, thinking leads to speaking and there ought to be no speaking without previous thought! God loves to listen to the thoughtful conversation of a loving people who stand true to Him in the midst of an ungodly crowd—and He thinks very highly of them.

17. *And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.* "Others, who thought much of themselves, shall be

thrown away like worthless pebbles, but these faithful ones shall be Mine in that day when I am putting My jewels into My crown, for they shall be precious in My sight."

17. *And I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.* When the sword of the enemy is drawn from its sheath. When disease is putting down its myriads. When God's vengeance has laid hold upon the ungodly He will be a hiding place for His people and will care for them as a man would anxiously care, not only for his son, but for his only son, one who is obedient and faithful to his father—"his own son that serves him."

18. *Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.* Not now, but *then*—by-and-by there shall be a distinguishing mark set upon all mankind! "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked."

18. *Between him that serves God and he that serves Him not.*

Malachi 4:1, 2. *For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you.* Here is the difference, "But unto you."

2. *That fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise.* Not like a scorching and burning oven as the sun of the heavens is in the East, but He shall arise!

2. *With healing in His wings and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* All is right with those who are right with God!

3-6. *And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of Hosts. Remember you the Law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their father, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* The Old Testament ends with the mutterings of a curse, but the New Testament begins with a message of blessing concerning the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! What a mercy to come from under the Old Covenant unto the New!

—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 RIGHT KIND OF FEAR
NO. 2971

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1876.

"Happy is the man who fears always."
Proverbs 28:14.

BUT did not John say that "fear has torment"? Then how can he be happy who has fear—and especially he who has it *always?* Did not John also say that "perfect love casts out fear"? How is it, then, that he is happy in whom love is not made perfect, if it true that the fear which John meant is left in it? Dear Friends, the explanation is that the word, "fear," is used in different senses—and both Solomon and John are right! Neither is there any conflict between their two statements. There is a fear which perfect love casts out because it has torment. That is the slavish fear which trembles before God as a criminal trembles before the judge—the fear which mistrusts, suspects and has no confidence in God—the fear which, therefore, keeps us away from God, causes us to dread the thought of drawing near to Him and makes us say, like the fool to whom the Psalmist refers, "No God." Many of you know what this kind of fear is, for you once suffered from it—though I trust you are now delivered from it by faith in Christ Jesus and by the love which the Spirit of God has worked in your hearts.

There is also another sort of fear which springs out of this slavish fear—and which is to be equally shunned, namely a fear which leads to the apprehension that something evil is about to happen. There are many persons who have so little faith in God that they fear that the trials which will sooner or later overtake them, will also overthrow them. They are afraid of a certain form of suffering that threatens them—they fear that they will not have patience enough to bear up under it. They feel sure that their spirit will sink in their sickness. Above all, they are dreadfully afraid to die. They have not yet believed that God will be with them when they pass through the Valley of Death and, because they cannot trust Him, they are all their lifetime subject to bondage! They cannot say that all things work together for good to them. And they often say, as poor old Jacob mistakenly said, "All these things are against me." And so they go on, fearing this and fearing that, and fearing the other, and their life is spent, to a great extent, in sorrow and sighing. May the Lord graciously deliver any of you who are in that condition!

That is a kind of fear from which the true Believer is free. He knows that whatever happens, God will overrule it for the good of His chosen.

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Resignation to the Divine will has made him feel that whatever the Lord wills is right—he does not seek to have his own will, but he is glad to make God's will his will—and so he is perfectly satisfied with all that comes. God save you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, from all fear of a slavish sort! Above all, no Christian ought to have any fear which would bring dishonor upon the truthfulness, the goodness, the Immutability, or the power of God. To doubt His promise—to suppose that He will not make it good—this is, indeed, a fear which has torment. To doubt God's faithfulness—to suppose that He can ever forget His children, that His mercy can be withdrawn from them, or that He will be favorable to them no more—this also is wrong. To doubt the perseverance of the saints, when God's Word has so plainly declared that He will keep their feet and will perfect the work which He has begun in them—indeed, to doubt *anything* that has the Inspired Scriptures to support it—and to tremble in any way when your trembling arises out of a suspicion that God may change, or cease to be faithful to His promises and faithful to His Son—all that kind of fearing is to be cast far from us!

But, dear Friends, there is another fear that ought to be *cultivated*—the reverential fear which the holy angels feel when they worship God and behold His Glory—that gracious fear which makes them veil their faces with their wings as they adore the Majesty on high! There is also the loving fear which every true, right-hearted child has towards its father—a fear of grieving so tender a parent—a proper feeling of dread which makes it watch its every footstep, lest, in the slightest degree, it should deviate from the path of absolute obedience. May God graciously grant to us much of this kind of fear!

Then there is a holy fear of ourselves which makes us shun the very thought of self-reliance—which weans us equally from self-righteousness and self-confidence—and which makes us feel that we shall surely fall unless the Lord shall continually hold us up and that we shall certainly die unless He shall sustain our spiritual life. This fear of our ourselves—the fear of sinning against God—is a fear which we ought always to cherish and, concerning which the text says, "Happy is the man who fears always."

I have taken this topic for a special reason. You know that we have recently had a great deal of preaching of "Believe! Believe! Believe!" and I have very heartily joined in the evangelistic services which have been held. We have also had a great deal of singing about full assurance—and we have had a little chattering about perfection, or something wonderfully like it. As far as I can make it out and as I put all these things together, I cannot help being afraid that there will be a great growth of the *mushrooms of presumption*! With warm days and damp days, and with everything tending to make vegetation luxurious, we may expect to see an abundant crop of poisonous fungi growing up—noxious agarics, toadstools and I know not what besides! They will come up in a night, but they may not be destroyed in a night. And they will be a great

nuisance and possibly worse than that. So I want to speak in such a way that we may all be led to do some sincere heart-searching and to commend to you the cherishing of an anxious fear lest, perhaps, all that glitters should not prove to be gold, and lest much of that which looks like wheat should, at the last, turn out to be tares.

I. My first observation shall be that THERE IS, AFTER ALL, VERY GRAVE CAUSE FOR FEAR. Otherwise, Solomon would not have been inspired to write, "Happy is the man who fears always."

There is cause for fear, dear Brothers and Sisters who love the Lord, *because corruption still remains in us*. In the best man or woman here, there is still the old flesh that lusts against the Spirit—that flesh which is in constant enmity to the Spirit and will never be reconciled to it. If that flesh keeps quiet for a time, it is there all the while, just as a lion is still a lion even when he is lying hidden in his den. He only needs some dark hour to come and he will rush forth from his den. So is it with the flesh which still lurks within us. When a man imagines that all his corruptions are gone, that is no proof that he is rid of them, but only that he does not really know his true condition, for, if God were but to lift the veil that covers his eyes and let him see the great deeps of sin that are in his nature, he would soon discover that he has grave cause for fear—and he would be driven to cry out to God, "Oh, keep me, I beseech You, or else I shall commit spiritual suicide! I must and shall become like the vilest of apostates unless Your Sovereign Grace shall hold me on my way."

There is also cause for fear, my Brothers and Sisters, *if you look around at the world in which we live*. This vile world has not changed its character—it is no more a friend to Divine Grace than it was in the days of the early Christians. It was a difficult thing to be a Christian in the days of Diocletian and the other persecuting Roman emperors, but I sometimes think that it is an even more difficult thing to be a Christian now! To be a soldier under Hannibal and to fight bravely when crossing the Alps must have been a difficult task, but it was far more trying for the soldiers when they reached sunny Italy and their holiday amusements destroyed the discipline of the army. The Christian camp, at the present time, seems to be pitched in a sunny plain where all the surrounding influences bend to relax the sinews of the warriors—and to take away their strength. It is hard to keep to the narrow way when the broad road runs so near to it that sometimes they seem to be one! The time was when the broad road was so distinct from the narrow one that we could easily discern who was travelling to Heaven and who was going to Hell. But now the devil has engineered the broad road so very close up to the side of the narrow way that there are many people who manage to walk on both of them—they were never so pleased as when they could first take a little turn on the narrow road and then, afterwards, take another turn on the broad one.

Let us never imitate Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, but let us walk only in the narrow way that leads unto life, whatever it may cost us to do so. You must be in a very singular position if you never have any temptations.

Indeed, I should not be surprised to learn, if you live where you have no temptations, that you are undergoing a worse trial than temptation, itself, would be! In such a place as that you are very likely to get stagnant. The very pleasantness of the situation may put you off your guard and you will not live so near to God as you would have done if your surroundings had seemed to be more opposed to your growth in Grace. There is cause for fear, then, when all around us there is an enemy behind every bush, a temptation lurking in every joy and a devil hiding himself under every table—when, as old Francis Quarles used to say—

"The close pursuer's busy hands do plant
Snares in your substance; snares attend your need;
Snares in your credit, snares in your disgrace;
Snares in your high estate, snares in your base.
Snares tuck your bed and snares surround your board;
Snares watch your thoughts and snares attach your word.
Snares in your quiet, snares in your commotion—
Snares in your diet, snares in your devotion!
Snares lurk in your resolves, snares in your doubt
Snares lie within your heart and snares without.
Snares are above your head, and snares beneath
Snares in your sickness, snares are in your death."

Besides that, dear Friends—in addition to having a store of dry tinder within our heart and showers of sparks falling near us—besides having a great heap of gunpowder within our nature and being constantly exposed to the fires that burn all around us—we must remember that there is such a thing as self-deception in the world. This is a great and a common danger. Do you not yourselves know some who have been self-deceived? I have had a wide experience in watching over the souls of others—and many persons have come under my notice who have thought themselves Christians—but I have often wondered how they could think so! I have seen that in their lives which has led me to feel sure—as sure as one man can feel concerning another—that the Grace of God could not be in them! Yet they have not had any doubt or suspicion concerning their Christianity. Now, Brothers and Sisters, do you not know some people like that? Well, then, is it not possible that the judgment which you have formed concerning them is the very same that others have formed concerning you? And perhaps that judgment is true.

There have been great preachers who have been very eloquent men and God has even condescended to use them in His service, yet, afterwards it has been discovered that they were living in gross sin all the while that they were preaching holiness to others. If that has been the case with only one preacher, might it not also be the case with me? Have you never heard of church members who have come regularly to the Communion Table and been very prominent in the work of the church—and apparently leading the way in all good things yet, after all—they were rotten to the core? They had made a mistake altogether—unless they had willfully deceived others instead of themselves—in professing to be Christ's people at all. Well, then, if some have acted like that, may not

you do the same? I do not wish to say anything unpleasant merely for the sake of making you feel uncomfortable, but I want you to remember that my text says, "Happy is the man who fears always."

Sometimes to examine the foundation on which we are building for eternity, to look into the profession which we have made, to see whether it will stand the wear and tear of daily life and to judge whether it will be likely to endure the test of our dying day—and the still sterner test of the Day of Judgment—is a wise occupation for every one of us. The man who dares not have his ship examined is the man who knows that some of the timbers are rotten! And if you do not like being examined, you are the very men who ought to put yourself through that process without a moment's delay, obeying the injunctions of the Apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know you not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?"

There is also great cause for fear, because *some Christians have been "saved, yet so as by fire."* Oh, with what difficulty have some of God's ships entered the eternal harbor! They have lost their masts, the deck has been swept clear of everything, they have been well-near abandoned as derelict! And if it had not been that the eternal Grace of God had ensured the safety of the vessels, they would have drifted away to destruction and gone to the bottom of the sea. And what tugging there has been to get some souls into Heaven! Do you not know some of that sort? I saw one, not long ago. I had highly esteemed him at one time but, from what I learned afterwards, I saw how little cause there was in him for my esteem. He had professed to be a child of God, but he was weeping and wailing and asking whether there was any hope for him. As a contrast to such a sad case, I may say that I have stood by the bedsides of many others and have learned from them lessons that I can never forget—for they have told me something of the joys of Heaven by the very glances of their eyes and the wondrous words which have fallen from their lips—often more full of poetry than poetry itself! They have seemed to be Inspired and to be favored with visions of the hereafter as they have looked through the veil which had become so thin to them.

But I have also seen some such as the one I mentioned just now, who have not lived near to God, who have neglected prayer, who have done but little service for Christ—and when they have come to die, they have been "saved, yet so as by fire." They have had to come, in their last moments, without any comfort or hope, without any joy in the Lord and cry, "What must we do to be saved?"—just as though they had never known the way of salvation, although they have been professors for years! Instead of having an abundant entrance into Heaven, they have just been saved and no more.

Now, you and I do not want to have such an experience as that and, therefore, let us always fear lest we should get into such a state of heart that this should be our case. Let us fear lest we lose communion with God. Let us fear lest we misuse any Grace which the Holy Spirit has given to us. Let us fear lest we become fruitless and unprofitable. Let us

fear lest we lose the light of Jehovah's Countenance. If we do so fear, we shall understand what Solomon meant when he wrote, "Blessed is the man who fears always."

II. Now, secondly, I want to prove to you that THE MAN WHO DOES SO FEAR IS A HAPPY MAN. I will show you that by a few contrasts.

The word, "happy," in our text may not exactly mean that the man enjoys happiness just now, but that he is *really* happy. He has the root of true happiness in him and he will have the fruit in due time. Now, here are two men. One of them says, "I am a child of God. I have had a very deep experience. I know all the Doctrines of Grace, blessed be God, and I feel that I am thoroughly confirmed in Christian habits. I may be tempted to sin, but I shall be able to resist the temptation." Take a good look at that man, so that you will know him when you see him again. With a formal prayer he leaves his bedroom in the morning and he goes forth to his business, perfectly satisfied with himself whatever may happen. Here is another man. He says, "I believe I am a child of God, for I have trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior and I know that I am safe in His hands. But I dare not trust myself. I feel that unless He shall hold me up all through this day, I may, by my words, or my actions, bring dishonor upon His holy name and I tremble lest I should do so." Look at him kneeling down there by his bedside and hear how earnestly he pleads with God. His prayer is something like this, "O Lord, I am as helpless as a little child. Hold You me up, or I shall surely fall! I am like a lamb going out among wolves. O Lord, preserve me!" Now, which of the two do you regard as the really happy man? The happiness of the two men may, to a superficial observer, appear to be about equal, but which happiness would you prefer to have? I say—and I think most of you will agree with me—God save me from the so-called happiness which is careless and prayerless—and give me that holy fear which often drives me to my knees and makes me cry to God to keep me!

Well, now, night has come on and the two men have reached their homes. Neither of them has fallen into any gross sin during the day. They have both been preserved from that evil. One of them retires to his bed after a few sentences of formal prayer, with no life or earnestness in it, and no expression of his gratitude to God. And he soon falls asleep in perfect contentment with himself. The other man looks carefully over all that has happened during the day, for he is afraid lest he may have sinned against God even unconsciously. And he takes notice of things which the other man does not think anything of and he says, "Lord, I fear that I erred there, and that I failed there. Forgive Your child and help me to do better in the future." Then he says, "I thank You, Lord, that You have kept me, by Your Grace, from being surprised by sudden temptation and You have enabled me to honor Your name, at least in some degree. I give all the glory for this to You and now, my Lord—

"'Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
In the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast.'"

Now, which is the happy man of these two? I know which I should like to be—the man who is so fearful and so full of trembling that he wonders that he has not fallen—and who is sometimes almost afraid that he has and who, therefore, walks humbly before his God. Is he not infinitely to be preferred to the other man who thinks it is a matter of course that he shall always stand and who has no qualms of conscience about what he calls little faults? You may rest assured that the seeds of untold misery are already sown in that man's heart!

Think of these two men under another aspect. Imagine that they are sailors out at sea. One of them is well aware that a certain course is very dangerous. Some captains have been able to take it and have made "a short cut" by doing so, and he decides that he will take that course. He can see that his vessel is bound to go near some very ugly-looking rocks and among a number of sharp ledges where many others have been wrecked. But he is a bold, daredevil sort of fellow—he believes that all will be right and he has no fear. But here is the other captain and he says, "My motto is to keep as far away from danger as I possibly can. I know that in fair weather that passage may be safe, but then I cannot reckon on fair weather. I may be caught in a fog and not know where I am. Or a terrible storm may come on and drive me where I do not wish to go. I shall, therefore, take the longer course which is also the safer course." Now, in which of these two vessels would you like to sail? And which of the two captains do you esteem to be that happy man? Of course you say the second one! We admire courage, but we do not admire foolhardiness—and the Christian who seeks to steer clear of temptation, who endeavors to be precise and exact in his mode of living so as not to go near to sin, but to avoid it—and keep away from it must be judged to be, in the best sense of the word, a happier man than the one who courts temptation and heedlessly rushes into a position of peril!

Look at the difference between what these two men regard as happiness. The one who was not afraid said, "Why should I fear? Am I not getting to be an old-established Christian? Have I not resisted temptation for such a long while that I need not fear it now? I feel that I may do what young people may not do—it would too dangerous for them, but it will never hurt me." So he talked, but look at him now! He has become so fond of the drunkard's cup that he was seen reeling through the streets, or else he has been so enchanted by the lusts of the flesh that he has committed himself fatally. Or it may be that he was strongly tempted to make money very quickly—and quick money-making and honesty never go together except by a very extraordinary system of circumstances! But this man thought it would end all right and that he would make a great haul, so he asked the devil to help him throw the net in just that once—and now he has got into the clutches of the law, and his name—the name of a man who once made a profession of religion—is bracketed with that of other rogues and vagabonds!

But now look at the timid man—the man who said, "I know that I shall never be intoxicated if I never take anything that is intoxicating. I know

that I shall not be a thief if I never take anybody's money but my own. I know that if I never indulge even in indelicate expressions, if I never think of or look at anything that is impure, I shall not be likely to go in that evil way which I utterly abhor." That is the man who is both safe and happy! "The man who fears always." Some people call him a milksop and say that he has not spirit enough to do as others do—but just look at him. He can go in and out of the House of God as an honorable Christian, while the other one, of whom I have told you, is a moral wreck and his name is a by-word and a reproach! I can bear my testimony that I have seen high professors so act as to become a stench in our nostrils and, on the other hand, I have seen poor, timid girls who were half afraid they were hypocrites, and poor trembling men who used to come to me for comfort and counsel, lest they should be deceiving themselves. I have seen many of the latter class enter the Port of Glory like ships in full sail coming into the harbor—while those other vessels, with their painted hulls that seemed to tempt a shot from the enemy—have gone to the bottom and they have been lost to us, and lost to themselves!

Now I will suppose that both these men whom I have been describing, have fallen into a certain sin. See what a difference there is between them now! The man who has not any fear says, "Well, yes, there is no doubt that I did wrong, but then"—and he begins telling all about the circumstances under which he says that he was "overtaken." He tries to make out that he was an innocent victim who was deceived by somebody else. Now listen to "the man who fears always." "Ah," he says, "I have sinned." And he hangs his head in shame and then adds, "I have no excuse to make and you cannot say anything to me that will be half so heavy and so hard as what I say to myself. God will forgive me, I have no doubt, for I have truly repented, but I can never forgive myself." The first man has dry eyes and a proud, defiant spirit. And it is very likely that, having committed that one great sin, he will go on and commit another—and yet another—and continually get harder and harder in his heart, yet all the while talk about being one of God's elect who will be saved at the last.

Well now, that man is not a happy man. I pray that none of us may ever experience the wretchedness of having a seared conscience and get into a state of indifference in which we can trifle with sin and yet pretend to be the servants of God. But, oh, if we *do* fall into sin, may the Lord make us very tender about it! Let this be our prayer—

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
O Lord, my conscience make!
Wake my soul, when sin is near,
And keep it still awake."

Dear Brothers and sisters, may you, by God's Grace, be preserved from sin! But if sin should come upon you unawares, may your bones be broken by it and may you feel that your very heart is wounded because you have wounded your God! To repent of sin is one of the hallmarks of a Christian, but to have a hardened, untrembling heart is one of the sure marks of the reprobate who is far off from God!

I might thus continue to show you, by a hundred contrasts, that the man who fears always is the really happy man. Suppose that we are fishing and that we have cast our lines into the water. There is one fish that is altogether afraid of our bait and of all our arrangements—and he swims as far as ever he can up or down the stream away from us. But here are some fish that are quite charmed with our worm. They say that they do not mean to swallow the hook, but we do not believe them. They say that they mean to get the worm off without letting the hook catch hold of them. They have very clever ways of sucking worms off hooks and they are going to show what they can do—and soon they are caught. But happy is the fish that fears the bait as well as the hook, and so keeps right away from both of them! When some of us were boys, we used to set traps for the sparrows and other birds in winter time and we would watch to see them go in to eat our crumbs inside the trap. Sometimes there would come a bird that had seen our arrangement before and had been almost caught in it and knew all about it. Well, as soon as ever he looked at it, he made up his mind that he would give our trap a very wide berth, so he flew away as far as he could. But there were some other birds that would come and look at the trap and even perch on it—and presently some of them would get into it. Of course they did not mean to be caught! They thought they knew the way to go just far enough into the trap to get those grains of wheat and then to fly out—but once in, they could not fly out.

And sinners are just as foolish as those sparrows! Of course they do not mean to be caught! They will fly out of the trap all right when they have eaten the wheat! Yes, but I say, happy is the bird that fears always, and that keeps far off the trap—and unhappy is the bird that thinks it can go just so far into the trap, but fully intends to go no further. Oh, how many young men and young women have been ruined because they have gone just so far into sin, meaning to stop there! But they could not stop there—they began to slide and the ice carried them along where they never meant to go. The only safe plan is to keep off the ice altogether. If you do not take the first wrong step, dear Friend, you will not take the second! And if Divine Grace makes you fear and tremble before you begin to go down the hill, you are not likely to be found among those who have fallen to the bottom. Happy is the man, in this sense, who fears always.

III. But I must pass on to notice, in the third place, that THE MAN WHO HAS THIS FEAR IN HIS HEART WILL DO WELL TO HAVE IT THERE CONTINUALLY—"Happy is the man who fears ALWAYS."

Have this fear concerning your holy things. For instance, when you come up to God's House to worship, be afraid, as you are coming along, lest you should be only a lip-server and get no blessing. If you are afraid of that happening, it will not happen. And when you are sitting in your pew, say to yourself, "Now, it is possible for me to become a mere formalist in worship and I may be listening to the Word of God with my ears, yet not receiving it into my heart. I am sorely afraid lest it should be so." Brothers and Sisters, it will *not* be so if you are afraid that it will be!

And when the service is over, say to yourself, "I am afraid that I did not worship God in spirit and in truth as I should have done. I fear that I did not praise Him, or pray to Him with my whole heart as I ought to have done. O Lord, pardon the iniquity of my holy things!"

I do not think any man ever preached as he ought to have preached if he is satisfied with his own efforts. I sometimes feel thankful to God for the feeling of dissatisfaction that possesses me every time I preach. I often feel, as I am going home, that I should like to go back and try to do it so much better—I do not mean better in an oratorical way, but pressing the Truth of God home to men's hearts more earnestly and more simply. I think that in this sense it is right that we should fear always. Ah, my dear young Brother in the College, you are afraid that you will become cold-hearted, but you never will as long as you cherish such a fear as that! If you are afraid that you will, by-and-by, preach in a perfunctory, official manner, you will not fall into that bad habit if you live in dread of doing so. If you are afraid that you will not set a good example to your people, I believe that you will set them a good example. But if you ever feel, "Oh, I can preach and practice, too—I am all right," it may happen that God will rebuke your pride and let you see—and perhaps let your enemies see—what a poor fool you are! Blessed is the man who, in his holy things, fears always—the man who is afraid when he is alone on his knees, lest he should not pray rightly—the man who is afraid lest, either in public or in private, he should act the hypocrite before his God!

And happy is the man who has *this holy fear in his own house*—the man who says, "I am afraid lest I should not act as a Christian father ought to act towards his children, or as a Christian husband should act towards his wife." Other members of the household may say, "I fear lest I should not be such a wife, or such a child, or such a servant, or such a master as I ought to be." These are the people who usually are what they should be—those who are afraid that they are not! Those who are the most anxious lest they should fail are generally those who do not fail.

And I would like you also *to be anxious in your business, for fear lest you should in any way take advantage of anybody*—lest, in the measure, or in the weight, or in the price, or in the invoice, these should be any mistake which would unjustly benefit you. The man who is afraid of anything like that will be an honest tradesman, you may rest assured of that! As for the servant or the workman who is afraid that he will not give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, and the employer who is afraid that he will not give his servant or workman as much as he ought to give him—I can only say that I wish we had many more of that sort of men than we already have, though I know a good many of that sort. If we are afraid of wronging one another and not loving our neighbor as ourselves, that is a healthy kind of fear—and the more we have of it, the more happy we shall be!

And if, perhaps, there should not seem to be in yourself any special cause for this fear just now—though "let him who thinks he stands take

heed lest he fall"—then *begin to be afraid for the church of which you are a member*. This is a fear which is always resting heavily upon me—the fear lest we should lose our earnestness in prayer—lest we should not care as much as we ought for the souls of men—lest the members of our church should grow worldly—lest we should become cold and indifferent towards our dear Lord and Master. Never lose this wholesome kind of fear concerning this church and your fellow members, or concerning any other church with which you are connected.

Then, *have a solemn fear about your own children,* lest, possibly, you should not have trained them up as you should have done, or should not have prayed for them as you should have done, or lest your own example should not have been such as they could safely follow. Be afraid for your children, as Job was for his. When they met together to feast, he "offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." The man who is thus afraid that things may be wrong is the man who is most likely to keep everything right. Many a man who becomes a bankrupt is so largely because he does not examine his books. He says that he does not like looking into his books—they are very unpleasant literature to him—and he never sees to the details of his affairs himself. He leaves this to John, and that to Thomas, and the other to one clerk and something else to another. And then one day he wakes up to find that everything has gone to smash! Do not let it be so in your household, or in your temporal affairs, or in your spiritual concerns, but look into everything yourself and watch everything carefully, for, in this way, by fearing always, you will be both safe and happy in the hands of God.

IV. Now, lastly, THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE, INDEED, VERY GRAVE CAUSE TO FEAR.

There are some of my Hearers at this service—I am glad that they are here—who, I am afraid, have cause to fear in a far deeper sense than that in which I have used my text. Some of you are not saved—you know you are not. You have never had your sins forgiven, you have never sought and found mercy through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son. And some of you are very ill—you were only just able to get here tonight. What? So ill as that, yet with no Savior to help you? Sick, well-near unto death, yet without a Savior? Likely to die soon, for you are consumptive, yet you have no Savior? Let me appeal to you, my dear Friend, is this wise? Can you afford to run such a terrible risk? Why, the healthy may die at any moment, but as for you, death is already at your door! So, surely you cannot afford to trifle with eternal things.

And some of you are getting old, yet you are not saved. Sixty years of age, and not saved? Seventy, eighty, and not saved? What are you doing? A man told me, the other day, that he would not come to hear me again, for, he said, "The last time I came, you called me an old fool." Why was that? I asked. "Why," he replied, "you said that an old sinner was an old fool." So I said to him, "Are you an old sinner, then? Because if you are,

you *are* an old fool!" And he could not deny it, for we are all fools till we are saved by Jesus Christ! A man must be a fool to run the risk of losing his immortal soul! I have heard that a man once went up to the top of the spire of Salisbury Cathedral and stood on his head. What do you think he was? "A fool," you say. Yes, so he was—yet he only risked his neck—but *you* are risking your soul's eternal welfare, risking the loss of Heaven and running a terrible risk of going to Hell forever! O Friend, is this wise? You know it is not and that I am only speaking the truth when I tell you that you are a fool—and one of the worst of fools!

O Sirs, if you are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are standing over the mouth of Hell, upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! You are hanging over the jaws of Perdition by a single hair and that hair is snapping! I looked down my well, this afternoon, as a man was going down it to do some necessary work, and I said to him, "Oh, do be careful! Pray be very careful!" I felt such dread upon me lest, possibly, the man should fall while he was going down that great depth into which I looked till it made me giddy—and I cannot bear to think of some of you, who are in far greater danger, for you are hanging over the mouth of Hell with only a rotten rope to hold to! Some of you may be in Hell within a week. I cannot guarantee that any one of you will live ten minutes longer. All the physicians in the world would not be able to guarantee to any one individual that he should live even for five minutes! You are always liable to death and in danger of the wrath to come. Therefore, escape for your lives, I entreat you!

And meanwhile I would put you in fear about this matter, that, through this fear, you may be driven to the only place of safety, even to Jesus Christ, who was lifted up upon the Cross and now is exalted on high a Prince and a Savior! There is life in Him! There is life for you at this moment if you will only trust in Him! There is pardon for you now if you will only believe in Him!

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

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

FORGIVENESS
NO. 2972

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 25,1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1863.

"But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."
Psalm 130:4.

How significant is that word, "but," in our text! It is as if you heard Justice clamoring, "Let the sinner die," and the fiends in Hell howling, "Cast him down into the fires," and Conscience shrieking, "Let him perish," and Nature, itself, groaning beneath his weight, the earth weary with carrying him, the sun tired with shining upon the traitor, the very air sick with finding breath for one who only spends it in disobedience to God! The man is about to be destroyed, to be swallowed up, when suddenly there comes this thrice-blessed, "but," which stops the reckless course of ruin, puts its strong hand, bearing a golden shield, between the sinner and destruction and pronounces these words, "But there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared."

Suppose the question had been left open—forgiveness or no forgiveness? We know that we have offended God, but suppose it had been left a moot point for us to find out, if possible, whether there was any forgiveness? Where could we find it? We might turn to the works of God in Nature, and say, "Well, He is good, who loads the trees with fruit and bids the fields yield so plenteous a harvest." But when we remember how His lightning sometimes strikes the oak and how His hurricanes swallow up whole navies in the deep, we shall be ready to say that He is terrible as well as tender—and we might be puzzled to know whether He would or would not forgive sin, more especially as we see all creatures die and no exception made to that rule. If we knew that death was a punishment for sin, we should be led to fear that there was no forgiveness to be had from the hand of God! But when we turn to this open page which God has so graciously written for our instruction, we are left in doubt no longer, for here we have it positively declared, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Exclusively in the Bible is this Revelation made, but the words of my text are not exclusive. The page is but one among a thousand echoes from the Throne of God which proclaim His willingness to save sinners!

In attempting to bring this great doctrine of the possibility of pardon before the mind of the sinner tonight, I shall handle it in two or three ways. First, *I shall try to prove it is so, that he may be sure of the fact.* I shall then try *to attract him to accept this doctrine by dwelling upon the pardon, itself*, hoping that the Spirit of God may work with my words.

And before I have done, I shall notice *what will be the sure result of this pardon*—whenever a man has been forgiven through the mercy of God, he is then enabled to fear the Lord and to worship Him in an able manner.

I. By way of assurance, O MAN, THERE IS FORGIVENESS FOR YOUR SINS, WHATEVER THEY MAY HAVE BEEN! However sinful your life may have been up until now, there is forgiveness with God even for you! God's bare Word ought to be enough for you, but since the Spirit of God and your conscience have shown you something of your sins, and since you will be desponding and full of doubts, it will be well for me to give you something more than the bare Word of God to make you confident there is forgiveness with Him.

Follow me, I pray you, back to the garden where your parents and mine first sinned. It was the greatest sin that was ever committed, with the exception of the murder of our Lord and Savior—the sin when Adam knowingly and wittingly rebelled against the one gentle command which his Master had given him as a sign of his obedience. This was the mother-sin from which all other sins have sprung—the well from which the great river of iniquity, which drowned the world, first streamed. What did the Lord say when this sin was committed? Did He lift His angry hand and smite the guilty pair at once? Did He visit our first parents with a curse that withered them and sent them down to their eternal portion in the Pit? He cursed, but it was the ground. He spoke in angry terms, but the serpent felt the weight thereof. As for man, though God pronounced a sentence upon him that we call a curse, but which has been transformed into a blessing, yet He gave that matchless promise which is the mother of all promises, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." In that one single promise that God, Himself, would provide a Deliverer by whom the tempter would be destroyed and all his craft would be foiled, I see written as clearly as with a sunbeam that God meant to have mercy upon me! He would not talk about the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head if He had not intended something comforting for you and for me. The fact, I say, that though He did drive our first parents out of Eden, He did not drive them down to Hell—that though He did banish them from Paradise, He did not immediately consign them to the flames of His wrath—that He did, then and there, give them a bright promise which for many a hundred years was the only one that covered the thick darkness of the Fall—that fact alone should make you hope that there is forgiveness with God!

But what, I pray you, do those many altars with lambs and bullocks smoking upon them mean—altars whose unhewn stones are dyed crimson with gore? Above all, what does that priestly man, wearing that jeweled breastplate, who comes forward in obedience to God and offers every morning and evening a lamb, mean? Or what does it mean that once in the year he produces a scapegoat which carries the sins of the people into the wilderness? What do those rivers of blood and those mounds of ashes from the altar mean, if God does not forgive sin? There can be no meaning whatever in all the long and gorgeous pageant of the

Jewish religion unless it taught to every onlooker this great and solemn lesson—that though God is just and blood must be shed, yet God is gracious and accepts a substitute that the sinner may go free! By all those smoking altars, the blood of rams, lambs, goats and bullocks, believe, O Sinner, that God has found a Ransom and a Sacrifice and that He, therefore, can and will pardon sin!

If you see these things dimly, here, you will see them more clearly in another fact. Do you not know, O man, that God has commanded you to repent? The times of former ignorance God winked at, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent. What for? Surely He would not command us to repent and then intend to punish us afterwards! It could not be possible that God would woo sinners to return to Him and yet not intend to forgive them! I cannot believe a theory so monstrous as that God would send His ministers and send His own Book—and earnestly and affectionately invite sinners to turn from their evil ways and repent of their sins—and yet intend, even if they did repent, to punish them on account of their iniquity! It cannot be!

Do you not know, too, that God has commanded you to pray for forgiveness? What is the meaning of that prayer, "Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us"? Would Christ put these words into your mouth if there were no pardon? Would He teach you to ask for forgiveness if forgiveness were an impossibility? Does God mock men? Does He teach beggars to beg when He intends to refuse? Does He bring you down on your knees that He may see you mourn—and laugh at your despair? Does He intend to see you rolling in the dust, girt with sackcloth and ashes, that He may afterwards put His iron heel upon your neck and crush you to the lowest Hell? It is not possible! The God who commands you to repent is just and merciful to forgive you your sins—and He who has bid you seek His face has not said unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek you me in vain."

Moreover, Sinner—and here we come to something still clearer—do you not know that Jesus died? Have you not heard the wondrous story how the Son of God came down from Heaven and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh? Do you not know that after 30 years of holy life, wherein He rendered perfect obedience to the Divine Law and made it honorable, He took upon Himself the guilt, the crimes, the iniquities of a multitude that no man can number, for He bore the sins of many, and now He makes intercession for the transgressors? See there, if you can dare to look amidst those moonlit olives where upon the ground there kneels a Man—no, more, there kneels Incarnate Deity—what does it mean that His head, His hair, His garments are saturated with blood? How came it that, on yonder ground, I see great clots of gore—where did they come from? Came they from His forehead? But what could have forced them from Him? What does yonder sight mean? I watch that Man dragged away and charged most infamously with crimes He never knew, tied to a pillar and there lashed with a Roman scourge until the white bones stand out like islands of ivory amidst a sea of coral—and His whole back has become a stream of blood! What does it all mean?

And yonder sight where He is stretched upon the transverse wood, where the nails have pierced His hands and feet, and where His life goes oozing from Him in anguish and extreme agony? What does that shriek of "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani" mean? He is a just Man—does God punish the just? He is God's dear Son, and has done no ill—does God hate Him and punish Him for nothing? Does He pour wrath upon Him without a cause? You know how it was. The sin of man was imputed to Christ. The iniquity of His people was laid upon Him. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And here is the riddle solved—He dies that we may live—

"He bore that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Then there must be forgiveness! I cannot see a bleeding Savior without understanding that there must be pardon! Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha—three sacred words, three irresistible arguments by which it is proved beyond controversy that there is forgiveness even for the chief of sinners!

But if this contents you not, O troubled Sinner, here is another fact for you to reflect upon—what multitudes have already been pardoned! Dare you look up yonder beyond the skies? Have you strength of eyesight enough to see that multitude clothed in white, who, today, are standing before the Throne of God? If there were no forgiveness, not one of them had been there! Were their robes always white? Listen to their answer—"We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are we before the Throne of God." FORGIVENESS brought them there! Not one redeemed soul would ever have seen the everlasting Glory unless it had been for the pardoning mercy of God—

"Round the altar priests confess
If their robes are white as snow,
'Twas the Savior's righteousness,
And His blood that made them so!
Who were these? On earth they dwelt
Sinners once of Adam's race—
Guilt, and fear, and suffering felt,
But were saved by Sovereign Grace!"

Here are scores and hundreds of us who bear witness that God has pardoned us! Whatever I may doubt, I dare not doubt my pardon in Christ Jesus. There are moments when one has to look well to one's evidences and come to Jesus Christ again—but this one thing I know—that Christ says, "He that believes on Me is not condemned." And I do believe on Him! If I have an existence, I know that I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ! And if so, then I am pardoned. And oh, how sweet it is to know this! What peace it gives! I can look forward to living or to dying with equal delight now that I can say, "My sin is forgiven." You can say, as I often do, in these sweet words of Kent—

"Now freed from sin, I walk at large,
My Savior's blood my full discharge.
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Do you know what it is to be forgiven, young man? If you do not, you have not tasted the sweetest thing out of Heaven! Oh, it is such joy! Angels hardly have ever tasted a joy that exceeds the bliss of having sins put away. It yields a calm so deep, so profound, that it can only be called, "the peace of God which passes all understanding."

I have thus tried to bring forward the great Truth of God that there is forgiveness with Him. And let me say, before I leave this point, that you will please remember that we have warrant in God's Word for saying that there is forgiveness for you. However great your sins may have been, with but one exception—there is the sin against the Holy Spirit which, if you have any tenderness left in your conscience, you have not committed—but, apart from that, "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." I wish I could go round these galleries and to these pews, and find out where the aching hearts were. Perhaps I would find one who said, "O Sir, I never attended a place of worship for 20 or 30 years—can I be pardoned?" I would say, "Yes, there is forgiveness for you!" Another might say, "Why, I cursed God to His face! I have dared Him to damn my soul! Can I really be forgiven?" I will answer, in the words of the text, "There is forgiveness."

And I might meet another who would say, "But I used to persecute my wife. I have ill-treated my children because they would serve God. Can I, a hardened wretch such as I am—can I be pardoned?" "There is forgiveness." And I might meet another who would say, "Years ago, I was a high professor, but I became entangled in the world and I have gone bad. Am I not cast out?" And I would say, "There is forgiveness." But there would be another who would say, "I cannot tell you what my crime is. Will you stoop down and let me whisper it in your ear?" And when I heard the awful words, which I must not tell again, I would still say, before you all, "There is forgiveness." And though it were murder or adultery—whatever it might have been and however frequently it might have been committed—though the woman were a harlot and the man a practiced thief, yet still we have the same Gospel for every creature—"There is forgiveness." And though you are 80 or 90 years of age, "There is forgiveness." Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against mercy, against God and Christ, His dear Son, yet still—"there is forgiveness." You have come to the brink of the precipice—O God, I see it! You are just going over—one foot already rests upon nothing and you totter to your fall! O man, let me catch you in my arms and tell you that "there is forgiveness!" One more step and you may be where there is no forgiveness, but where the black and terrible pall of despair shall hang over your soul forever! And it shall be said of you, "There are no acts of pardon passed in that cold grave to which he has gone. He is lost! Lost! Lost forever!"

II. And now, secondly, I SHALL RECOMMEND THIS GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS TO YOUR NOTICE.

I commend it *for its nature*. It is a perfect pardon—every sin is blotted out at once—not a few sins, but every sin! Though they are innumerable, they are all gone, they are all gone at once! And it is *eternal* pardon—they

are all gone forever! Once forgiven, they will never be laid to your charge again. They are like the Egyptians in the Red Sea—the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left—the pardon is complete in every respect. I heard one man say of his friend, the other day, when the two had disagreed and I had tried to make it right, "Yes, I forgive him, but." That is not how God puts it. He has no "buts" in His forgiveness. You sometimes say, "Yes, I forgive him, but I will never trust him again." Not so the Lord! You make a clean breast in confession and He will give you a clean breast by absolution. He will put all the sin you have committed so wholly away that they shall not be remembered against you any more forever! And this pardon is instantaneous. You know that it takes but a moment to receipt a bill when the debt is paid—and Jesus Christ has paid the debt of every Believer! And all that is to be done is for God to give you the receipt, to write in your heart the word, "JUSTIFIED"—and this He does in a moment! When I think of the nature of this pardon—putting away all sin in a moment, and all the consequences of sin, I feel as if I wish we had a choir of angels here, that they might sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Consider too, dear Friends, not only the pardon, itself, but the *person to whom it is sent*. Remember that it is sent to you. Not to the fallen angels—they were greater than you but, when they fell, they fell without a hope of being restored to the favor of God. It is not sent to the damned in Hell. Oh, what would they not give for it? How would they stretch forward—how would they catch every word! Though they have been there but one moment, they know more of God's wrath than you and I do and oh, how they would prize the presentation of eternal life in Christ Jesus! It is not sent to them—it is sent to you. You know what you have been. You know something about the hardness of your heart and the sinfulness of your past life—yet God sends this message to you, "There is forgiveness."

And I want you to remember *who it is that sends the forgiveness*. It is the God whom you have offended—that very God whom you may have cursed, whose Sabbath you have broken, whose Book you have despised, at whose ministers you have laughed and whose servants you have persecuted! Yet He says, even He, "There is forgiveness." And lest you should doubt it, He takes a solemn oath before you all—and God never swears unless there is need for it, and thus He swears—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." What more can we ask than this? Admire and be attracted by the pardon when you think of who it is that sends it!

Consider, too, *how it comes to you, and by what channel*. It comes through the wounds of your best Friend, through the sufferings of Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. "He was despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs,

and carried our sorrows." O Sinner! Will you not be only too glad to lay hold of that which comes to you through so Divine a channel which is marked with the heart's blood of One who is the Friend of sin even unto death?

And, then, I pray you to remember that if you do not receive this forgiveness which is preached unto you, *there is no other way under Heaven by which you can be saved*. Enter by this door or stand shivering outside forever! Bow the knee and kiss the Son, or else He will break you in pieces with His rod, as men break potters' vessels. "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" But if you reject this pardon of God, you write your own death warrant and prepare the noose that is to be your souls' destruction!

I would to God that I had such powers of persuasion that I might induce you to lay hold of this precious pardon that God presents to you. I know that my pleading is useless unless the Spirit of God shall be pleading, too. But many, many times in this House, while I have been talking about the full, rich Grace of God, some poor soul has felt that there was a message from God in it and I trust, I hope it may be so tonight! Remember that in the message of mercy, I am authorized to leave out no one—I am told to preach it to every creature under Heaven, and I do. There are no terms but just this—that you will take what God freely gives you! Just as when men enlist for soldiers, the soldier does not give the sergeant anything, he takes the shilling. And the way in which your souls are saved is by taking what Christ freely offers to you, freely presents to you—the finished righteousness which He worked out in His life and death! You are to take, not to give! If there are terms, they are very simple. They are put so as to suit the dead in trespasses and sins! Christ comes to you just where you are. You have no power, no spiritual life, no goodness, no tenderness of heart—but Jesus, like the good Samaritan, comes just where you are and He cries in your ear, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." He bids me say to you, though your hand is withered, "Stretch out your hand." Power shall go with the command and you shall be made whole!

I remember the time when if anyone had tried to preach to me full and free forgiveness to be had for nothing, and to be had on the spot, I do believe I would have leaped almost out of my body to have heard it! I have heard, sometimes, of Methodists and Welshmen standing up to dance and I do not wonder at it, if they really do but get the full sense of this, that the big, black, foul villain of a sinner—the moment he trusts Jesus Christ—is forgiven, is a child of God and is accepted! Why, it sounds too good to be true! And it could not be true if it came only from me, for I am but a man and can only think and act as a man! But because it comes from the true God and it is just like Him, because it accords with His attributes of loving kindness and truth, therefore we know it is true. "I am God, and not man," He says, and He gives that as a reason for His mercy. Why, if His love were not as much superior to ours as the heavens are above His earth, there would never be mercy

presented in any shape, much less in a shape like this! There is nothing asked of you, only that you will just be nothing and let Christ be everything—and take from Christ's hand that which He freely presents to you—pardon through His precious blood!

III. Now, dear Friends, I cannot put this Truth of God more plainly than I have done, but I have the last part of the text just to comment a little upon—"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

You see, the only men that ever fear God are those that are forgiven. Other men may pretend to do it, but they fail to do it. Why I believe that the religion of nine out of ten professing Christians is just this, "I go to church, or I go to chapel, regularly, and I then think I have done very well." That is what the men think, and the outside world believes that religion is this, "If a man is honest, and sober, and walks righteously, and so on, he goes to Heaven." But how startling must the sermon of this morning [See Sermon No. 515, Volume 9—THE SINNER'S ADVOCATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] have been to some of these stuck-up Pharisees when we told them it was not the righteous who would go there, but the sinner! And that the Apostle John did not say, "If any man has done good works, he has an Advocate," but, "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father." As Martin Luther gloried to put it, "Jesus Christ never died for our good works—they were not worth His dying for! He gave Himself for our sins, according to the Scriptures." What did our Savior, Himself, say, "I came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance."

The Lord never has any who really and acceptably fear Him but those who once were sinners and who are led as sinners to accept His pardon—and these are the people that fear Him. Do you want to find a warm-hearted woman who really loves Jesus Christ and who would break the alabaster box for His sake? You will find her in one who may be called "a woman who was a sinner." Do you want to find a man who would preach Christ's Word with tears running down his cheeks? You must go and find him among them who once were foul, of whom the Apostles said, "Such were some of you, but you are washed." When the Lord wanted a man to write the next best book in the world to the Bible—*The Pilgrim's Progress*—He did not go to Lambeth Palace for him, and He did not go to any of the fine streets of this city to pick up some moral person. There was a swearing tinker playing at "cat" on Sunday on Elstow-Green, and the Lord said, "That is the man." He laid hold of him, washed his heart, made him a new man in Christ Jesus—and John Bunyan, the master-dreamer, has given us that remarkable book! And when the Lord wanted a man who would stir up London from end to end by preaching in St. Mary Woolnoth, where should He find him? Why, among the ragamuffins who were conducting the slave trade on the coast of Africa among the sweepings and dregs of the universe! Almighty Grace picked up John Newton, changed his heart and made him one of His mightiest teachers!

And when the Lord will bring out any that shall really fear Him and do anything great for His sake, it will be either from among those who have

been outwardly great sinners, or else those who have been made in their conscience to feel the greatness of their guilt and thus have been fitted to deal with others. Oh, how many times I have blessed God for the five years of despair that I had to endure! No poor soul was ever more racked than I was, nor more hunted of the devil. For five years I was a victim to that black thought that God would never forgive me and I bless His name for it. I never could have preached to the chief of sinners if it had not been for that experience! If I had come freely from my mother's apron strings without any deep sense of sin, and had found Christ as many and many a young man does, readily and at once, I would never have liked to go down and run my hands in the mire to get at the foul and the vile. But now I look back upon those times of anguish—why, they were days when I thought I was worse than the devils in Hell! They were days when if anybody had asked me my character, though no one ever knew anything amiss of it, still I would have said, and felt it, too, that there did not breathe God's air a greater miscreant that more deserved to be in Hell than I did! I wrote bitter things against myself and if any had said, "Why, your life is moral," I would have said, "Yes, but my heart is a reeking dunghill, full of everything that is foul!" And I felt it, too, for though my lips never cursed God, yet my heart did with blasphemy so foul that I shudder when I think of it. When I was given up as prey to the devil, and it seemed as if there was a pandemonium within my heart, then indeed I knew what it was to be sorely broken in the place of darkness and to be like a ship driven out to sea with the mast gone over the side and every timber strained and the hold filling with water—and nothing but Omnipotence keeping it from going down into the lowest depths! Ah, then I knew that I needed a great Christ for great sinners! And I dare not ever preach a little Christ! And I dare not preach Him to little sinners either!

Oh, how great your sin has been, my Hearers! But Jesus Christ is still greater! You have gone deeply into sin, but the arm of Mercy can reach you! You have wandered far, but the eyes of Love can see you and the voice of Love calls to you now, "Come, come, come and welcome, come and welcome!" Come just as you are and you will not be cast away, but be accepted in the Beloved! "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared," and none fear, and love, and bless, and praise God as much as those who know that there is forgiveness with Him!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 145.

When you get to the 145th Psalm, you enter the Beulah Land of the Psalms. Henceforth the time of the singing of birds is come and you go from one Hallelujah to another! In the Hebrew, this is one of the alphabetical Psalms, but one letter (nun) is omitted, perhaps, as Dr. Bonar suggests, "we must be kept from putting stress on the mere form of the composition." Those ancient singers sang their way through the alphabet from A to Z, and it is also well for us to begin to praise the Lord

while we are yet children, and to keep on praising Him till we get to the "Z" in the very hour of death, gasping His praises till we get into eternity—

"My God, I'll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die!
And praise You when I rise again,
And to eternity!"

Verses 1-3. *I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.* Such as the Lord is, such should His worship be. If He were a little God, He would deserve little praise, but the great God is "greatly to be praised." There is no fear of going to any excess in our praises—we will never laud Him too highly, however lofty our expressions may be.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable." David knew what it was to be searched by God and he prayed, "Search me, O God." But he could not search the greatness of his God. There, he was utterly lost—the utmost range of his faculties could not compass the greatness of Jehovah—"His greatness is unsearchable."

4. *One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.* There is a hallowed tradition of praise. Each generation should hand out the praise of God as a precious legacy to the next one. Train up your sons and daughters to praise your God so that when your voice is silent in death, another voice like your own may continue the strain.

5. *I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty, and of Your wondrous works.* "I will speak." What a powerful speaker David was! Note how he piles up his golden words. He is not content merely to talk of God's majesty, but he speaks of its "glorious honor." When he talked of God's works, he calls them "wondrous works."

6. *And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts.* If they will not speak of anything else, they shall be obliged to speak with awe when the terrors of the Lord are abroad in the earth. If they were as dumb as fishes before, they shall begin to say to one another, with bated breath, when earthquakes, famines, war and pestilence are rife, "What a terrible God He is!"

6. *And I will declare Your greatness.* While other men were talking, David did not say, "Now I can be quiet." When they did not speak, he did, and when they began to speak, he still added his quota of praise to Jehovah.

7. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.* What a beautiful expression! "They shall abundantly utter." The original has in it the idea of bubbling up, boiling over, bursting out like a fountain! Men's hearts shall get to be so full of gratitude to God that they shall overflow with the memory of His great goodness! Then they shall sing. Singing is the language of jubilant nature—"the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing." Singing is the language of men when they wish to express their

highest joys. The saints sing the high praises of their God. Singing is the language of the holy angels! Did they not, when they came to Bethlehem, sing concerning the newborn King? Singing is the language of Heaven and most marvelous of all, singing is the highest language that God ever uses! "He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Oh, for more holy singing!

8. *The LORD is gracious*. That alone is enough to make us sinners sing, for we need Divine Grace and, "the Lord is gracious."

8. *And full of compassion*. There is no "passion" in Him, but there is "compassion" in Him. What a mercy that is for us! "He is full of compassion."

8. *Slow to anger, and of great mercy*. Do you hear that, you great sinners and you saints who need great forbearance?

9. *The Lord is good to all.* Even to His enemies! Does not the dewdrop hang upon the thistle as well as upon the rose?

9. *And His tender mercies are over all His works*. He cares for the worm in the sod and for the fish in the sea as well as for men upon the face of the earth.

10. *All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You*. Their voices can reach a higher note and a loftier strain than God's works can ever reach. "Your saints shall bless You."

11. *They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom.* For the saints love God as their King, and they rejoice to remember what the King's Son said to His disciples, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." So well may they sing of it!

11-13. *And talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom. Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations*. What is the use of preaching if it does not glorify God? What is the use of a tongue that does not speak or sing of the glory of God's Kingdom? Let one of God's bards have this as the theme of his song and he feels like a hind let loose, rejoicing in glorious liberty!

14. *The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up as those that are bowed*. Does not this seem to be an amazing change in the strain? The Lord is a King and His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom—yet what is He doing? Why, He is upholding, propping up those that are ready to fall and lifting up those that are crushed and oppressed! Earthly kings often glory in the terror of their power and the splendor of their majesty. What a condescending God is ours, whose Glory is a moral glory and whose chief delight consists in blessing the poor and needy! Let us bless His name for this. Are any of you ready to fall? Then praise Him for this glorious truth, "The Lord upholds all that fall"! Are any of you bowed down? Daughter of Abraham, have you been bowed down these many years? Oh, that you might be made straight this very hour! And you may be, for God can lift you up, for He "raises up all those that are bowed down."

15, 16. *The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season. You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living*

thing. What a glorious God we have! How easily can He supply the needs of His people! He has but to open His hands and it is done! We need not be afraid to come to Him, as though our needs would be too great for Him to supply. The commissariat of the universe is superintended by this truly Universal Provider, who has but to open His hands to satisfy "the desire of every living thing."

17. *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works*. This is a thing for which many modern divines do not praise God. The attribute of righteousness in the Character of God is expelled from a good deal of modern theology. But he who loves God rightly, loves the righteousness of God! I would not care to have salvation if it were unrighteous salvation. The righteousness of God gleams like a sharp two-edged sword and it is terrible to those who are at enmity against Him. But the true children of the Most High delight to see this sword of State carried in the front of the great King of kings! The seraphim cry, one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts!" The redeemed in Glory sing, "Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints!" But the critical critics of the present day care nothing for these attributes of Jehovah.

18. *The LORD is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.* If you read this Psalm through carefully, you will notice the great number of, "alls," with which the latter part of the Psalm is studded. And this is appropriate, for God is All-in-All, He is the One, the All, so let Him have all praise from all!

19. *He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them*. When you have respect to God's will, God will have respect to your will. When you fear Him you will have no one else to fear, and when you make His service your delight, He will make your needs His care.

20. *The LORD preserves all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy.* As in a state of sanitary perfection, everything that breeds pollutants and disease is banished—so must it be in God's great universe when He has completed His works—"all the wicked will He destroy."

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever*.

—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.

THOUGHT CONDEMNED, YET COMMANDED
NO. 2973

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1876.

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:31-33.

THESE are soothing words to read, but difficult words to put into practice. Had anyone except the Lord Jesus Christ uttered them, we might have quoted to him that ancient saying, "Physician, heal yourself," for we shall never find any other teacher who is, himself, absolutely free from care. But Jesus Christ not only gives us the purest possible precepts, but His own life is the best exposition of them. If ever you want to know what Christ means by His teaching, look at His life. You may rest assured that He never gave us a command which He was not, Himself, prepared to obey. Those of us who have put our trust in Christ are His servants and He, Himself, condescended to be a Servant for our sakes. Indeed, He is the real model Servant and the service which He requires of us, He, Himself, shows us how to perform. I do not intend, therefore, so much to expound the text by any words of my own, as to illustrate it by the life of Jesus Christ Himself. I think that it may be more profitable and certainly it will be more unusual, if I take these words of Christ and say to you, "If you would know their meaning, look at the life of Him whom you call Master and Lord. You can best understand His words by His works."

I see in the text, first, *a precept forbidding thought.* Secondly, *a precept commanding thought.* And then, in the two precepts, if they are rightly kept, I see *a frame of mind admirably fitted for all Believers in coming to the Communion Table.*

I. First, then, we have here A PRECEPT FORBIDDING THOUGHT—a precept which says, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear?" How are we to understand this precept?

Certainly, *we are not to understand it in the sense of the idler*, who says, "God will provide and, therefore, there is no need for me to labor. God's Providence is my inheritance and, therefore, I may fold my arms and sit still." The man who talks and acts in that fashion will have thistles on his land, emptiness in his cupboard, rags on his back and ruin to his character—and all that will serve him right! Paul wrote to the

Thessalonians, "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." And it would, perhaps, be the best way of treating some men if they were never allowed to eat anything except what they had themselves earned. Of course, this rule would not apply in the case of those who are disabled by old age, or laid aside by sickness, but, in every other case, work is the lot of us all and it is a benefit to us all—and we ought never, under the pretense of piety, to endeavor to shirk it! You have heard, perhaps, of the very pious man who entered a monastery in order that he might spend all his time in devotion. So, when the time came for the brethren to go into the fields to work, he did not leave his cell—he was too spiritual to handle a hoe or a spade, so he continued in communion with angels. He was very much surprised, however, when the time came for the brotherhood to assemble in the refectory, that he was not called! And after waiting till the demands of hunger overcame the claims of his spiritual being, he went to the prior and asked why he had not been called to the meal. And he was informed that as he was so spiritual that he could not work, it was thought that he was probably so spiritual that he could not eat and, at any rate, the laws of the monastery did not permit him to eat until he had earned what he needed. There was much common sense in that reply and our Lord Jesus Christ was not one of your lackadaisical, goody-goody sort of people who have nothing at all to do! Point me to a single wasted hour in our Savior's whole life. Show me one instance in which He was a sluggard, if you can. There is His life record before you, written by four truthful men—put your finger, if you can, upon a single spot where He might be rightly accused of being sluggish. If he had been so, we might have had a warrant for interpreting this text according to the lazy man's version of it, but it is not so. His motto was always, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night comes when no man can work."

Neither did our Lord Jesus Christ intend to inculcate prodigality when he said, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?" and so on. This is what the young spendthrift does when he comes into possession of his estate. He gathers all he has with both hands. Take thoughts? Not he! As long as the gold will last, he will spend it without reckoning! All the proverbs of prudence he despises—he is too free-hearted and generous to think of them—and so, by his sinful extravagance, he speedily brings himself to poverty. Our Lord Jesus Christ never meant that and He never acted like that. With what singular economy did the Savior always behave! Generous to the last degree, He fed five thousand men, besides women and children, but, equally economical, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Jesus Christ would have us take care of what we have, for we are only stewards, and a steward must not waste his Lord's goods. Extravagance, waste—the allowing of anything to perish which ought to be used—is a wrong thing which cannot be too sternly condemned. And the Savior never intended, for a single moment, to justify any such action as that!

Neither did our Lord forbid a certain amount of forethought. One kind of forethought He certainly did condemn when He said, "Take therefore no

thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But He, Himself—and as I have reminded you, He is His own Expositor and the key to His own teaching—often looked forward. For instance, with regard to Lazarus, who He might have gone to him at once, He stayed away a while, looking forward to the time when Lazarus would have been dead and buried four days as the proper period for displaying His resurrection power! And as for His own death, He looked forward to that from the very opening of His earthly ministry and long before. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened until it was accomplished. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, not merely once, but virtually all His life! He did think of His latter end and His whole life was a preparation for that great offering up of Himself as a Sacrifice for the sins of men. He did not, therefore, forbid us to look to the end of life and to the necessary preparation for that end. He did not forbid us to look towards ends and objectives which may require futurity to ripen them, for, if we did not do so, our life would be altogether confusion and certainly could not be well-directed!

What, then, did the Savior mean when He said, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear?" I think that He meant, first, "*Do not let provision for your temporal needs be the chief end of your life*, for this is what the heathen do. The heathen Gentiles live to eat, to drink and to clothe themselves." This is what the savage still does—give him "happy hunting grounds" where he can get sufficient food, and where the skins of beasts may cover him from the inclemency of the weather and you have given him all that he needs. Jesus says, "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." But you are not to make this search the sole end and aim of your life—you were created for something nobler and better than that. For such an objective as this, an ox or an ass may live, but not a Christian! It is utterly beneath the dignity of your immortal spirit, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, to be living alone, or chiefly, for this reason. This is a matter which will require your careful thought—God has formed you of the dust of the ground and the appetites of animals are shared in by you—they crave and demand your attention—but not such attention as would lead you to make these minor matters the main business of your life! But, alas, how many men there are who are simply great consumers of bread, meat, wine and such like things—

"Like brutes they live—like brutes they die."

May God convert them, by His Grace, and so lift them up to something higher! As for all of you who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, scorn such business as satisfies the heathen savage!

But the Savior must have meant more than that. When He said, "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink," He meant, *as compared with the service of God, and the honor and glory of His name, which should be the great objective of your life—do not give any consideration to these other things*. Christ elsewhere puts the matter thus, "He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this

world shall keep it unto life eternal." He means that His disciple is to hate, or to love less, even his own life—to be prepared to consider that even that is a mere trifle if it should ever be a hindrance to the Glory of Christ. You remember how the Apostle Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." Brethren, if it ever comes to this, that you must lose your business, your employment, your livelihood, or else do wrong—lose *everything* sooner than commit the smallest sin! And if it came to this, that you must lose your liberty and lie in a dungeon, or else deny the faith—accept the prison, but reject the opportunity of traitorously forsaking your Lord and Master! And if it came even to death, itself, remember how bravely the martyrs behaved when they refused to accept pardon at the price of recantation! They could die, but they could not deny their Lord! They could burn, but they could not turn and, therefore, they took no thought as to what they should eat or what they should drink, or whether they should live or die! They counted all such things as insignificant trifles to those who were seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness! And who will dare to say that they were unwise? If any should even *hint* that they were not wise, think of them, as they are now within yonder pearly portals, amid the white-robed hosts bearing the victor's palm—

"Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal Throne of God!"

These are they who, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, took no thought of minor matters, but followed the Lamb where ever He led the way!

Still further to open up the meaning of this injunction, let me remind you that *this is just what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did*. You cannot say that Jesus Christ ever troubled His head about what He should eat, or what He should drink—His meat and His drink consisted in doing His Father's will! Even life itself was as nothing to Him, for He cheerfully laid it down for our sakes. When the devil offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, you know how He answered him. And when, afterwards, Peter began to rebuke Him for talking about dying, He seemed to think that He was in the same position as when He was with the devil in the wilderness, for He said to Peter, "Get you behind Me, Satan; for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of man." He counted nothing that He had as being worth preserving and, in this sense, taking no thought of anything, He surrendered all to God to be used for the good of His people!

And, dear Friends, we shall further see the meaning of the text if we note that *we are not to take such thought about eating, drinking and so on, as to make ourselves slaves to work and worry*. I know some professing Christians who seem as if they needed to grasp the whole world. They already have plenty of business, yet they are craving for more. The days are not long enough for them—they would like to be up before the larks, or not to go to bed at all if they could do without sleep! They stretch out their arms like huge encompassing seas seeking to

swallow all the shore. They have what ought to be enough—they have long had enough and a great deal more than enough for their needs—yet they have not enough, nor is it probable that they ever will have enough to satisfy their cravings unless the Grace of God should exert its gracious influence over their hearts! And see how worried they always are! I have seen a poor man with only a crust of dry bread to eat, yet he was perfectly happy. And I have seen a rich man with an abundance of wealth—and he was utterly miserable! The one could rejoice in God, though he had little of this world's goods. But the other could not rejoice notwithstanding all that he possessed!

A Christian should not be one of those who are full of worry, those who rise up early, sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness and devote all their time to secular and secondary things, so that they have no leisure for private devotion, or for the service of God. God ought not to have the clippings and the odds and ends of life. He ought not to come in for the cheese-parings and the candle ends as He seems to do in some men's houses. But the chief part of our time, yes, all our time should, in some respects, be consecrated to Him. While it is right for you to be diligent in business, yet you should always let everything be done for God's Glory—and that cannot be the case if you become the slave of Mammon and if the signs of fretting and worrying are plainly visible upon your very face! Think for a moment—when did your Lord ever fret and worry about gold and silver? Did anyone ever see upon that blessed brow of His any cloud because of His lack of these things? Enough was given to Him for His daily maintenance and that, He entrusted to Judas, the treasurer of His little band of disciples. But He made no request for it, nor did He levy any tithe or tax for the support of Himself and His followers. Nor was He ever anxious about ways and means. He took all things calmly and quietly and He would have you do the same.

And He meant too, dear Friends, *that no Christian ought to be very anxious about anything. He* never was. I know some Christians and some of them are here now, who will not enjoy the service, or the Communion because they are so anxious about what is possibly going to happen. They say that they believe in Providence, but they really disbelieve in it. They say that they are trusting in God, but they do not truly trust Him. They know that they ought to cast all their care upon Him who cares for them, but they do not do anything of the kind! They continue to care for themselves and they are almost worn out with anxiety. Look even at the mother of our Lord when the supply of wine at the wedding-feast ran short—she was, apparently, all in a fret, so she went to Jesus and said, "They have no wine." But Jesus said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." His time would come in due course and then He would give them what they needed for that wedding feast. But until the right moment came, He remained calm and quiet. And that is how we should be, leaving everything in God's hands. Having done all that we can do by honest labor and earnest prayer, let us leave the rest

with God, for He would not have His children cumbered with much serving, nor have them vexed with earthly cares.

And, more than that, dear Friends, *we ought never to take such thought as to get to murmuring, repining and complaining of our lot*, as though it had not been fixed by Infinite Love and Wisdom! Some people wish that they were almost anything rather than what they are, albeit there are others who would be glad enough to be just what those very people are! You think, my Brother, that your cross is heavier to bear than mine? I would not, however, recommend you change with me, as I certainly would not change with you! If we could all lay our crosses down in this Tabernacle and each man could take another one's cross which he liked better than his own—within 24 hours we should all be back here crying for our own crosses to be given to us again—for each man's cross fits his shoulders better than anybody else's cross would fit them! Besides, we can have Grace given to us to endure the trial which God has sent us—but if we had a trial of our own choosing we could not expect that Divine Grace would be given to support us under that, so what would we do then? Never murmur, my Brothers and Sisters, until you find Christ murmuring. Read all the records of His life and see when He ever complained. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had nowhere to lay His head. Yet He did not mention that fact in any spirit of complaining. He was a poor Man. His garment was like the common robe of the country. His food did not consist of delicacies and dainties, neither was His drink selected from the choicest liquids in the world. Yet He was a joyous man—"a Man of Sorrows" for our sakes, but, as far as He, Himself, was personally concerned, the noblest, the calmest and the happiest of mankind!

And, Brothers and Sisters, *we must never let thought about temporal things drive us to despair*. Possibly, in this large audience, there is a man who says, "I have struggled very hard and everything seems to go against me—I am inclined to throw it all away." But, my Brother, when did your Lord throw away all His work, or throw *any* of His work away? He never did! And if you will take to God that portion of your care which you ought not to attempt to carry, you will find that the part of the load which you ought to carry is not too heavy for your shoulders when the Lord strengthens you with His Grace! The wear and tear of life comes not out of the Providential trials which we have to endure, but out of the unbelieving cares and burdens which we make for ourselves! You can carry easily enough the load that God appoints for you, my Brothers and Sisters, but if you let the devil sit on the top of it in the form of your own anxieties, doubts and fears, then the burden will crush you to the earth! Imitate your blessed Lord and Master, and never despair, but hope on, hope always and even if God, Himself, should seem to forsake you, yet cry, "My God, my God," even as Jesus did when God had forsaken Him!

I will only say one other thing upon this point, which is that *we are not to think about temporal things so as to get into the habit of hoarding, as some do*. They scarcely spend enough to provide for *their own necessities*. The poor ask nothing from them. And God's Church—I was

about to say gets less than nothing—and I might truly say that though it appears to be impossible, for there are some who give a good deal less than nothing to the Lord's cause, for they occupy a place in the building where services are held which has been erected, and is still kept up by others at an expense which these misers never attempt to share—so that, as far as God's House is concerned, they absolutely take from that House instead of giving to it, albeit that they have superabundant substance of their own from which they ought to contribute to the work of the Lord! Saving is well, but the first thing that a man has to do is to see to the saving of his soul! And there are some who always look so much to the saving of their wealth that their soul stands very little chance of being saved! *To get and to hold* seems to be the great end-all and be-all of some men's being—but it can never be so with a true Christian. He, by Divine Grace, is like His Master, who, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." His riches consisted in giving and, therefore, He was the richest man who ever lived, for He gave more than anyone else when He gave Himself that He might redeem His people!

I have thus explained to you the thought that is forbidden. May God's Grace enable us to obey our Lord's injunction. And the secret—the only secret by which we can learn how to obey it is this—somebody must think and care for us and, as we are not to think and care for ourselves, we must cease all sinful caring by believing that our Heavenly Father cares for us! If Jesus cares for me, I may get rid of care about myself. And I urge all my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by the wounds that were given Him for our sake, and by all the many tokens of His love that He has given to us, never to doubt that He cares for us in anything—in the little things as much as in the great ones, counting even the hairs of our head and bearing all our afflictions, according to that gracious Word of God, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Cast your care, then, on Him, for so you may cease to care for yourselves!

II. But now, secondly, we have in the text A PRECEPT COMMANDING THOUGHT—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

Call back your thoughts from the pursuit of the tidings of this life and when you have recalled them, send them forth in pursuit of the blessings of the life that is to come! What ought a Christian to care for? What did Christ care for? *Christ's great care was for His Father's Glory*. For this He lived and for this He died. There is no single action of His life that had not God's Glory as its end. O beloved Brothers and Sisters who are bought with the blood of Christ, we cannot, any of us, say this about our own lives! Yet we ought to be able to say it and we ought now to pray God's blessed Spirit to enable us to concentrate all our thoughts, powers and energies upon this one objective—that we might, in all things, glorify God! This is, as the Catechism says, "man's chief end"—especially the chief end of *redeemed man*—to do everything, whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the Glory of God—to make the most common acts of daily life, as well as the higher acts of service and

devotion, subservient to God's Glory. God help you to attain to this ideal Christian life!

Next to that, Christ's great care *was to do the particular work which God had given Him to do.* When He had been sitting by the well, talking to that poor woman of Samaria, His disciples wondered why He did not ask for meat. But He said to them, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He was completely absorbed in that one thing—the finishing of the work which God had given Him to do. And how early He began that work! What a bright example He has set before you young lads and lasses! When He was 12 years of ago, after He had been "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions," and Joseph and Mary had sorrowed because they could not find Him, He said to them, in answer to His mother's question of reproof, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And He might have finished His life with the same enquiry. When wicked men led Him away to crucify Him and He willingly went as a sheep to the slaughter, He might have said, "I am still about My Father's business." He never sought to save Himself—He always served His Father who had sent Him. There were no by-ends with Christ. You never find Him seeking personal honor. On the contrary, He hid Himself away from men when they sought to thrust honor upon Him. You never find Him seeking personal pleasure—His life was a life of self-denial. You never find Him seeking riches. Among all the poor, there were none poorer than He was. But He always delighted to do what God had given Him to do!

O Brothers and Sisters, if we were to live as He did, we would make our lives to be grand lives, and happy lives, too, albeit that we would probably multiply our sorrows, even as Christ did. Yet, as I have already reminded you, there was a deep happiness underneath the surface, in Christ's inmost soul, which abundantly recompensed Him for all the trials He had to endure. Let us labor to do as He did so that we shall be able to say, "This one thing I do—the one thing which God has given me to do." Short of this, let us never be content. I long to be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "For to me to live is Christ." I should like to be a thunderbolt, hurled from the right hand of God, and to go crashing through every obstacle till it had reached the mark at which God had aimed me! I pray that the love of Christ may thus constrain me, and drive me on towards the great objective of my being—the Glory of my God! So may it be with you too, dear Friends and, to that end, "gird up the loins of your mind," "lay aside every weight" and the clinging garments which would entangle you and impede you in running to the goal which lies before you—the finishing of the work which God has given you to do!

What else did Christ care for? Well, I might truly say that He cared for nothing else. For these two things—to glorify God and to finish His work—comprehend His whole life. Yet, as a matter of detail, I may remind you that *Christ lived to care for His people.* He was free from care about Himself, yet full of care for His people. From the very first day

when He had disciples around Him, till the hour in which He was taken up from them, He was always thinking about them. Read any one of the Gospels through, with this thought in your mind, and you will be struck with the tender care of Jesus Christ towards those who followed Him. There is Peter, for instance. Christ knows that Satan desires to have him, that he may sift him as wheat, but He means to be before the devil, so He says to Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." He did not say, "I will pray for you when you get into Satan's sieve" but, "I have prayed for you already. I have anticipated the temptation by My supplication for you." When Judas and the band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came to arrest our Lord in Gethsemane, what did He say? "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." His only thought was about His disciples, not about Himself! Just as, after instituting the Last Supper, when He was going out to be betrayed and needed all the comfort, humbly speaking, that His disciples could give Him, He never asked them for comfort, but He began comforting them by saying to them, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me! In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." You see that all His care was for you, not for Himself! And, Brothers and Sisters, let us have something like this care for the Church of God! Let us be mindful of the Lord's people and let us watch for opportunities of doing good to others. If we hear of any who are seeking the Lord, let us try to guide them to Him. If we know any among our Brothers and Sisters who have backslidden, let us seek to be the means of restoring them. If any are sad at heart, let us endeavor to comfort them. Having given up all sinful cares, let the welfare of the people of God be our one and only care!

And then, again, *Christ had a care for those who had no care for Him.* That is a beautiful simile which He used concerning guilty Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!" That is a beautiful emblem of what Christianity should be. The mother bird seems utterly oblivious of herself altogether. If she can but spread her wings over those little chicks that nestle down close to her bosom, she will give away her own warmth for them and sacrifice her own life in their defense. Christ looked upon that city, which He knew would perish with an overwhelming destruction, but His big heart was palpitating in His bosom and He was longing to cover even those great sinners with His wings of love! He manifested His care for the sons of men very practically. When a crowd gathers to hear anyone preach, surely it is not the preacher's business to feed his congregation as well as teach them! Yet Jesus thought it was His duty to do so. They were hungry, weary and ready to faint—and the gracious Savior was concerned about them, though He had no care about Himself. And He especially cared for those

poor pale-faced women and children who had come so far, and looked so weak. And He said to His disciples, "I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way."

And then, like a prince who makes a great feast, He fed them all with loaves and fishes! And, Christian men and women, if God enables you to get rid of care on your own account, you will begin to care for the poor and needy, and to care for sinners. Yes, and you will learn to love your neighbor as yourself. And when you meet with a case that needs your help, you will be careful in attending to it. And if you cannot tell whether it is a good case or not, you will be like Job, who said, "The cause which I knew not I searched out." That man is like Christ who lives, not for himself, but for others. It has been all too truly said that there are some people whose first care is for themselves, and whose second care is for themselves, and whose third care is for themselves, and whose fourth care is for themselves, and so on as many times as you like to repeat it! Possibly somewhere down in the millions, there is a little care for somebody else, but it is too low down ever to come to anything practical. I am afraid it is often so with some professing Christians! But let it not be so among you. The heathen care for themselves. The brute beasts care for themselves. But the Christian should care for others, with a view to the Glory of God. For this reason he should live, even as Jesus lived.

III. Now, thirdly, IN THE SPIRIT OF THESE TWO PRECEPTS, IT WILL BE WELL FOR ALL CHRISTIANS TO COME TO THEIR LORD'S TABLE.

Come first, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *without care about temporal things*. Did you come in here heavily burdened, my Sister? Then you had forgotten that the Lord loved you and that He knew all about your needs. Now that I remind you of these facts, leave your burden in the pew where you are sitting—it will not bother anybody else—and come to the Table without it. "O Sir!" you say, "I have worked very hard all week." Then, my dear Sister, do not go on working or worrying *today*. "I have had a crushing burden to carry the last six months," says a Brother. Then, my dear Brother, do not carry it any longer—there is no need that you should. The Jews, when they ate the Passover, stood with their loins girded and each man had his staff in his hand. They were allowed to carry a burden, for they were going on a long journey and they were thrust out in haste. So we read that "the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes, upon their shoulders." But the Christian, at the Lord's Table, does not stand. What ought to be our posture at the Communion Table? In Matthew 26:20, we read, "When the even was come, He sat down with the twelve." No doubt, according to the Oriental custom, they reclined in such a position that John even leaned his head upon the bosom of Christ. They sat, or reclined, perfectly at their ease, as if to remind us that when we believe in Jesus Christ, we enter into rest. What is the teaching of the emblems upon the Table—the bread and the wine? What do they mean? They are to remind us of the broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His shed blood, of which we are, symbolically, to eat

and to drink. Paul says, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" What? Will He deny you bread for your body after He has given you Christ, the Bread of Heaven, for your soul? Will He deny you clothes for your body after He has clothed your soul with the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness? Will He deny you a sufficient store of earthly goods that you may get through this world when He has already given you a mansion in the skies and a crown of life that fades not? If we should forget our cares *anywhere*—surely we should do so at the Communion Table!

Now, dear Friends, let me, ask—*why do you still carry your cares*? Have they ever done you any good? Which one of you, who has been the most full of care, has ever put a sixpence into his pocket thereby? With all your fretting and worrying, have you ever obtained any comfort? It is sorry music that you make with your moaning over your anxieties! I am sure that you have never enjoyed the tune yourself, nor has anyone else. And as for you who have been the greatest money-grubbers, I can tell you that you will die poorer than you were when you were born! "No," you say "that cannot be, for naked came we into this world." But you will *die* poorer than that, for when you came into this world you had both soul and body—but when you go out of this world, you will have to leave your body behind, so that you will die poorer than you were born! You may save as much as you like and you may struggle, and wrestle, and fret, and fume, and worry, but it will come to that in the end! The man who will carry fifty staves, or a hundred, or who will not be satisfied till he gets many hundred staves and tries to travel along with all that bundle of sticks—well, he may do it if he likes, but if you will give me one good stout stick to walk with, I will be satisfied and I think that is the wise thing to do! He who has what he really needs and who is content, is the truly rich man!

So, Brothers and Sisters, put aside all cares about temporal things as you come to the Table of your Lord. But come to *His Table with your heart full of care about your God*. Come with this care—that you may not come as a mere form! Or with this care—that you may truly discern the Lord's body! Or with this care—that, through the outward signs, you may behold your Lord and Master crucified for you! Come with this care—that you may really feed upon Christ after a spiritual fashion. And with this care—that, when you go away from the Table, you may not lose what you have gained here, but may show by your life that you have really been strengthened by feeding upon Jesus Christ! Concentrate all your thoughts into this one desire—

"Nearer, my God, to You!
Nearer to You"—

and partake of the emblems of His body and His shed blood with this sole objective, that you may get nearer and yet nearer to Him and that you may afterwards live like He did. Come to the Communion in this spirit and God's blessing will surely reap upon you!

Before I close my discourse, I have a few words to say to those of you who have no part nor lot in the matter of which I have been speaking. I am addressing many persons who are not Christians. They are full of care about the things of the world and, very likely some of them will say to me, "You might let us care about the things of the world, for we have nothing else to care for." Some persons say, "It is a dreadful thing that these unconverted people should have such-and-such amusements." So it is, but there is another aspect of the case. Whenever I see a pig in a sty and the farmer is going to give him some slop from the house, I say, "Let the creature have it. He likes it and it is the proper food for him." I do not envy him and if I were to see a man of my acquaintance go and drink the hog's food, I would be shocked, indeed! So, when I see a man who professes to be a Christian, taking delight in the pleasures of the world, I am shocked—but such things are suited to the poor creatures that like them. Only remember, my Friend, if you are going to be content with this world, you are thereby giving up Heaven and giving up the joys of eternity! And in taking the good things, as you call them, of sin, and the pleasures of the flesh, you take the devil and all his works—and all that involves your being cast away from the Presence of God forever!

Oh, if you only knew your true condition, you who are without God, and without Christ, you would want to get away to your houses and to fall on your knees and cry unto the Lord to have mercy upon you! And if you were wise, you would not even wait till you reached your homes, but in this very place you would cry, "What must we do to be saved?" If your heart really utters that cry, let me give you the Scriptural answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust that Savior whose teaching I have tried to explain. Trust Him who did more than teach, for He lived! Trust Him who did more than live, for He died! Trust Him who did more than die, for He rose again and ever lives at His Father's right hand on high! Trust Him and you shall be saved forever! The Lord bless you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

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

A WAFER OF HONEY
NO. 2974

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1906.

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IN THE YEAR 1863.

"My Grace is sufficient for you."
2 Corinthians 12:9.

LET no Christian imagine that he will ever have immunity from trouble while he continues in the body. Should you be favored with visions and Revelations of the Lord, caught up to the third Heaven, admitted into Paradise and privileged to hear things which it were not lawful for a man to utter, conclude not that you have escaped the rod—rather expect that such high privilege will need heavy affliction to balance it! If God has given you the great sail and the prosperous wind, He will also give you the heavy ballast to keep your keel deep in the stream. Do not expect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that because you have been strengthened in the faith, you will therefore be loosened from the burden of the flesh—neither because you may have been the means of strengthening others, that, therefore, trouble will be light for you. Even into your ship the deep waters may come. Think not that it is so water-tight that the billows will only dash against it. You may be called to feel heaviness—your faith may be all but staggered and your soul may have to cry out from the depths because of the slender strength you possess.

The Lord has such ways of chastising His children as to make them feel. We think, some of us, after we have suffered a certain amount of trouble, that we have been so conditioned to it we shall no longer be moved as we used to be. The Apostle Paul had been beaten with rods, tossed about in shipwrecks, yet he had suffered hunger and thirst and nakedness till he felt that, if any man had a right to glory after the flesh, he had. Still, even he found that the Lord had a way of getting at his heart and making it smart. He had thorns in the flesh, messengers of Satan that did most effectually buffet him. We, too, must have trials—briars of a kind that shall come right home to us and touch us in our bones and in our flesh.

Neither let us think, dear Friends, that even the privilege of the Mercy Seat will shield us from the rod. When chastened we run to prayer, but we shall not, therefore, escape the chastisement! Paul, an Apostle, prays. He who certainly must have understood "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," beseeches the Lord three times, yet the thorn in the flesh was not blunted, much less removed! He still had to suffer as he had done before. Oh, how often we think we can use the Mercy Seat for our own lust! Is not prayer too sacred a thing for us to make a selfish use of it? When God gives us the key of His storehouse and bids us take what we will, shall we use even a single promise of His Word merely to pander

to our own desires and to enable us to escape from enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? If we thus misuse prayer, we may be excused for it, but we shall not be accepted in it. Even Paul is non-suited when he asks ease for the flesh. He gets no release from trouble. He gets something better, however, for the Lord says to Him, "My Grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Thus, Beloved, we must reckon upon the adversities that are sure to befall us. "In the world you shall have tribulation." This is one of the Divine shalls and wills. The Lord will chasten those whom He loves and His children shall suffer—you can be sure of that. It is as sure as any other thing in the world, "You *shall* have tribulation."

I. To those who have proved the truth of this declaration, the text will be peculiarly sweet. THERE ARE CERTAIN SORE VEXATIONS OF SPIRIT FOR WHICH GRACE IS THE ONLY BALM. The Lord does not say, "My Providence shall protect you." Nothing of the kind—Divine Grace is the remedy in this case and, I take it, this was because the Apostle was suffering in the very core and center of his being. There are many trials, the grief of which may be fully relieved by ordinary Providences—but these that come and wound a man to the quick—require Grace as their only effectual balm.

Past experience of Grace is of no avail in such a case. It is *present* Grace that is promised in the text and it is present Grace that is required. When we have sometimes been bowed down and walked in darkness, and seen no light, we have called to remembrance our song in the night and our spirit has made diligent search—but that very song has been turned into howling in the remembrance and all that we thought we felt, and thought we knew has vanished from before our eyes! I do not know how it has been with you, but there have been times with me when I could set no value upon my past experience. The devil has said it was all a delusion, my faith mere presumption, my hope mere excitement—and all my joys but the effusion of animal spirits. There will be a time when he will bid you look back and all the way will look like the Valley of the Shadow of Death. You cannot see one hopeful sign in it! And you turn over the books of experience and read them, and you think, "Well, my spot is not the spot of God's children, and my footprints do not seem to be at all like the footprints of the flock." I tell you, if you have ever done business in deep waters, you have found that anchors at home are of no use in a storm—and that the anchor which stood so well a year ago, if it is left at home on shore—is of no use to you now in the storm! It is present Grace, nothing but present Grace, that will do now! You have eaten all the cold meats and you have brought out from the cupboard every moldy crust you can find—and now your soul is reduced to the very last and faints within you. And now you must cry to your God in your trouble and get present Grace in this, your time of need!

And if past experience is of no use, *much less is past success*. Somebody might have touched the Apostle on the shoulder and have said, "Paul, Paul, Paul! Why must you feel the buffetings of Satan? Did you not establish the Church at Corinth, and plant churches throughout all Asia Minor? Who has served his God as faithfully as you have? Have you not been on many journeys, in perils by waters, in perils of robbers,

in perils by the sword, in watches and fasts? Have you not had the care of all the Churches? Has not your Master highly distinguished you and made you not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles? What multitudes of spirits are now before the Throne of God that were born, under God, through your ministry! And what thousands are still on the road who call you their spiritual father and to whom you have been as a nursing mother in the faith!" If you had said this to the Apostle, he would have replied, "Yes, sometimes this might have comforted me. If it had been a question of my Apostleship, this would have been satisfactory. If the point in hand had been a question as to whether my ministry has been acknowledged of God, this would have been decisive. But I am touched in another place, now, and the wound is so deep, my sore is grievous. And my heart is so exceedingly heavy that no kindly thought of others, and no pleasant musings of my own bring me the slightest relief. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me!" The Lord knows how to succor him and, therefore, He gave him that gracious assurance, "My Grace is sufficient for you."

I think it is well, dear Friends, to remember the Lord's past goodness, but we must not live on that—we must go and get fresh supplies from Heaven. Old manna, to this day, though it came from Heaven, will always breed worms and stink, if it is kept. There is no alteration in it from the days of Moses and it is the same at this moment. You must eat the manna as you get it and constantly go for more! The old manna will be of very little use to you. It is only on Sundays, when your soul is perfectly at rest and quiet—it is only at those sweet resting seasons, which the soul sometimes enjoys, that the remembrance of the past becomes very sweet. You must have daily present dispensations of manna from the Throne of God.

In such a case as this, to which the Apostle was brought, we feel sure that *the fact of his high office and eminent attainments of Grace* would not have been a sufficient consideration. Paul, who shall match you? So deep in knowledge and so ardent in zeal, you seem to have a seraph's spirit. So mighty in words and yet, so humble in your own esteem, you are surely a prince in Israel! Paul was not one of the young men, much less one of the babes in Grace. He says, "There are not many fathers," though certainly he, himself, was worthy to be called a Patriarch. Yet that fact would not comfort him. And, Brothers and Sisters, you may come to such hard pinches that your growth in Grace and the flourishing of your virtues will not afford so much as a drop of comfort to you—you will have to go to the Eternal Fountain to drink, for even these marble cisterns will have been broken and will hold no water.

Observe, further, Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord does not say, "*The consolation of your brethren shall be sufficient for you.*" Oh, how sweet it is to be comforted by our fellow Christians! Let those who will, walk in isolation—give me sweet communion, for to tell one's trial to a true Brother in Christ is often to lighten the weight, as if half of it were removed! Sometimes it is to be wholly relieved, for the words of some wise men in our Israel are, indeed, as balm that brings speedy healing to the wound. But there are wounds which the stranger intermeddles not

with, no, that even the dearest friend cannot touch! There are certain vexations of spirit and disquietudes of soul that mock human agency. I have had, sometimes, to converse with some members of the Church and I have never felt so much the littleness of my own power as when I have tried be comfort them and failed. I thought it was because I was but as a little child in experience and could not talk with them as a father in Israel might have done, whose years might have given him more wisdom. But I have found that even the fathers have failed and that years have not always sufficed to give sufficient knowledge to comfort the troubled conscience, or to remove the burden from the galled shoulder. No, there are cases that mock the ordinary practitioner and must be taken straight to the Great Physician, for the only thing that will survive the purpose is the Grace, the *present* Grace of an all-sufficient God!

I might prolong this catalog, but you who experimentally know the Truth of God will know from your own experience that there are trials and there are points in affliction where nothing can possibly console but the immediate outpouring and receiving of the Grace of God.

II. And now, Beloved, in the second place, let me say that SUFFICIENT GRACE IS A SURE BALM—that even for the most acute disorder, the most chronic disease—"Grace" *is* "sufficient."

Do you not perceive that it just meets *the fear which trial excites*? What is the Christian's fear when he is buffeted, tried and afflicted? I know him in his sober senses—he has a fear of sin. Listen to him. "I am afraid of being poor," says he, "not because I dislike poverty, but I am afraid of my faith, lest I should murmur against God. I am not afraid of suffering," he says, "if God sends it to me, I am willing to receive it. But I am afraid of my faith, lest the pangs should be too severe and I should doubt my God. I am not," he says, "afraid of slander or of persecution. I have learned to rejoice in this, for so am I made a member of the goodly fellowship of the martyrs—but I *am* afraid lest I should deny my Lord, or be ashamed of Him, or prove an apostate, after all. As I look forward to the temptations of the world, the suggestions of Satan and the corruptions of the flesh which shall yet assail me, I am not afraid of their coming if I can but be guaranteed that they shall not cause me to sin"—for the only real wound the Christian gets is when he has sinned! Sufferings are only scars, flesh wounds—sins are the real wounds! We are never trampled on by Satan, however low our spirits may sink. It is only when we give way—capitulate in very terror and begin to be afraid—that Satan is really victorious. The battle of sin is the battle in which Satan gains the victory! But suffering, shame, distress, peril, nakedness and sword are no triumphs to Satan, for, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

You see then, Brothers and Sisters, *that Grace meets the danger because it deals with sin*. You are afraid that your patience will give out, so the Lord says, "My Grace shall operate upon your patience and make you endure." You think your faith will fail, so the Lord says, "My Grace gave you your faith and My Grace, like oil secretly applied to the fire by One standing behind the wall, shall keep your faith burning while the devil pours on his floods to quench it. It was My Grace that first taught you to love My great name so, when persecuted, My Grace shall make

you love Me more. I have kept you from apostasy until now and, let what will come, My Grace, by which I guaranteed your final perseverance, shall be sufficient for you and you shall come out of all your trials and troubles like silver out of the furnace—not defiled—but cleansed and purified by the flames." You see then, Brothers and Sisters, that this assurance does actually touch the fear which the Christian may ever have before his eyes—no, it does not merely touch the fear, but it absolutely touches all the real danger! It is as though the Lord should say to one of His servants who was standing alone, while thousands of his enemies were shooting at him with their arrows, "They shall shoot at you, but I have covered you with armor from head to foot." Or it is as if you or I trembled at the thought of crossing the deep sea and the Lord had said, "The sea is deep, and you must cross it—but I will be by you and you shall go through it dry shod." Or it is as if He said, "The fire is hot and you must walk through the midst of it. Those glowing coals your feet must know, but I will so cover you by My power that the flames nor coals shall not hurt you—you shall walk through the fire and not so much as the smell of it shall pass upon you."

What does it matter how much we suffer if we have Grace to endure it? Put a Believer where you will, if his Master gives him Grace, he is in the best place he can be for security! I have heard Brethren sometimes say, "Such a minister is in great danger! His position is lofty, his head will be turned." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if he had had the keeping of his own head, it would have been turned long ago! And your head will turn even if you are on the ground if you have the keeping of it! But if God sets a man as high as the stars and if He kept him there, he would be able to sing, "You make my feet like hinds' feet, and make me to stand on high places." It is the Grace we have, not the position we occupy, that is the important matter! If a man had Grace enough, you might put him in the worst haunts of sin and he would be the better for being there!

Now, do not think I say what I do not know. Solomon saw hyssops grow on walls and cedars on Lebanon. However, I have seen cedars grow on walls and hyssops on Lebanon! I have seen the smallest Christians in the best places and the best Christians in the worst positions. I have seen, in the midst of the haunts of the harlot, Grace shining in all the purity and chastity of lovely womanhood. And in the haunt of the thief and of the burglar, God has been pleased to have some choice saint, that, for honesty, integrity and holy living might have been worthy to have walked in a bishop's palace, or to have adorned the best Evangelical drawing room in England! Brethren, it is not the position that is the main thing! The best of men may grow in the worst places and some of the meekest of Believers may be found where there ought to have been the bravest. I will leave this point, therein, by repeating that whatever may be the trial of heart which a man may have to endure, this assurance just meets the case—"My Grace is sufficient for you."

III. And, lastly, SHOULD NOT THE ASSURANCE THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE SUFFICIENT GRACE MAKE US EXCEEDINGLY GLAD?

"My Grace is sufficient for you"—what then? "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities"—not only gladly, but, "most gladly."

Nothing else will make you happy. The Grace of God comes to meet your case and now how happy you should be! Think about the sureness of this fact, that sufficient Grace will be ours! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I am not careful about *preaching* tonight, I merely talk right on about some things that you know and can testify. It has been so, has it not, in your experience? If there is one saint here who has an accusation to make against his Lord, let him speak! He might well say to you, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? Which of you have I failed to succor? When have I violated My promise? You have been in the waters—were you drowned? You have passed through the fire—were you burned? What loss have you ever sustained by your troubles? Did I ever refuse to hear your cry when you called upon Me? When was it that, in the day of battle, I did not cover your head and that I left you as a prey to the destroyer?" My answer is—O Lord, You know all things and You know that Your servant's witness is—

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood,
His loving kindness, oh, how good!"

And is not that your case, my Brother, my Sister in the Lord? I am sure it is! Well then, this ought to make you glad. "My Grace is sufficient for you," says the Lord. Your past experience proves it. Gladly, therefore, rejoice that you have an opportunity yet again of testing and trying the good Word of the Lord!

Again, *is not God's Grace sufficient for you in your present emergency*? Have you had some trouble today? I suppose you have had quite enough, too, for I never did find a day yet that had not enough trouble in it, and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof—well, but have you not had sufficient Grace today? Do you feel dull, heavy and gloomy in God's House of Prayer? Well, but there is Grace to be had and, therefore, looking to Him before you go to bed, you may still have another day to sing of the sufficient Grace which was given in the necessary hour! "Oh, but," you say, "it is not now! I can trust God for today, but there are clouds looming before me and I fear to enter them." Well, my dear Friend, if He is faithful to you today, add that to the fact that He was faithful yesterday! Is He not the same yesterday, today and forever? And ought you not at once to rejoice in Him? Furthermore, ask your Father and He shall tell you to turn to the records of Inspiration and they shall teach you! Were the righteous ever forsaken? And when did the Lord cast off His chosen? They have certainly been in quite as deep waters as you have ever known—you have not yet been brought to lose all that you have, to lose every child—not yet do you sit among the ashes and scrape yourself with a potsherd as Job did. And can you say, to the fullest extent, "They that walked in the streets did condemn me"? Not yet have you drunk of that cup and been baptized with the baptism of Him who said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—

"His way was much rougher and darker than yours"—

and yet your Lord triumphed! And all His people, in all ages, and under every circumstance, have triumphed in Him! If you could find one child of God who has been left, and if you could find one instance in which

God has been untrue to you, then it would be fair for you to be depressed in spirit—but until then, you should be most joyful!

Remember also, Brothers and Sisters, that *we would never know how sufficient Grace was if it were not for these troubles*—therefore we ought to be glad of all the lessons that assure us how ample and sufficient this Grace is! I know not whether all soldiers love the thought of war, but there are many who plead for a campaign. How many an officer of low rank has said, "There is no promotion, no hope of rising, no honors unless we have to fight. If we could run to the cannon's mouth, there would be some hope that we might gain a promotion." Men get few medals to hang upon their breasts who never know the smell of gunpowder. The brave days, as men call them, of Nelson and Trafalgar, have gone by—and we thank God for it—but still we do not expect to see such brave old veterans, the offspring of this age, as they who are still to be found lingering in our hospitals—the relics of our old campaigns. No, Brothers and Sisters, we must have trials if we are to get on. Young men do not become midshipmen altogether through going to the school at Greenwich and climbing the mast on dry land—they must go out to sea and be on deck in the storm! And if we are to be among the worthies, we must have stood side by side with King David! We must have gone down into the pit to slay the lion, or have lifted up the spear against the eight hundred as Adino did. Conflicts bring experience and experience brings that growth in Grace which is not to be attained by any other means!

Besides, Brothers and Sisters, *how is God's Grace to be seen by other men in the world except by our trials*? Grace is given to keep us from sin, which is a great blessing. But what is the good of Grace except it is in the time when the trial comes? Certainly, the Grace that will not stand in the hour of temptation or affliction is a very spurious sort of Grace and we had better get rid of it, if we have it. When a godly woman's child dies, the infidel husband sees the mother's faith. When the ship goes down and is lost in the sea, the ungodly merchant understands the resignation of his fellow man. When pangs show through our body and ghastly death appears in view, people see the patience of the dying Christian. Our infirmities become the black velvet on which the diamond of God's love glitters all the more brightly! Thank God I can suffer! Thank God I can be made the object of shame and contempt for, in this way, God shall be glorified! This shall be the wonder of many and to the praise of His own Grace—that so mean and so contemptible a thing was made the instrument of effecting His purpose!

I will say no more except to commend this assurance to you and ask you to take it home and lay it on your tongue. It will be like a wafer made with honey. Mind you have it for your breakfast tomorrow morning and let it be your constant daily meal—live on it—"My Grace is sufficient for *you*." Let the word, "you," come home to your heart, as though God spoke it to *you* and as if He had never spoken it to anyone else!

There are some of you to whom the text does not apply, except in this light—you have many sins—but if you trust Christ, His Grace is sufficient for you. You have been head over heels in the kennel of sin, but the power of His blood is sufficient to make you white. And even if you

have become a very prince and peer in the dominions of evil, the Grace of Christ is sufficient to wash you whiter than the driven snow! May the Lord add His blessing on these feeble rambling remarks, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 3:9-27; 5:6-11; 8:1-32.

Romans 3:9. *What then? Are we better than they?* The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans contains so horrible an account of the manners of the Gentiles, the heathen of Paul's day, that it is one of the most painful chapters in Scripture to read. Not long ago, one of our missionaries out in China was attacked concerning the Bible on this very ground. One of the learned men said to him, "This Bible of yours cannot be as ancient as you say that it is, for it is quite clear that the next chapter of the Epistle to the Nomads must have been written by somebody who had been in China and who had seen the habits and ways of the people here." So accurate is the Holy Spirit, who knew right well what the ways and manners and secret vices of the heathen were, and still are! But the Jews said, "Ah, but this is a description of the Gentiles." So Paul replies, "What then? Are we better than they?"

9, 10. *No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentile, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* Then he selects passages out of different parts of Scripture to show what man is by nature.

11-18. *There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.* These are all quotations from Old Testament Scriptures, from their own Psalmists and Prophets from whom Paul quotes to the Jews so that they might see what their own character was by nature.

19. *Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* The Law of God was given to the Jews and the descriptions which it gives must be descriptions of the Jews. "Therefore," says Paul, "as Gentile mouths have been already stopped by the descriptions of *their vices*, you also, the favored people of God, have your mouths stopped by the descriptions of yourselves taken from your own Prophets."

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh.* Whether Jew or Gentile—

20, 21. *Be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now.* Since man is lost, since man is guilty—

21-27. *The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets: even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:*

for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? If salvation is given to the guilty and if all are guilty—if no one can claim exemption, and yet salvation is freely given—what then? Why, salvation must be purely by the Grace of God! So let Grace have all the honor. "Where is boasting then?"

27. *It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No: but by the law of faith.* The law of works sometimes aids boasting, for a man rejoices and glories in what he has done. Yet the law of works ought to stop our boasting because we are guilty in God's sight. The law of faith stops our mouth because we are under obligation to God and do not dare to boast, seeing that we have nothing of good but what we have received from Him!

Romans 5:6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* What a wonderful sentence that is! Not, "Christ died for the saints, "not, "Christ died for righteous men," but, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

7-9. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* What an argument this is for the final safety of Believers! If Christ died for us when we were enemies, surely He will give us, now that He has died for us and made us His friends, His reconciled subject—"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

10. *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.* There is a threefold argument here. We were enemies, yet God blessed us even then, so will He not bless us even more, now that we are reconciled to Him? When we were enemies, He reconciled us unto Himself. Having done that, will He not certainly save us? We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son—so much more shall we be saved by the life of the risen and glorified Jesus, which has almighty, irresistible power!

11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.* Observe that Paul writes "There is therefore," for he is stating a Truth of God which is founded upon solid argument. "There is therefore now"—at this very day, at this very moment—"no condemnation"—none of any sort—none that will lie in the Court of Conscience or in the Court of King's Bench above! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Our forefathers

used to read this verse, "There is therefore now no damnation." One of the martyrs, being brought before a Popish bishop, heard the bishop say to him, "Dying in your heresy, you will be damned." "That I never shall be," answered the good man, "'for there is therefore now no damnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.'" He had sought the very spirit of the text, for there is nothing that can condemn the man who is in Christ Jesus!

1. *Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* This is the distinctive mark of a man in Christ Jesus. He does not let the flesh govern him, but the Spirit. The spiritual nature has come to the front and the flesh must go to the back. The Spirit of the living God has entered into him and become the master-power of his life. He walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* And nothing else can do that. Every man is, by nature, under bondage to that which Paul describes as "the law of sin and death." There is a law in our nature which is so powerful that even when we would do good, evil is present with us, and we cannot get away from that law except by introducing another, which is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Dr. Chalmers has a remarkable sermon upon it—*The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*—and it is this new affection for Christ which is the accompaniment of the new life in Christ, which expels the old forces that used to hold us under bondage to sin and death.

3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* The Law of God never made anybody holy and it never will do so. The Law says to a man, "This is what you ought to do and you will be condemned if you do not do it." That is quite true, but the Law supplies no power to enable us to do this! It says to the lame man, "You must walk," and to the blind man, "You must see," but it does not enable them either to walk or to see! On the contrary, our nature is such that when the Law issues its commands, there is a tendency in us at once to *disobey* them. There are some sins which we never would have thought of committing if we had not been commanded not to do them, so that the Law of God—not because of its own nature, but because of the *wickedness of our nature*, is weak and ineffectual for the producing of righteousness. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come, has lived and has died—died for us who are His people, and has put away our sins. Now we love Him! Now, being delivered from all condemnation, we love Him who has delivered us and this becomes the force by which we are inclined to holiness and led on further and further in a course, not merely of morality, but of holiness before God! What a blessed system this is, which saves the sinner from the love of sin, delivers a man from sinning, gives him a new nature and puts a right spirit within him!

5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.* Flesh cares for flesh. The man who is all body cares only for the body. The man whose mind is under subjection to his body, minds "the things of the flesh."

5. *But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Where the Holy Spirit is supreme. Where the spiritual world has become predominant over the heart and life. There, men live for something nobler than the worldly man's trinity, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed?" The carnal life is only becoming to a beast, or a bird, or an insect. But when a man cares for his immortal spirit and lives for Divine and spiritual things, he has attained to the life that is life, indeed!

6, 7. *For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* As long as a man lives only for this present evil world, lives for self, lives under the domination of the flesh, he cannot really know God, or truly serve Him. Such a mind as his "is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."

8. *So then they that are in the flesh.* That is, those who are under its condemnation and power—

8-10. *Cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any men have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* So that although Christ dwells in a man, he must not reckon that he will be free from suffering, pain and sickness, for the body has not yet risen from the dead and does not yet feel the full effect of regeneration. The soul is risen from the dead by regeneration and it, therefore, "is life because of righteousness." The body will, in due time, also share in the power of Christ's Spirit. The day draws near when we "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

11, 12. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* We have got nothing good out of the flesh at present, for it is not yet "delivered from the bondage of corruption," though it is to be delivered.

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* For the flesh is to die.

13. But if you, through the Spirit do mortify. Or, kill—

13. *The deeds of the body, you shall live.* Shall a dying body, then, be my master? Shall the appetite for eating and drinking, or anything else that comes of the flesh, dominate my spirit? God forbid! Let death go to death—and the flesh is such. But the newly-given Spirit of God, the Spirit who has quickened us with immortal life shall rule and reign in us forevermore!

14-21. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed anew. For the earnest*

expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the Son of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We are part and parcel of creation and we shall draw it along with us. There shall be new heavens and a new earth. The curse shall be taken from the garden, thorns and thistles shall no longer grow there, and there shall be no killing or devouring in all God's holy mountain. The galling yoke, which we have laid on the whole of creation by our sin, shall be taken off it by our Redeemer!

22, 23. *For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body.* We groan in unison with a groaning creation and we shall not, at present, get altogether rid of our aches, pains and sicknesses.

24-32. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 757, 729.

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"Therefore have they forgotten Me."
Hosea 13:6.

Our text reminds us that God does take notice of what men do, or of what they do not do. Here He complains—and there is a kind of mournful plaintiveness about His words—"Therefore have they forgotten Me." It is not a matter of indifference to God whether men remember Him or not. It seemed to be a subject of surprise to David that God should think of man, for He wrote, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him?" Yet God is mindful of man and it grieves Him that man is not mindful of Him! It would not disturb our minds if one tiny ant should forget or ignore us, yet we did not create it, and we have not the claims upon it that God has upon us. Yet, little though we are—and so insignificant that the ant, itself, is a great thing in comparison with us if we reckon what we are in comparison with God—it seems that He does want us to remember Him, to think of Him and to trust, love and serve Him. And when we do not, He is vexed and grieved. At least, speaking after the manner of men, we are taught to believe that it pains Him at His heart, so that He cries out by the mouth of His servant, the Prophet, "They have forgotten Me—their Maker, their best Friend and their greatest Helper."

I am afraid, dear Friends, that the accusation in our text may be brought against a very large number of us. Certainly it can be laid to the charge of all those who have lived without thinking of God and who have never turned to Him with repentance and faith and who, consequently, are still strangers to Him. How many such people there are, God alone can accurately compute! The great mass of our fellow creatures would come under that category. But, worst of all, among the Lord's own people there are, alas, some against whom this accusation can be brought! They have forgotten their God—not absolutely, so as to be utterly and altogether like the thoughtless sinner—yet very sadly and grievously, so that God, Himself, complains of them, "They have forgotten Me." For, mark you, if God observes what ordinary men do, much more does He take notice of what His own people do! An unkind word from a stranger may have a very slight effect upon us, but if such a word should come from the lips of one whom we love it would cut us to the quick! We could put up with a thousand things from those who are mere acquaintances,

but from a beloved child, or from the wife of our bosom—such a thing would be very hard to bear. Remember, O Christian, that ancient declaration, "The Lord your God is a jealous God." Because He loves us so much, He is in that very proportion, jealous, for the greatest jealousy grows out of limitless love. And the Lord our God who bought us with the heart's blood of His dear Son, counts us so dear to Him that a wandering thought in our mind becomes a crime against Him—and the giving up of any part of our heart to love of the world, or of self, or sin, or Satan, or any other of His rivals—becomes to Him a cause of grief and sadness. If there are any children of God here—and I fear there may be many—who have grown cold in heart and who have wandered from the Lord, I hope the text will come like a lament from Him who hung upon the Cross of Calvary, "Therefore have they forgotten Me. Therefore have they forgotten Me."

I. I am going to call your attention, first, to THE TIME WHEN THIS SIN WAS COMMITTED. "Therefore," says the Lord, "have they forgotten Me." When was that? If we ascertain that, we shall also find out when *we* ought to be most upon our guard against falling into a similar sin.

It appears, dear Friends, to have been when the Israelites had come out of the wilderness into Canaan—*when they had escaped from troubles and had come into an easy condition*, for so the context reads—"I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me." It is a very sorrowful fact that in this case the greater God's goodness was to His people, the less was their gratitude to Him—just in proportion as He was kind to them, they were cold to Him. These people had been delivered from excessive toil. In Egypt they had been a nation of slaves. And in the wilderness they had been for 40 years pilgrims with weary feet. They seldom tarried long in any place, but backwards and forwards across that "waste howling wilderness" they marched almost continuously. And concerning all that time, God says, "I did know you in the wilderness." He knew them, morning by morning, as the manna fell. He knew them when the quails came on swift wings to bring them flesh to eat. He knew them when the morning and evening lambs were offered in sacrifice for them, sinners as they were all the while they were in the wilderness, and He says, "I did know you then." So, Brothers and Sisters, it has happened to some men that when they have had hard times, long hours and stern labor, they have managed to be up in the morning early to get a quiet season of communion with God and, though they scarcely could have been thought capable of doing it, for they worked so hard, yet they could find leisure to teach a few children in the Sunday school, or to distribute tracts, or to speak a word for Christ at an open-air service! They had very hard bondage in their daily occupation, yet whenever there was a weeknight service, they always managed to get there. They were very apt out of sheer weariness because they had been toiling so hard during the day, to fall asleep when they sat down in the pew—still, they said that half a loaf

was better than no bread—and they were glad to get a message from any of the Lord's servants in those trying days.

But, dear Friends, you remember that in due time the children of Israel came to Canaan. Then there was no more marching to and fro in the wilderness for them! They found houses built ready for them to occupy and they could sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig tree—and then it was that the Lord said, "They were filled, and their heart was exalted, *therefore* have they forgotten Me." It is just the same with the man who used to come to the House of God Sundays and weeknights, though he was sorely weary with his heavy work. He now has what men call, "an easy berth," and has very little to do, so, being no longer a poor galley slave tugging at the oar, you might have thought that he would have given more time to God's service and have become one of the most industrious Christians living! But instead he does not do as much, now, as he used to do with the little bits of time which his hard toil allowed him! Ah, Brothers, when you get into smooth and easy places, then is the time when you should be most anxious, lest of you, as of the Israelites, the Lord should have to say, "Therefore have they forgotten Me." I would gladly wish for every one of you that you may be able to earn your daily bread without any excessive labor. I would that every man who has to toil beyond due and reasonable hours, were delivered from such semi-slavery. Yet I know that there are many who make an ill use of any leisure that they get and some who are not nearly as fervent in the cause of God, now that they have leisure, as they used to be before they were so privileged!

These Israelites, also, were now *delivered from the pressure of urgent needs*. At the very beginning of their wilderness journey, they had to go for three days without water. "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." They cried to Moses, "What shall we drink?" And he cried to the Lord and soon the bitter waters were made sweet. Before long, they had eaten up all that they had brought with them out of the land of Egypt—and they murmured, again, and then the Lord gave them a daily supply of manna—their bread dropped from the sky morning by morning! But now that they have got into Canaan, that have broad fields that are very fruitful, they reap abundant harvests, their barns are full to bursting and the hillsides are clad with vines, olive trees, fig trees and all manner of dainties! Instead of having to gather one day's food at a time, they have many months' supplies laid up in store. Some of them became very rich but, alas, it was of them that the Lord had to say, "According to their pasture, so were they filled...therefore have they forgotten Me." You surely have known or heard of men and women who have loved the Lord when in poverty—or, at least, who have seemed to do so—and who were very fervent and active while they had to look up to the Lord from day to day and pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." But, in the order of God's Providential dealings, they have been lifted up into another station in life. You would naturally have supposed that they would have loved

the Lord more and have done more for His cause—and laid themselves out with a greater willingness for His service—but, instead of that, it has been the very reverse with them! When they were financially poor, they were spiritually rich—but now that they are financially rich, they are spiritually poor! As they have gone up temporally, they have gone down spiritually. Their barn has become full, but their heart has become empty! Their wine press has overflowed, but the joy of the Lord has departed from them. It is a sad, sad thing wherever this happens. Sadly, some of us know that it often happens. Let it not be so with any of you, Beloved.

Then, again, *these Israelites had become very self-indulgent*. They enjoyed themselves and lived only for pleasure. And they despised everybody who would not or could not do the same. Being "rich and increased with goods," they looked down upon those who were not rich and, worse than that, they began to forget their God. O my Brothers and Sisters, I have often looked upon them who have been in sore trouble and I have wished that, by some magic touch, I could lift the daughters of sorrow out of their sad state! But I have lived long enough to feel that if I could do it, I would deliberately stay my hand until I had consulted with Infinite Wisdom to know whether it would be for their good or not. If it were in my power to lift the cross from every Brother and every Sister's shoulders here and to give all of you your heart's desire, I would not do so, however much I might feel prompted to do it! As I often see how the plant that bloomed in the shade is burnt up in the sunshine—and how some natures have never yielded the sweetest perfume except in grief's sad dripping-well—when I perceive that some of God's saints never seem to honor Him when they are lifted up into high places—I feel that you and I had better be satisfied to let the Lord put His people wherever He pleases and keep them on "short commons," sometimes, and even chasten them every morning, as the Psalmist says was done to him. Perhaps some of them, if the Lord did not make them cry every morning, would make themselves cry twice as much before night—and if He did not afflict them, they would very soon bring far worse afflictions upon themselves by falling into some great sin.

I think I know the reason why God does not trust some of us with the bright eyes and the elastic step which He bestows upon others. I think I can see why He does not give some of us more prominent positions in His Church and greater influence among the works for Him. I think I can tell why that Sister is lame and that Brother is blind—why that one hangs her harp upon the willows and that other toils amid continual poverty. It is because God will not risk all His ships on the roughest sea. He has constructed some of His vessels so that they can stand the storm—and these He sends away into the thick of the tempest—but His little ships He keeps nearer the shore. Some of His seamen see less of His wonders in the deep because they are not able to bear the sight as others can. I think it is so and, certainly, this is true—that seasons of prosperity, of any sort, are seasons of great trial to Christians. According to our text, it was at the time of their prosperity that the Israelites forgot their God.

II. Now, secondly, let me indicate THE PROGRESS OF THIS EVIL WHENEVER IT HAPPENS TO A MAN.

It has happened that *some men have lived all their lives forgetting God.* It may be that some of you who are here at this service have never really thought of God—you have forgotten all about Him. A gentleman was walking down a country road one Sabbath morning and he met a man with a cartload of hay. He was asked by the man who was driving the cart whether he had seen two lads on in front. "Yes," said the gentleman, "I have, and I think they are the boys of a father with a short memory, are they not?" He said he did not know whether it was so or not, but they were his lads. "Well," said the gentleman, "I thought that you were their father and that you had a short memory, for you do not seem to have recollected that there is a text of Scripture which says, 'Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.'" That short memory concerning the Sabbath affects a great many people concerning everything else that is good. Some of you, I fear, have such short memories that you have never even recollected the God who made you. You have eaten just as the cattle eat and you have drunk as they drink—but you have never blessed the Giver of the unnumbered mercies that you have received—any more than the cattle have done! Some of you go on from morning to night without any recognition of God. There are hundreds of men who might be compared—as Rowland Hill did once compare them—to hogs under an oak. "They eat the acorns," he said, "but they never look up and thank the oak." They live in this world and feed upon the bounties which God has provided for them, yet they have no thought of Him! It is His air that they breathe and it is by His power that they exhale the air—they could not exist for a single moment if it were not for Him—yet He is not in any of their thoughts! If God were blotted out of the universe—if such a thing could be, that He should no longer exist, but that they could still exist—they certainly would not be grieved. Possibly they would feel all the easier in their mind because there would be no judgment to come and no punishment for all their evil.

Ah, my Friend, you must be in a very bad plight if you think you can get on better without God than with Him! If your boy were to say concerning you, "I wish I might never see my father again"—if that little child who eats at your table every day, whom you clothed but the other day with new garments—if he were to say, "I never want to speak to my father again—I wish he were dead!"—there must be something radically wrong in that child! His morals must be thoroughly bad. Even if nobody has ever found him out in deceiving or lying, I am sure, from that one fact, that he is a bad boy. Now, my Friend, even if I cannot point to any sinful act of yours, I am sure that there must be something very wrong with you if you have lived in this world all these years without thinking of God!

If I am invited to go and stay with a friend in the country and I simply see his beautiful park and his fine gardens, and indoors I have all that I need in the way of refreshment during the day and a comfortable bed at

night, but my host never puts in an appearance—and I do not know whether he is anywhere about the premises—I do not enjoy my visit. I came down to see him, so I cannot be content with seeing his park and his gardens, and so on. I say to the servants, "Where is your master? I came down here to pay a visit to him and I cannot find any pleasure here unless I see him." And, dear Friends, I feel just like that with regard to my God. When I look at this beautiful world which He has made—and it is a beautiful world, after all, let who will speak against it—I always feel that I need to see Him who made it. Even our lovely gardens which seem to me to be a thousand times more beautiful than all the vineyards of the Continent, would give me no pleasure in looking at them unless I could always realize that God is there. The sea itself—the wide and open sea—what is it if there is no God to rule its waves and to speak in its storms? I must see traces of God in everything that happens! But some of you have lived all this while and God's cry concerning you—over hill and dale, up and down the street, in the house where you live, across the table at which you eat, and over the pillow on which you sleep—is, "They have forgotten Me. I have made them, kept them alive and blessed them in a thousand ways, yet they have forgotten Me!—Me, of whom they ought first to have thought, for it was essential with them that they should first have thought of Me—and through not thinking of Me, they have bred within themselves all manner of evil." O unconverted people, I wish you could put yourselves in God's place for a few minutes and just think how you would feel if others had treated you as you have treated Him! Let the sharp arrows of conviction stick fast in your conscience as you realize that you have acted in a mean, dastardly, ungenerous, ungrateful way towards your God—the tender, loving, gracious Creator, Preserver and Friend of men!

But, now, turning to you Christian people, I want to ask of the progress of this evil in *you*. I will show you how it often works. When God prospers you in business, takes away sickness and removes causes of sorrow, it sometimes happens that *the evil of forgetting God begins with an almost imperceptible alienation of heart from Him*. You do not notice it. You would be very grieved if you did, but your heart begins to grow cold and the love to your Lord that once burned in your soul is not as fervent as it used to be. And this condition of spirit very speedily shows itself in increasing fondness for worldly things. To have riches may be a blessing to you, but for *the riches to have you* will be a great curse to you. There are some who have abundance of temporal things given to them and they make a good use of them, so they may be thankful for them. But there are others who are carried away by these temporal things which thus become the source of all sorts of calamities. A man may have a fine house and a beautiful garden and he may be thankful for them—so far, so good—but he may fall into the sin of making a Heaven of that house and garden—and so they will be the cause of sin. He may be wealthy and that will be a good thing if he uses his money rightly. But, by-and-by, he may begin to feel that the one thing worth living for is to have money—and that will be an evil. If you have acquired a certain amount of money

and you feel that you are a person of importance simply because you have so much wealth, you are putting earthly things into the place which God alone should occupy. As old Master Brooks says, it is as when a husband, whose wife used to dote upon him, has given her rings, chains and other ornaments—and now that she has them, she dotes over them and forgets him! It is very sad when this is the case and it is often so with some who profess to be the Lord's. If we accept His gifts as tokens of love from Him and see Him in them, than they are helpful and not hurtful. But when we get to thinking of *them*, and not of *Him*, then they become mischievous to us.

This is an evil which continually grows, for *this man who is beginning to mind earthly things, keeps on indulging himself*. He takes more of what he calls pleasure than he used to do and, indulging himself thus, he gets into a wrong state for prayer, for searching the Bible, for attending the means of Grace. And the more he enjoys this world, the less does he think of the next world. As the things that are seen eat like a canker into him, the things that are unseen seem to lose their power over him. If he still attends the place where he went before to hear the Gospel, he says that the minister does not preach as he used to do, and the singing is not as lively as it used to be. Other Christian people say that they cannot see any difference at all, but he can. You know, dear Friends, what is very often the difference between one dinner and another. It is not the fault of the cook—it is the need of an appetite. Here are some Brothers and Sisters who have lost their spiritual appetite. They cannot eat this and they cannot eat that, and they cannot eat the other. They have lost their appetite, that is the reason. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet," says Solomon, but this man, who has prospered in the world and has had much enjoyment in it, is now beginning to lose all relish even for those very spiritual things that were once the delight of his soul! So he begins to drop off coming to the House of God and gradually declines, first a little in this way, and then in that. He has more money, now, than he used to have, so it takes him a longer time to count it. He has more business than he used to have and it takes more time to look after it. He cannot come to weeknight services and if, on the Lord's-Day, for appearance sake, he does not cease going to the place of prayer, he carries his ledger with him in his carriage—metaphorically, if not literally! There is many a man who comes into his pew with acres of land hanging to his boots. And there is many a woman who sits there in a fine new dress—not only the one she has on, but the other one that is to be made up on Monday!

It is sad when worldly things then get into the soul and come right into God's House. Why, the preacher himself knows what it is to find a thousand distracting thoughts come to his mind while he is addressing you! And, therefore, he knows that they must come to your minds while you are listening to the Word of the Lord. Thus it happens that in one thing after another, the love of God and His Word withers—and the love of the world grows. By-and-by, family prayer gets pushed into a corner—

very short and not very sweet. And private prayer hardly knows where to find a place for the sole of its feet. Private prayer, as there are none but yourselves to note its observance, is a very convenient place for retrenchment. You want to save time, as you have so much to do and, therefore, you snip off a piece here, and another piece there, and who but God is the wiser? You do not perceive any very great difference, for your conscience is getting seared. So, by degrees, a Christian who is declining in spiritual things, gives up private prayer—not altogether, perhaps, but the sweetness and the enjoyment of it depart as he trifles with it, instead of entering into the holy exercise with all his heart and soul.

In some professing Christians, this declension goes still further. *At last they give up all religious profession*. I wonder whether there are any here who once declared and probably believed that he was a Christian, but who has now given up even the name of Christian? If so, my Friend, one of two things is true concerning you—either you never were converted at all, and so have been a mere professor, or else, if you ever were truly converted, you will have to come back. As surely as ever the Lord looked upon you with an eye of love, you must come back to Him, for, after He has once set His seal upon you, He cannot and will not let you go! Oh, that you would come back to Him now! You will have to come back, poor wandering sheep, for you belong to the Good Shepherd who will not lose one of His flock! Wayward as you are, He will have you with Him and if you will not come back to Him when He calls you, He has some rough dogs that will worry you back! But back from the paths of sin you must come—and I pray God that you may come back right speedily and so once more enjoy the blessings of peace with Him! I sometimes pass persons who used to sit in these pews and who were, I thought, ardent Christians. Even now some of them have respect for me, but I fear that they have none for my Master. If I get anywhere near them, they slink away, for fear I should speak to them. I wish they had as much anxiety about the grief they have caused my Lord as they have about any grief they may have caused me. May God grant, through His Sovereign Grace, that all of us who have professed to be His, may be preserved, lest—

"When any turn from Zion's way
(Alas, what numbers do!)"—

we also should turn away, as we shall certainly do unless His Grace shall hold us fast!

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, a few words about THE PECULIAR EVIL OF THIS SAD CONDITION—"They have forgotten Me"

It is *so grossly ungrateful* that every Christian who realizes that he is apt to slide into such a condition should, at once bestir himself and watch against it. What? Shall I love the Lord less because He gives me more? Shall I set the gifts which His goodness bestows upon me, upon His Throne and let them be idols to deprive Him of my heart's love and worship? If I do this, surely I shall be worse than the brute beasts! God grant, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we may be ashamed of such a condition as this and flee from it!

Remember that if any of us do begin to set our hearts upon the things of this world, *whatever we gain, we must be losers*. The man who has scarcely a rag to cover him, but who delights in God, may be the *beau ideal* of a happy man. But the man who is robed in purple and who calls an empire his own—and who has forgotten his God—is to me the model of misery mocked by majesty! God save you from being able to delight yourselves in anything but your God! May He put so much bitterness into every other cup that you will be compelled to take the cup of salvation and, calling upon the name of the Lord, to drink only of that! You will be dreadful and eternal losers, whatever else you gain, if you lose the Lord!

If you forget God, you who are indeed His children—and I am speaking only to such people just now—it is a terrible thing for you to be led into a condition in which you forget your Heavenly Father. If there were a wife who was very poor, but who, as long as she was poor, clung to her husband and found all her delight in his love, but who, when they became rich, no longer cared for him, it would be wretched riches that could burn away her heart from him who ought to possess it all! If I love my brother and find great comfort in fellowship with him, but I should suddenly get to be so great that I should not know my brother—what a miserable being I would be! Many a man does not know his own relations when he begins to get rich. He thinks he is somebody of importance, but really he is a big nobody—a very great and dreadful nobody! And when a man, just because God prospers him, does not know Jesus Christ, his great elder Brother, and gets to be ashamed of mixing with God's poor people who go to the little Ebenezer Chapel or of being seen with those poor commonplace sort of Christians who try to follow the Lamb where ever He goes—he is a poor, poor specimen of a man, much less of a Christian! God give us minds and hearts quickened by His Grace, that will enable us to live above all such meanness as that!

A sad part of the wretchedness of this condition is that *it involves so much trifling with God*. If we have forgotten God, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have forgotten the many deliverances we have had in the days that are past. We have forgotten the wiping away of our tears of sorrow. Worse still, we have forgotten the precious blood of Jesus that spoke peace to our soul. And we have forgotten the Holy Spirit who came into our hearts and gave us joy and rest in Jesus Christ. And if we have forgotten God, we have forgotten His gracious promises which are yet to be fulfilled, and the glorious Covenant of His Grace, ordered in all things and sure, on which our hopes of Heaven are based! We have also forgotten His claims upon us—forgotten that we are His children, His beloved, His elect, His redeemed! We have forgotten all that and we are living in such a condition that we are trifling even with His threats! He has threatened that He will chasten us and we seem to make light of His threats and to defy His chastisements. We must have gotten into a state that is piteous and lamentable to the last degree if we can live from day to day in forgetfulness of God!

IV. I will say no more about this sad decline, but finish my discourse by telling you HOW THIS EVIL CAN BE CURED.

If any of us, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are suffering from this dreadful decline, *it is a good help towards its being cured when we see the mischief of it*. When a man has this sad condition pointed out to him and the Spirit of God enables him to see it, that is a great help towards lifting him out of it. But I think that the best thing for us all to do is, just for the moment, to sink all differences and not ask any questions about whether we are saints or sinners—whether we ever did love the Lord, or whether we did not—and *let us all go straight away to the Cross, just as if we had never gone there before*. By nature, and by practice, too, we are all guilty and we all deserve to be cast into Hell—the best of us as well as the worst. So let us all go where the Savior carried the great load of sin upon Himself and bore the consequences that He might set us free from it forever. Let us look up to Him and, by faith, view the flowing of the blood from those many wounds that He received on our behalf. Let us look into that dear face of His—the image of matchless misery and majesty combined! Let us note the crown of thorns and the marks of ignominy and shame that cruel men put upon Him. Let us hear Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And, as we see Him die, let us believe in Him again, or believe in Him for the first time.

My Savior, my Redeemer, wherever I may have wandered, I come back to You. My soul believes in You, trusts You, hangs all her hopes for time and eternity upon You. Will You not speak peace and pardon to my guilty spirit? Ah, if you come to Him with such a confession and cry as this, you will get your love back. The best place to get it back is the place where it was born. It was born at the Cross and you will get it back if you go to the Cross, just as you went at first, and stand there, with this as your soul's confession of faith—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

I cannot say more except just this—*if God is prospering you, keep very close to the Cross*. Do you not see that if the richer you get and the more often you go to the Cross, it will be safe for you to be trusted with wealth? Take care to sanctify everything that God gives you by giving Him His proper portion and do not use your own portion till you have given Him His. Then, if you look at every blessing as coming to you by the way of the Cross, and say, "Jesus Christ has sent me this, for—

"'There's never a gift His hand bestows
But cost His heart a groan'"—

if you receive everything as *through* Him and then desire to use everything *for* Him, you may be as rich as the Rothschilds and yet you may be as gracious as the Apostle Paul! You might have all the world given you, and yet, for all that, it would not hurt you. If you had as much of God as you had of gold, God would see that the gold was safe in your hands. He would trust us with prosperity if He saw that all our prosperity only bound us more closely and more completely to the Cross of His dear Son. So, if any of you have forgotten Him, conclude this

evening's service by coming to the Cross. And thus Father, Son and Holy Spirit shall get glory from you. May it be so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 13:1-9.

Hosea was full of complaints against the people of God, for in his day they had very sadly wandered from the Lord. They had even forgotten Him. In Hosea's prophecy we have the plaintive voice of a loving God chiding His backsliding children.

Hosea 13:1. *When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel, but when he offended in Baal, he died.* A modest, humble, trembling heart is often by far the sounder heart, but when we begin to sin and to sin boastfully, and to wrap ourselves about with the robe of self-complacency, then is death very near to us! "When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."

2. *And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the word of the craftsmen: they say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.* When Jeroboam became king of the new Kingdom of Israel—in order to prevent his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship God in Solomon's temple—he started two shrines at Dan and Bethel and there he set up what Holy Scripture calls in derision, "calves." I suppose that his idea was to make images of a bull, the emblem of power, intending them to be the symbol of the Divine Being and that the people still intended to worship God, but to worship Him under the image of a bull. It is the same in Roman Catholicism to this day—the worship of God, the worship of Christ, by means of crucifixes, and emblems and symbols of various kinds. But when men once begin that kind of idolatry, there is no knowing where they will stop, for the worship of God through the medium of symbols soon grows into the worship of other gods, saints, "blessed virgins" and I know not what besides! They are pretty sure to be set up when once people begin to make use of outward and visible emblems of the Deity. So it was with these ancient Israelites. From worshipping the bull, which was meant to be a type of the Omnipotent God, they went on to the worshipping of "molten images of their silver and idols according to their own understanding." Brothers and Sisters, let us take warning from these idolaters and always keep to the simplicity of worship ordained by God in His Word. However comely and beautiful, or grand and imposing and, consequently, fascinating, any form of idolatry may be to some minds, let us utterly despise it if it is not according to the mind of God and the teaching of His Spirit as revealed in His Word.

3. *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.* Those who will have gods of

their own making shall have but a brief enjoyment of them. He who truly worships the Everlasting God shall have an everlasting blessing! But he who worships gods that he has made himself—mere objects of this mortal day—shall have but a short day of it. He shall be as the early dew which glistens brightly, but is soon gone—or as the morning cloud which is banished by the rising of the sun.

4, 5. *Yet I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me: for there is no Savior beside Me. I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.* The Israelites drew near to God when they needed bread and water in the wilderness. God says, "I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." And the Lord might say to His people nowadays, "I did know you when you were very sick, when you were very poor, when you were in great trouble. You sought Me then—how is it that you are trying to do without Me now?"

6-8. *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten Me. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will tear open the rib cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.* When men forget God they may expect that they will meet with some terrible judgments. And especially God's own people will find this to be the case with them if they forget the Lord. Our God is a very jealous God and when His children will set their hearts on other objects instead of upon Him, He will take care to embitter those objects of their affection to them—He will make their idols to be loathed by them. If God did not love us very much, He would think little of our faults, but just because He loves us so much, He cannot bear that any part of our heart's affection should go away from Him. So, if He sees that we deal unfaithfully with Him, He will make us realize that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing. His anger against us will be like that of a bear that is robbed of her whelps, or of a lion or leopard leaping upon his prey.

9. *O Israel, you have destroyed yourself: but in Me is your help.* "You have gone away from Me, but I will bring you back again. You have destroyed yourself by your sin, but I will restore you to My favor by My Grace. You may look within yourself for causes of repentance, but you must not look to yourself for the means of restoration. You must look to Me, your Savior and your God." So this verse teaches us "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help."

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

ORDER IS HEAVEN'S FIRST LAW
NO. 2976

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path." Joel 2:8.

THOSE who have been able to observe the marching of an army of locusts have been amazed beyond measure with the marvelous regularity of their advance. Agur, who must surely have seen them, says, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." The wonder is that creatures comparatively so insignificant in size, and so low down in the scale of intelligence, should maintain such more than martial order, both in their long flights and in their devouring marches. The ablest commanding officers would be at their wits' end if ordered to marshal a multitude numbering even a thousandth, or perhaps a millionth part of the countless hordes of these destructive marauders and yet, by instinct, the locust soldiery can and do keep rank better than the most veteran regiments of the line, as I can personally testify, from having seen miles of them in one of the Italian valleys. "They shall march everyone on his ways," says the Prophet, "and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path."

I. As I considered this remarkable fact in insect life, my meditations led me to note THE ORDER WHICH REIGNS, not only among locusts, but THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF GOD'S WORLD. And then I said within myself—After this fashion should there be order and arrangement in the Christian Church. God has trained His great insect army and among them order reigns, but this is no exception to the general rule, for all the hosts of God are marshaled in rank and file and are never left to be a disorganized mob of forces. From the most minute to the most magnificent, all creatures feel the sway of order and they well observe the laws imposed by their Creator!

Look up to the heavens and observe the innumerable stars that glisten there so plenteously that numeration fails. Looked at through the telescope, stars are so abundant that the heavens appear to be covered with dust of gold and yet we have no record that one of these bodies has ever interfered with the orbit of its fellow sphere, or if such a catastrophe has ever been permitted, it has been part of the all-comprehending scheme. The majestic orbs move, each one in its own orbit, and all in perfect harmony. Even the aberrations, as we call them, are nothing but the result of regular law and the astronomer finds that he can calculate them with the greatest possible accuracy. There are no irregularities,

discords, or failures among the constellations! And if to the student of the heavens such should appear to be the case, he has but more fully to master the universal law and he discovers, with astonishment, that every eccentricity is a necessary incident in a system grander than he had thought. Mere amateurs in astronomy talked of irregularities, but Newton and Kepler found a mathematical precision manifest in all. At no point need we be afraid that the universe will be thrown out of gear! If a man had placed innumerable wheels in a machine, there would be, in due time, a breakdown somewhere. Oil would be needed here, a cog would be broken there, a band would be snapped in this place, or a piston would be immovable there—but God's great machine of the universe, whose wheels are so high that the sublime Ezekiel, when he saw them, felt that they were terrible, has continued to revolve these many thousands, perhaps millions of years, and has never yet been stopped for cleaning or repair because God has impressed upon every atom of it the most docile spirit of submission—and His powerful hands are at work every instant amidst the machinery giving force to His laws.

Nor is it so in the coarser inanimate forms of matter only, but *the same law holds good with the whole animal creation*. Not locusts alone, but the fish of the sea and the birds of the air all observe their Maker's bidding and both live and move according to rule and order, all forming portions of the perfect circle struck out by the Divine compasses. What a wonderful thing it is that mighty streams of fish should come, during certain seasons, from the North and swim near enough to our coasts to afford our citizens so large a portion of their daily food! If there is complaining in our streets, there need not be, for extended fisheries could supply all the inhabitants of Britain, even if they were multiplied a hundred times, and yet there would be no perceptible declining in the teeming population of all the sea, for God has so arranged it that there shall be most of those kinds which are most required for food. But what a marvel that at the fixed period, the unguided fish should migrate in such countless shoals and should return again, in due season, to their old abodes among the Arctic waves!

Mark, too, how every tribe of animals is necessary to all the rest. So beautiful is the order of Nature that we cannot wantonly destroy a race of little birds without suffering from their removal. When the small birds were killed in France by the peasantry, who supposed that they ate the corn, the caterpillars came and devoured the crops. Man made a defect in an otherwise perfect circle—he took away one of the wheels which God had made and the machine did not work perfectly. But leave it alone and no jars or grindings will occur, for all animals know their time and place and fulfill the end of their being. You spoil the harmony of Nature's concert if even the sparrow's chirrup is unheard. The stork and the crane fly at God's bidding, the swallow and the martin know their pathway—the prowling beasts and ravenous birds, as well as the domestic cattle, all hold their own in Nature's arrangements. Like the bejeweled breastplate of the high priest, Nature is full of gems, each one in its setting—and the glory is marred if one is lacking. Be assured that the

wild ass and coney, leviathan and behemoth, eagle and dove, gnat and lizard are all arranged for the highest good and are beautiful in their season. "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path."

Rising a little higher, *there is also order in the Providence of God*. When you view the great world of human history, it looks like a skein of thread much twisted and tangled. When you study it, you see nations rise and fall, like boiling waves of a foaming sea. You read of horrible wars, wantonly commenced and wickedly continued. The human race seems to have destroyed its sons without a motive. Men rush upon each other with all the fury of fiends and tear each other like wolves—and yet they eat not that which they have killed! The history of mankind appears at first sight to argue the absence of God. We ask, "How is this? We expected to find, if God were in Providence, something more orderly and regular than we see here. Instead of a grand volume from a master-pen, we see words flung together without apparent connection. We expected to find a sublime poem, such as angels might love to read, but all this is confusion, void and unintelligible—strokes and dashes without meaning to us." Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, and so it is. But we are little children and do not yet understand God's hieroglyphics! We write in large text and have not the transcript of the celestial shorthand. Our limited field of vision only lets us see a brick or two of the great house—and straightway we begin to criticize the infinite Architect and His work. After all, supposing this world to have existed six thousand years, what is that? In God's sight, it is but as a day, or as yesterday when it has passed. We see but one thread of history, a raveling of life, and then we vainly fancy that we can form a fair judgment of the tapestry curiously fashioned by the finger of the Lord!

Coming down from these great things to ourselves, *depend upon it that all the events in our own little lives are marching straight on to a gracious consummation*. You, child of God, sometimes say, "What can be the design of this cross? What can be meant by that bereavement? Why am I perplexed by this dilemma? Why is this difficulty piled like a barricade across my path? Well, you know not *now*, but you shall know hereafter! Meanwhile, settle it firmly in your faith that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Your affliction does not jostle your prosperity, but promotes it. Your losses do not cause your loss—they really increase your true riches! Onward still, laden with untold blessings, every event is marching for the righteous and for the humble spirit. God has His way in the whirlwind and the clouds are the dust of His feet. Only be patient and wait upon Him with childlike confidence and the day shall come when you shall wonder, and be astonished, that there should have been such order in your life when you thought it was all confusion—such love when you thought it unkindness, such gentleness when you thought it severity, such wisdom when you were wicked enough to impugn the rightness of your God! Brothers and Sisters, the events of our history march on as

rightly as a victorious legion under a skillful Leader. Do not let us arraign the wisdom of that which happens to us, or fancy that we could order our affairs in better style. Our good and ill, our joy and grief, all keep their places. "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path."

II. But we must rise still higher. We have come from the world of matter to the world of living creatures and up to the world of intellectual beings—NOW LET US THINK OF GOD HIMSELF.

We may say of all His attributes that "neither does one thrust another, but each one walks in his path." Let us be careful at any time in thinking of God, that we indulge not in reflections upon one attribute to the forgetting of the rest. Many Christians are much soured in their disposition by considering God only in the light of Sovereignty. Now, that He is a Sovereign, is a great, deep, mysterious, but also most blessed Truth of God, and we would defend Divine Sovereignty with all our might against all comers. But, at the same time, absolute Sovereignty is not the only attribute of God and those who keep their eyes fixed upon that, to the exclusion of all other qualities and prerogatives, get an ill-balanced idea of God—and very likely they fall into errors of doctrine and, still more likely, they become hardhearted towards their fellow men and forget that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but desires rather that they should turn unto Him and live.

On the other hand, many injure their minds very greatly by reflecting solely upon the one thought of God, that He is good. It is a blessed Truth that He *is* good and benevolent, and full of compassion—and Holy Scripture tells us that "the Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works." God forbid that we should seek to diminish the kindness of God, or think lightly of it, "for His mercy endures forever." Yet some look at that one emerald ray as though it were the whole of the spectrum! They gaze upon one star and regard it as the Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, all in one. And, alas, worse results follow, for they are tempted to think sin to be a mere trifle since they ignore the Justice and Sovereignty of God. They so exclude God's righteousness and vengeance from their minds so that when they hear of Hell, and of the wrath that will come upon the impenitent, they shudder with inward unbelief and try to doubt it—and, perhaps, manage to find texts of Scripture which look as if they helped them in their perverted and jaundiced view of the Most High! They think they are glorifying God, but they are really dishonoring Him, for God is no more altogether Mercy than He is altogether Sovereignty! And He is no more altogether Sovereignty than He is altogether Mercy. The fact is that every glory meets in God! All that is good, excellent and great may be found in Him in complete perfection. God would have you so to think of Him, for, in the Atonement, which is His grandest Revelation of Himself, He has been pleased to show you—

"How Grace and Justice strangely join;
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the choicest blessings yours."

This leads me one step further to observe that *the same order is perceptible in the Doctrines of the Word of God.* Doctrines, which look as if they contradicted each other, are nevertheless fully agreed. It is the defect in our mental vision which makes separate Truths of God appear to cross each other's orbit, for it is certain that the Truths of Scripture do not thrust each other, but each one goes on in its own path. Perhaps the fiercest of fights has been waged over the great fact that salvation is of Grace and the equally certain fact that man is responsible to God under the Gospel, and that, if he perishes, his ruin lies at his own door—and is not to be charged upon God in any sense whatever. This has been the arena in which intellectual gladiators have fought with each other age after age. If they had stood side by side and fought the common enemy, they would have done good service, for I believe in my soul that they both hold some Truth and that either of them will hold error unless he will yield something to his rival. There are some who read the Bible and try to systematize it according to rigid logical creeds, but I dare not follow their method and I feel content to let people say, "How inconsistent he is with himself!" The only thing that would grieve me would be inconsistency with the Word of God! As far as I know this Book, I have endeavored, in my ministry, to preach to you not a part of the Truth of God, but the whole counsel of God—but I cannot harmonize it, nor am I anxious to do so. I am sure all Truth is harmonious and to my ear the harmony is clear enough—but I cannot give you a complete score of the music, or mark the harmonies on the gamut—I must leave the Chief Musician to do that.

You have heard of the two travelers who met opposite the statue of Minerva and one of them remarked, "What a glorious golden shield Minerva has!" The other said, "No, it is bronze." They argued with one another. They drew their swords, they slew each other and, as they fell dying, they each looked up and the one who said the shield was made of bronze discovered that it had a golden side to it—and the other, who was so bold in affirming that it was gold—found that it also had a bronze side. The shield was made of two different metals and the combatants had not either of them seen both sides. It is just so with the Truth of God—it is many-sided and full of variety. Grand three-fold lines run through it—it is one yet three, like the Godhead! Perhaps you and I have only seen two of the lines—many persons refuse to see more than one—and there may be a third yet to be discovered, which shall reconcile the apparently antagonistic two, when our eye shall be clarified by the baptism in the last river and we shall ascend the Hill of the Lord to read the Truth of God in the light of the Celestial City!

However, it is clear that salvation is altogether of Grace and equally clear that if any man perishes, it is not for lack of invitations on God's side—honest invitations to come to Christ. We hear our Master saying, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Some friends are so afraid of that text that they generally quote it "weary and heavy laden," which is not the true reading—the *laboring* ones are invited to Jesus! Many such invitations did Christ give, yet did

He not also say, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him"? Amid the soft rain of tenderness we hear the thundering of those solemn Truths of God—"So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." "Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens." As we listen to that thunder, we bow to the Sovereignty of God yet, amid the pauses, we hear the Master say, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely," and we also hear Him say, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." Let us believe both sets of Truths and not oppose ourselves to friends who hold either the one or the other, but seek to bring them to believe both—for as the Bible is true, they are, both of them, the Truths of the living God! Observation leads me to think that those persons who are willing to hold the whole of revealed Truth, are generally Christians of a more active spirit and more desirous for the conversion of souls than those who contract their minds and only hold some one or two great theological dogmas. If we will but lay aside our Chinese shoes and allow our feet to grow as they should, we shall find it far better walking on the road to Heaven—and we shall be more ready for any work which our Master may call us to do!

III. Now we turn to THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Dear Friends, you and I who have entered into the Kingdom of Grace and have received a life which the worldling cannot understand, (for the carnal mind knows nothing of the spiritual life), *must remember that our thoughts, graces, and actions ought all to keep their proper position* so that it may be said of them, "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path."

As to our thoughts, we ought to endeavor, as God shall teach us by His Spirit, to keep our thoughts of God's Word in their due harmony. Some Brothers and Sisters, for instance, are altogether doctrinal in their inclinations. Doctrinal study is admirable—may God send us much of it! Yet doctrine is not all that we are taught in the Sacred Word. There are also duties and promises—why despise these? Then again, other professors of religion are altogether of a practical turn and, while they value James, they depreciate Paul. They do not like an expository sermon, they cannot endure it! But if you give them a precept, they rejoice greatly. They are quite right as far as they go. The Lord send us much more practical Christianity! But this is not all. There are others who are altogether experimental and some of these will hear no sermon unless it treats upon the corruption of the human heart, or upon the dark frames of the child of God. Others will have no experience but the bright side—you must always preach to them out of the Canticles, inditing the good matter concerning the sweet love of Christ towards His spouse.

Now, each of these forms of preaching is good in its season, but he who would keep close to the Scriptures and preserve completeness in his thoughts must weigh well the doctrine and seek to get a clear view of the Covenant of Grace and the economy of salvation. He must study the

precepts and ask the Holy Spirit to give him the fleshy heart upon which those precepts may be written as upon living tablets. And then he must watch his experience, mourning over inbred sin, but also rejoicing in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, through whose blood we have the victory.

We must endeavor, as much as possible, to exercise our thoughts upon all the subjects which God has given us to think upon in His Word and has applied to our hearts by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Where this is done, we shall avoid one thought thrusting another, and each will go in its own path. I have heard of doctrinal preachers who hated the very sound of the word, "duty." I have also heard the practical Brother declare that he detested "election" while the experimental Brother has affirmed that the doctrinal preacher was merely "a dead-letter man." Oh, what naughty words for God's children to use to describe one another—bitter sentences which they only use because they know so little! Shame upon us that we say, "I am of Paul" and, "I am of Apollos" and, "I am of Cephas," for all these are ours to profit by if we are Christ's! Learn from the doctrinal, learn from the practical, learn from the experimental! Blend the whole together and let not one thrust another, but allow each to go straight on in its own path!

The same should hold good in the graces which we cultivate. The Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to put, by His Holy Spirit, into the hearts of those whom He has saved, certain lovely and precious things, but it is not always easy to get these in due harmony. For instance, I know a Brother who is very faithful. He does not mind telling you of your faults, but then, he is not affectionate in spirit—and so he never warns you of your infirmities in a way that does you good. Now, if that Brother could get affection to balance his fidelity, what an admirable man he would make! I remember well another Brother who was all affection and nothing else. He was so affectionate as to be effeminate and I, poor rough creature as I am, could never bear the sight of him. He always reminded me of a pot of molasses and his office appeared to be the anointing of everybody he met. If he could but have mixed a little fidelity with his sweetness, he would have been a much better and stronger man. Secker says that Christianity ought, first, "to make a man more of a man and then, more than a man"—and so it would if we sought, by the power of the Spirit, to cultivate all the graces!

The beauty of the human countenance does not consist exclusively in having bright eyes—no, the fine eyes help, but all the other features of the face must balance it. A man may have the finest possible forehead and yet he may be extremely ugly because his other features are out of proportion—so it is with character. Character must have all the graces, but all the graces in harmony. Take, for instance, the virtue of meekness. It is a lovely thing to be of a meek and quiet spirit, but then, my Brothers and Sisters, how could reforms ever be worked if all were so meek that they could not speak out against error? Where would you find your Luthers and your Calvins? Meekness must be balanced by the virtue

which is its compensating quality, namely, *courage*. Affection must be strengthened by fidelity. A man must be patient under affliction, but he is not to be so patient as to be idle. He must couple energy with his patience, in order to manifest a practical faith. When we have each of these, we shall be what Paul and James call, "perfect." Then shall we have come to be "entire, needing nothing," having reached "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Christian men should be men-Christians. If your child should have a rapid growth in its arms, but not in its legs, or if its legs should lengthen, but not its arms, what a strange being it would be! What a monster! It is the growth of each limb in proportion that brings a man to perfection. So, my Brothers and Sisters, when our heads grow faster than our hearts, it is an ill sign—yet how many know a great deal more than they feel, and criticize much more than they believe! It is also an evil thing when a man's tongue grows bigger than his head—when he has more to say than he knows or does—when, like Mr. Talkative, he can talk about the road to Heaven, but makes no progress on it!

The same proportions and balancing should be found in our Christian duties. This is too large and difficult a subject to go fully into, now, but we will have a word or two about it. A man is not in his outward action a complete Christian because he is attentive to one duty, for God would have His people attend to all. It will sometimes be a question with you as to how much time should be given to private devotion, how much to family worship and how much to worship—and you may easily make great mistakes here. I recollect a Brother, a very excellent man, too, who was always at Prayer Meetings and public services, but, unfortunately, being always away from home, his family was so neglected that the sons grew up, one after another, to be the most precocious specimens of depravity that the parish could exhibit! We thought and we hinted as much to our Brother that if he would be at home, sometimes, to teach the children, whose mother was as neglectful of them as the father was—and so the mischief became doubled—he would be far more in the path of duty than in attending public services to the neglect of family piety. I only wish he had been able to see the propriety of our advice, for he has had to smart for his folly. It is not often that a man's private devotions obtrude in this way, but I know one professor who used to spend so long a period in private prayer that he neglected his business and also the assembling of himself with God's people. It was, indeed, an unusual vice, but it came to be quite a sin in his case. This last is a very unusual fault and one that I could almost excuse because it is so unusual—but I recommend far more strongly the careful thinking of how much time is due to God in the closet, how much at the family altar, how much at the Prayer Meeting and how much to the weeknight services—for we must give to each according to its due proportion.

Again, the difficulty will often occur to you, my Brothers and Sisters, as to how much is due to diligence in business and how much to fervency in spirit. No one can draw the line for another. Each one must judge for himself, but this must be the law—"Neither shall one thrust

another; they shall walk everyone in his path." There may be a season in which you may lawfully give all the hours of the day to business. Your business may require it and there are times with commercial men when to go to weekday services would be almost insanity—they must keep to their work, or else there will become a failure—and then the name of Christ will be evilly spoken of. There will be times, too, with workingmen, when if they were to insist upon coming to the Monday evening Prayer Meeting, or to the Thursday night lecture, they would be altogether out of the path of duty—there is a demand for labor just at some particular time and they must obey the call—and they are in the path of duty in so doing. I am afraid that there are not many who fail in that way, but crowds who err in the opposite direction. Some will keep the shop open so late that there is no time for family prayer! Others will confine their servants so strictly that they can never get out on weeknights to hear a sermon. It does not strike the employer's mind that some of the young people would perhaps like to be at the Prayer Meeting on Monday night, nor will the employer be there himself. Now, I cannot say to you, you must give so much time to God and so much to the business—you yourself must ask God the Holy Spirit to guide you! But remember, you must not let one thrust another. It is a good saying of an old Divine, "Never bring to God one duty stained with the blood of another." As much as lies in you, give to each distinct duty its due proportion.

There is a still greater difficulty with regard to the arrangement of distinct duties *when they are likely to run counter to one another*. Here is a servant—his master expects him, after he has entered into an engagement with him, to do such-and-such unnecessary work on the Sabbath. The young man says, "No, I cannot do that. It is clearly unscriptural and I must obey God rather than man." But there are certain things which come somewhere between the necessary and the unnecessary—and the servant may properly enquire, "What is my duty?" You must settle it carefully within your own mind. Have you any sordid or selfish motive for deciding in any particular way? If so, be very cautious how you decide, but seek the Lord's Glory, and the Lord's Glory, alone, and say, "While I am, as a servant, to serve man, yet I am the Lord's free man and I must walk both as a servant and the Lord's free man, and not forget either."

Sometimes the matter of the conduct of children towards parents has come under our notice. A harsh parent has said, "My children shall not carry out their religious convictions." In such cases we have had to occasionally recommend the child to wait until he has grown a little older. At other times, we have bid the child break through the parent's evil command, since we cannot hold that the parent can have any right to make his child disobey God. In the matter of the child's religion—when it is able to judge for itself—it is as free as its parents and has a right to choose for itself. And while the parent should seek intelligently to guide it, coercion must never be tried. If the parent is ungodly, the child is free from all obedience to wicked commands and must then act in obedience

to a higher Parent, and to a greater Law, namely, the Law of God. The same happens, at times, with regard to the husband and the wife. Of course, a good wife continually wishes to do that which will please her husband and she is happy to be subservient to him as far as may be. But when it comes to a point of conscience and the two relations clash, the relations of the Heavenly Bridegroom and the earthly husband—it is not always easy to decide upon a fitting course of action. But we may at least be certain that we must not be actuated by selfishness, nor by a desire to avoid persecution, nor to please men—we must stand on the side of honesty to God, fealty to the King of kings and a regard for the Truth as it is in Jesus. Do try, if it is possible, and I believe it is possible in every case, to harmonize all your relationships, so that neither one of them shall thrust another, but each shall walk in its own path.

IV. So, Brothers and Sisters, my concluding remark shall be that as this is to be true in the little commonwealth of the heart and the home—IT OUGHT TO ALSO BE TRUE OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.

It is a great blessing when the members of the church do not thrust one another, but everyone goes in his own path. *There are different orders of workers and these must cooperate.* Alas, workers in a Sunday school do not always agree with one another. Then, workers in Sunday schools are not always so fond of workers in Ragged schools as they might be and, perhaps, the workers in Ragged schools may sometimes look down with coldness upon the distributors of tracts. It should never be so. We are like the different members of the body and the eye must not say to the foot, "I have no need of you," neither must the hand say to the ear, "I have no need of you." Every man must work according to the gift of the Holy Spirit. When a man steps out of his proper office into another, he makes a great mistake, both for himself and for the Church at large—and when one Brother envies another and picks holes in his coat, and finds fault with his service, he needs to hear that Inspired question, "Who are you that judges another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls." I pray all the bands of workers to maintain a holy unanimity, being of one accord, minding the same thing, provoking one another to nothing but love and good works, striving for nothing except that they together may promote the Glory of the Lord Jesus!

And as it is true in any one church with regard to the laborers, *so it should be also with regard to the different ranks and classes of Christians.* The rich should never say, "We do not want so many poor in the church," neither should the poor man say, "Our minister favors the wealthy—there is more thought of the rich than there is of the poor." There is just as much fault on one side as there is on the other in these things. While we sometimes find the purse-proud man looking down on the poor, it quite as often happens that the poor man takes umbrage where there is no need for it and is much more wicked in his jealousies than the other in his purse-pride. Let it never be so among Christians, but let the Brother of high degree rejoice that he is exalted and the poor that he is brought low! We need both and cannot do without either—and

having both in the church, neither should one thrust another, but each should go in his own path.

So with the educated and the uneducated. I have been saddened, oftentimes, when I have heard a sneer against a Brother who cannot speak grammatically. The Brother who can speak grammatically, perhaps, does not try to speak at all—and yet he sneers at the other and says, "Well, really, I wonder that such fellows should preach! What is the good of them?" Now, until you have done better than he does, do not find fault with him! God uses him, so surely you ought not to despise him! The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, that the learned and educated minister is necessary and useful—we have no right to sneer at those who have gone through a College and earned a high degree of learning, for they are useful. But on the other hand, who among us hears of such men as Richard Weaver and Mr. Carter, and others who are laboring among the poor and dares to despise them? If I might have my choice, I should prefer to work with them rather than with the fine-spun gentlemen, but still, every man in his own order, each man after his own fashion—let the one take his position and the other take his position—and never say a jealous or an angry word of each other, neither let one thrust another, but each one go straight on in his own path.

So it ought to be with all our churches. In this great city of London, there is no excuse for anything like jealousy among the various Christian churches. If we were to build as many places of worship as would reach, set side by side, from here to London Bridge, on both sides of the road and without a single house or shop in all the distance—and if we were to put Gospel preachers into them all, I believe they could all be filled without any of them being a hindrance to another—for the millions in this city are so enormous that there is no chance of our being jostled by one another! We are like fishermen in the deep sea. Because there are a hundred boats, they need not, any of them, come off the worse. If there were 50,000 boats, they could all be full where the fish are so abundant. Perhaps you say, "I hear Mr. So-and-So, and what a dear man he is!" Very likely he is, but so is somebody else. It would be a great pity if everybody could hear only one man. It would be a very sad thing if everybody wanted to come to the Tabernacle, for we cannot make it any bigger than it is—and it would be a very wretched thing if everybody wanted to go somewhere else, for then we should have an empty house! But now, each one listening according as his own spiritual taste may guide him, or as his spiritual appetite may dictate to him, we are formed into different communities which prosper individually, but which would glorify God much more if all disunion were cast aside and if we sought each other's good, profit and edification.

And so, to conclude, it ought to be with the different denominations. I sometimes think that these will continue forever. They are of no hurt to the Church of God, but a great blessing, for some of them take up one point of the Truth of God which is neglected and others take up another—and so, between them all, the whole of the Truth of God is

brought out! And it seems to me that the Church of Christ is even more one than if all the various sections were brought together into one grand ecclesiastical corporation, for this would, probably, feed some ambitious person's vanity and raise up another dynasty of priestcraft, like the old Babylon of Rome! Perhaps it is quite as well as it is, but let each body of Christians keep to its own work and not sneer at the work of others. Let all feel, "We have this to do, and we will do it in the name of God." Let each body of Christians try to correct its neighbor in its errors and mistakes, but let each work hand in hand and stand foot to foot in the common battle and the common service, for, O my Brothers and Sisters, the time will come when our little narrow jealousies will all melt away like the hoar frost when the sun arises! When the King shall come in His Glory, or we are carried to the other side of the stream of death and see beyond the curtain which parts us from the invisible world, we shall look with very different eyes upon some things which seem so important now! We shall then see that God has forbidden us to glory in anything but the Cross of Christ and that the one thing necessary, after all, to contend for was, "By Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

Now, may the Lord help us to go straight on in our own paths, not one thrusting another, but all working together for God. And if there are any among us who are not converted, let me remind them that they are out of order—and let me tell them what comes of that. When a man sets himself in opposition to God's Laws, they crush him as surely as he is there! Throw yourself from the Monument and the law of gravitation will not be suspended to save you. Even so, if you are out of order with God, there is no help for it—and your destruction is certain if you remain opposed to Him. Oh, that you may be led, by Divine Grace, to get into order with God—to be reconciled unto God by the death of His Son! He tells you the way to get into order. It is this—simply trust Jesus! That is the way to rectify all errors. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! May God bless us all with that salvation, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

PLOWING ROCK
NO. 2977

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"Shall horses run upon the rocks? Will one plow there with oxen?"
Amos 6:12.

THESE two questions are evidently Oriental proverbial expressions. Proverbs have always been used by the wisest of men. Solomon not only spoke and wrote a great many, but he also made a considerable collection of those uttered by others. We find in the writings of such notable thinkers as Socrates, Pliny and Aristotle, an abundance of short, pithy sentences, many of which can be used as proverbs. Proverbs have great force in them, because they are condensed wisdom. They are generally most convincing—it is hardly ever possible to answer or controvert them. They carry truth home as an arrow has often been known to carry death to the person aimed at, for they strike, they stick, they penetrate, they wound. Our Lord Jesus very frequently made use of proverbs, nor was He singular in doing so. The Prophets of old constantly employed them and here, in our text, we see Amos—who, from his occupation as a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, was probably more familiar with their use than some others of the Prophets were—puts together two proverbs which were commonly used to signify that men do not, as a rule, continue to labor in vain and spend their strength for nothing. Wise men do not send their horses to run upon the rocks and they do not send their oxen to plow where all their toil would be wasted—"Shall horses run upon the rocks?" "Will one plow rocks with oxen?" The answer implied is, "Certainly not," and it means that if a thing cannot be done, or is not worth doing if it can, it will be well for us not to attempt to do it. Our text may have two bearings—first, *upon men* and, secondly, *upon God*.

I. First, WITH REGARD TO MEN. They are not usually so foolish as to try to plow a rock, yet many are as foolish as that in moral and spiritual matters!

I want to give you three or four illustrations of this fact. The first is that *many persons have tried to find the way of safety and pleasure in the way of sin*. Many a man has sought to get rich by injustice. Possibly he has succeeded to a certain extent, but, as a general rule, it is notorious that ill-gotten riches are generally ill-spent and bring a curse upon their possessors. Some have thought that if they indulged their passions, they would have great enjoyment. Although their fathers warned them that such a sin would be like self-destruction and would make their whole life

sad, they have not believed it would be so and they have tried to plow this hard rock of sin and to find lasting pleasure therein. There are hundreds and thousands of men who are pursuing the way which is not good—and they know it is not good—yet they foolishly continue in it because they conceive it to be the path of pleasure, nor can you beat that false notion out of their heart, do what you may! On the contrary, they turn upon you and call you a "Puritan" because you object to their style of living. Possibly they revile you as a hypocrite because you point out the evils of the way in which they are walking. Yet if they would but think at all seriously, they must perceive that the way of sin cannot lead to happiness. It is absolutely inconceivable that God, who made the whole universe, should have arranged that the terminus of sin should be Heaven, or should have made the path of evil lead to joy and peace! The Judge of all the earth cannot have put a premium upon wickedness! In the long run, it will be proved that sin brings forth sorrow and that the path of right is the path of peace. Yet many will not see that it must be so and they continue, even to the bitter end of life, to plow that rock, breaking the plowshare, wearing out the ox, and themselves dying a death of miserable disappointment, which, if they had not been arrant fools, they would never have had to endure, for they would never have attempted so hopeless a task as that of trying to find any real pleasure in the ways of sin! As well might you sow the sea with salt and expect to reap from it a harvest of golden sheaves! As well might you scatter firebrands and expect to gather from them the cooling streams that flow from the mountain spring, as live in sin and expect to receive happiness as the result of doing so! Cease, O sons of men—such an act of madness as the plowing of this rock must always be!

Others are attempting another equally absurd task. They are *hoping to find real joy in pursuits which are laudable in themselves, but which are entirely of this world*. Did you ever read the book called *The Mirage of Life*? It is a book which is well worth everyone's reading. The author gives, in sets of pictures, the life of the man of pleasure, the life of the courtier, the life of the philosopher, the life of the statesman, the life of the warrior and so on with a very fair selection of facts from the lives of such men, with the objective of showing that, although each one of them was eminent in his own line of things—and apparently successful in that line—yet they all failed to find the precious jewel of solid satisfaction. Most of them lived in a sort of perpetual weariness and when, at last, they died, and their eyes were opened, they found that their pretty dreams had all vanished and that the reality, when they beheld it, was dreary indeed. There have been men—perhaps some of you have known them—who have had more wealth than you and I would care to count, yet they have thought themselves poor—and so they really were, for they were incapable of enjoying the riches which they had amassed! There have been men who have been crowned with laurel who have had all sorts of honors heaped upon them, yet, when a friend has wished them a happy new year, they have said, "Then it had need be a very different year from any that we have ever yet experienced." The high places of the

world, like the mountaintops, are glassy with icy dangers and they are cold with discontent. Many try to clamber up to them—and a few reach the summit, but others perish in the crevasses. Yet those who reach the summit often envy those who are in the valley below, and those in the valley envy those on the heights, for, beneath yon moon, there is no contentment to be found in earthly things either in the peasant's hut or the monarch's palace! The man whose arm is not long enough to grasp that which lies in the land beyond the stars will have to live and die without attaining to perfect satisfaction. Man, it is not here below that God has placed that which you need! The bread for your souls must come from Heaven! That which can satisfy your immortal spirit must be Divine, like the Creator who made you! God alone can satisfy the cravings of your soul. Cease, then, to toil, and tug, and fret, and fume, and waste your time and strength in seeking happiness in these bubbles of earth. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"—insofar as you need them—but as for seeking them *first*, plow that rock no longer, for it will yield you no return for all your toil!

Men of another sort are satisfied that the things of this world are not sufficient to render a man perfectly happy, so *they have religious thoughts of a certain form*. They believe that they are very good, excellent and they mean to make themselves still better and so to get perfect peace by feeling that they are what they ought to be, and have done what they ought to have done! I remember when I plowed that hard rock and entertained the hope of getting a very fine crop off it—but I woke, one morning, to discover that the rock would not yield even the moss or lichen of comfort to me—there was nothing on its surface that could bring me any contentment. Self-righteousness is a great cheat. The man who gets most comfort out of it simply gets that comfort because he is ignorant! If he knew himself and knew God's Law, and knew the demands of inflexible Justice, he would fling upon the nearest dunghill that self-righteousness of his which looks like fair white linen, but which really is, in God's sight, nothing but filthy rags! O Sinner, you cannot find your way to Heaven by your own works, for the only way to Heaven by works is to keep *perfectly* the Law of God—and you have already broken that Law! You must present this matchless vase, flawless and entire, at the gates of Glory if you would be saved by works—but you have already shattered it in a thousand pieces—how can you hope to mend it? That is impossible! The hope of salvation by a perfect life is over and you must, each one, feel that your life has already been imperfect.

Some hope that they will get perfect peace by the way of ceremonies. Many people tell us that we are living in a very enlightened age, but I am inclined to think that Carlyle was uncommonly near the mark when he said that "the United Kingdom contains about thirty millions of people, mostly fools," for it does seem as if people, nowadays, are fools to a very large extent. For instance, a man says that if we will come and confess our sins to him, he can forgive us in the name of God—and that he can,

by sprinkling a few drops of water upon a child, and uttering certain words, transform an heir of wrath into an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! He also says that if we come to what he calls an altar, he will give us the very body and blood of Christ to eat and drink! Well, when I was young, I thought that anybody who talked like that ought to be served like the gypsies who were put in prison for taking sixpences from silly servants and pretending to tell their fortunes! And, in later years, I have been sometimes surprised that the law has not been put in motion against these gentlemen, for certainly the imposture which they seek to foist upon us is a far more terrible one than that of the fortune-telling gypsies! The so-called "priest" has no power to forgive sins, or to change the nature of the child he sprinkles, or to offer the sacrifice of the "mass." There is nothing more in him than there is in anybody else—and let him talk as loudly as he may, his pretensions are utterly vain and worthless! If you trust to him, the result to you will be the same as it has been to tens of thousands before you, for you will find that all the ceremonies which men have invented, yes, and all the rites that God Himself has given, cannot bring healing to a diseased soul, or hush the tumult of an awakened conscience, or bring the soul into a state of conscious reconciliation with the Most High! O Sirs, you may be sprinkled, and confirmed, and immersed, and go to the Communion Table, and do I know not what besides—yes, you may travel along seven thousand leagues of ceremonialism, but you will be just as uneasy at the end as you were at the beginning! That is not the way of peace, neither will God make it to be so! It is plowing a rock—and no harvest can possibly come of it.

Some are trying the equally impossible task of *being saved by Jesus Christ when they shall have prepared themselves for Him.* In other words, they talk about being saved by Christ, but, in their heart of hearts, they do not think that Christ can save them till they have reached a certain standard of excellence. Now we know, from the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins and He will do it from first to last, or not at all. He will be the Alpha and the Omega—the A and the Z of salvation's alphabet, or else He will have nothing to do with it! Yet thousands of hearers of the Gospel are constantly saying, "We will believe in Jesus when we feel our sins more—when we feel more repentance—when we have done this and told that, and experienced the other." Ah, Sirs, this plan of bringing Christ in at the end of the work—after you have accomplished the first part of it yourselves—is a most foolish mistake, and a fatal one, too! It is like setting oxen to plow a rock. Let me ask you—Are you any better than you used to be? You have been trying, for a long while, to make yourselves ready for Christ—are you any more ready than you were at the first? Has it never struck you that Hart's lines are true?—

"If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all"?

Thus I have shown you how the text can be applied with regard to men.

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you how these Proverbs can be applied WITH REGARD TO GOD. "Shall horses run upon the rocks? Will one plow there with oxen?"

God does not always continue to do that which, after a certain period, turns out to be unprofitable. Dear Friends, there are some of you—I pray God to grant that there may not be any of you of whom this will remain true—but it is at present true that *there are some of you to whom the Gospel has come in vain*. Up till now, so far as you are concerned, the Gospel plow has only gone across a rock—the Truth of God preached in your hearing has not gained an entrance into your heart. Oh, how many come and hear us preach merely that they may compare us with other preachers! They pass certain criticisms upon our mode, manner and matter. We do not know, and we do not care what they say, but the point that really concerns us is that we cannot get the Gospel plow into them—we cannot make them feel, and repent, and believe! A great master of the art of preaching once said, when his congregation complimented him on having delivered a fine discourse, "There is another sermon lost." He did not want his hearers to praise his discourse—he wanted them to feel the power of the Truth of God which he had preached to them! And so do we. But there are some hearers into whom we do not know how to get the Truth of God. We may put it, first in one way, and then in another way—sometimes pathetically and, at other times, we may make use of a little humor. We may denounce or allure, but we are equally foiled in whatever way we attempt to reach them. We cannot get the plow in where we want it to go and if ever the share does seem to make a little impression, it only produces a slight surface scratch. Some of you have had a good many of those scratches. You have thought, "When I get out of this place, I will go home and pray," but you have not done so. Or, if you have prayed, your seriousness has soon vanished and the impression made upon you in the service has expended itself in that prayer!

What is worst of all, in some of you, *God's dealing with you, in the preaching of the Gospel, has developed the hardness of your hearts*. It has made others realize how hard they are and, truth to tell, it has really hardened them. Plowing does not harden rocks—but preaching does harden sinners if the Gospel does not reach their hearts and, of all hardhearted men, the hardest are those who have been hardened in the fire of the Gospel! If you want to find a heart that is as hard as steel, you must look for one that has passed through the furnace of Divine Love and has been made aware of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, but has rejected the Truths of God that has been made known to it.

This hardening of heart is *not* the fault of the plowshares which have been used and, *with some of you, God has used a great many*. There is a man here who used to be plowed by God when he was a child, and the plowshares employed then were his mother's tears. He cannot forget them! Even now, as I bring them to his memory, he feels as if he must weep as he did when he was a child. Ah, my Friend, that mother of yours is in Heaven, now, but if she could look down upon her son, and tears

could be shed in Heaven, what cause she would have to weep over you! She prayed for you when you were nestling in her bosom and she took you to the House of God from your very early days. You can remember her very look when she used to speak to you about Jesus when you were quite a little child! And perhaps you remember her dying request that you would follow her to Heaven. But that plowshare—one of God's best—has never yet cut into your rocky heart and you still remain as hard as you ever were!

Since that time God has tried you with the plowshare of personal sickness. You have not always been such a strong man as you are today. Time was when you lay very near the gates of death and you trembled at the prospect before you! Do you remember when the fever seized you, or when you thought the cholera had claimed you as its victim? You trembled then and you made many vows which all proved to be lies! And you even made a profession of repentance, but it was mere profession—and though you appeared, just for a little while, to be touched—and those who were around you, who had prayed for you, hoped that at last the plowshare had entered into you—they found that you rose up from that bed of sickness worse than you were before!

Since then, God has used another sharp plowshare upon you—the conversion of some of those who are very near and dear to you. You were not at all pleased when your wife came home a converted woman, but you could not help feeling it. And when your sister wrote and told you that she was rejoicing in Christ as her Savior, you could not pour ridicule upon the letter and, as you read it, it brought tears to your eyes. You quickly wiped them away and said that you were not such a fool as to trouble about so absurd a matter, yet it was not easy for you to forget the emotion which the news had caused. Possibly your own dear child, whom you love very much, has made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you do not know anything, experimentally, about such faith as that. This is a very sharp plowshare and none can think lightly of it but those who are unaware of its operation. To have your relatives and friends converted and to be yourself left out of the happy circle of blessing ought to make you think seriously about this matter!

Another plowshare has gone across your rocky heart from the fact that some of your old companions are dead. One was buried this week, was he not? You used to drink and smoke with him, but there will be no more pipes and beer on a Sunday night for you two! You know right well that he died without the fear of God in his heart and you also know that you are living in the same sad and perilous condition. It gave you quite a shock when someone said to you, "Old Tom is dead." You have also seen several of your business friends die. There was that clerk who was in the office with you a little while ago—he is gone and you have been called to occupy his place. Death has come awfully near you again and again. You have been like a soldier on the field of battle who saw the ranks on every side of him mown down, yet he still lived on. God's plow has been at work with you—He has been trying, by these striking Providential dealings, to touch your hard heart—but it has not yet yielded. Do you

think that God means to keep on plowing you to no effect? If you do, you are wonderfully mistaken, for the oxen will not always plow upon this rock—and when it comes to this—that neither can love melt you, nor terrors subdue you—God will say, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." And when God says that, your doom will be sealed! May God grant that He may never have to say that concerning any whom I am now addressing!

I have thus shown you that you have been like a piece of granite rock, untouched by all the different plowshares which have been tried upon you. There is another thought that you must not forget and that is, *you have wearied the workers*. I pity the poor oxen that have to plow a rock—they plod on and on and all their toil is wasted. The hardest form of labor is that which produces no result. I remember being in a military prison where they punish the men by making them carry cannon balls from one end of the yard to another, and bring them back again—a very senseless practice. The sergeant who accompanied me said, "When we let the men carry the balls from this end of the yard, to make them into a pyramid at the other end, there was some kind of amusement in the task, so the rule was made that the man must carry the ball from this end of the yard and bring it back again, and his toil seems to be so altogether fruitless that it becomes a double punishment to him." It is certainly a very great trial for a man to have to work for nothing and to feel that all he is doing will result in nothing. There are some of us who have had to do so with you unconverted folk. And sometimes some of us have been very harshly used—we oxen that have to plow such hard rock's as you are!

The first part of my text asks, "Shall horses run upon the rock?" I remember going over a smooth, rocky place in the Alps which is called Hell-Place because it is so very slippery. Well, horses could not be expected to run over rocks like those, and it is not surprising that they sometimes trip! And if the preacher occasionally trips, it is little wonder when he has such rocks as those to go over. George Herbert says that the sins of hearers sometimes make the preacher trip, and so it is. There is often, in the hearer, that which makes the preacher speak amiss. I remember pleading one night here with all my soul, and I said, "If some of you who are listening to me, never mean to accept Christ as your Savior, do not continue to sit in this place and hear the Gospel, but go away and let somebody who will accept Him, occupy your seat." I did not think that one of my hearers would take me at my word, but there was one, over whom I have never ceased to lament, and for whom I still pray, who says that he will never come here again because he is one of those who will never receive Christ and, though he would still like to hear me preach, he will never occupy another person's place. It was a mistake on my part to say what I did, but I do not think I would have tripped like that if the rock had not been so hard and smooth!

It is hard for a horse to have to run upon such a rock as that and it is hard for the oxen to keep on plowing there. I have had over 20 years of this kind of plowing upon some of you—and I have made nothing of you

yet. Thank God, there are not many of your sort, but there is still a remnant left of the old Park-Streeters who were "almost persuaded" then, and they are still "almost persuaded." And I am "almost persuaded" that I shall never be able to do them any good. It seems to me that there is nothing which I can say that will ever reach their hearts, or else, surely, it would have reached them before now! I am always glad when I hear that some other preacher attracts them and that they are listening to him with interest, for, as long as they get saved, I do not mind how it is done. Still, it is hard lines for us to have to preach for 20 years to some of you and to have all that labor for nothing. If anybody could teach me how to preach better, I would gladly go to school, again, and learn how to get at some of your hearts. If they would teach me how to speak in such a vulgar style that I would lose my reputation, but be blessed to the saving of your souls, I would willingly fling my reputation to the winds! Or if I could learn the art of oratory, I would go and sit at the feet of Cicero or Demosthenes, if I could but get at your superfine hearts that need such fine words before they will be touched! But I fear that it is the oxen's fate to go on plowing, and plowing, and plowing—and to get weary with the labor, and yet to see no result of it all.

One other thing that I want you to remember—you who remain unconverted after all this effort—and that is *if the same labor which has been lost upon you, has been used elsewhere, it might have been profitable*. Christ said, concerning Bethsaida and Chorazin, a very amazing thing which I do not fully understand, but which I absolutely believe—"If the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." It is a very extraordinary thing that God would send the Gospel to men who do not get any good out of it, and not send it to people who would have got good out of it! There are people, possibly, even in London, certainly, in other parts of the earth, who would have been converted if they had heard the Gospel as much as you have—yet you have heard it and have not been converted! That same digging about and fertilizing that would have made other trees bring forth much fruit, has been used in vain upon you, for you have brought forth no fruit. And you have stood there and occupied a plot of ground which a better tree might have occupied. You have cumbered the ground—do you think that God will always allow you to do that? Have you—who live in the country and have a large orchard—have you a tree that has borne no fruit for many years? I am sure that, if so, you mean to have it cut down before long—and God means to have some of you cut down—and that, it may be, before long! I tremble even as I speak to you thus, for I may be a Prophet foretelling the destruction of your soul! May God, in His infinite mercy, grant that you may repent before His axe of Judgment falls upon you!

Any man in his senses, when he finds that the rock will not break, gives up plowing it. The ancient proverb says, "Will one plow there with oxen?" and God, though infinitely merciful, is equally wise. And if, after the use of means which are blessed elsewhere, any heart still remains hard, He may fairly say, "I have done with it. I give it up to its natural

rockiness and so let it continue forever." That is the end of the matter and a terrible end it is! And I do not know anything more that I can say about it. I have preached the Gospel thousands of times and I have nothing to preach but the Gospel—but these people will not have it, so what more can I say to them? A man came to me the other day and asked me to pray for him. He was one to whom I had many times explained the Gospel and after I had again done so, he said to me, "Will you pray for me, Sir?" I said, "No, I will not." He asked, "Why not?" and I replied, "Do you want me to ask God to save you apart from the Gospel? I have told you the Gospel again and again—will you accept it? If you will not, I shall not ask God to save you. How can I do so? I cannot expect Him to save you if you will not have the Gospel. If you will have it, that will save you. If you will not have it, you will be lost and it is no use for me to pray for you."

There I had to leave the matter so far as that man was concerned, but let me say this much to God's people—You see that we cannot do anything with this rock. The oxen are quite tired out with their useless labor, so let us pray to God to turn that rock into good soil. It needs a miracle to be worked and only God can work it. Let us unite our prayers and cry to God, "O Lord, You did change our rocky hearts into good soil, where the Good Seed could enter, germinate and grow. Change these rocks, we beseech You!" Here is the reason for our Prayer Meetings and for our private intercession. We can do nothing with these rocky hearts, so let us turn to God who can do everything! Then I may add that if you will pray God to change these rocky hearts, I will go on preaching to them! The weary ox will go on plowing again, hard as it has found the work for these 20 years and more. If you will pray, I will preach! If you pray God to make the rock brittle and break it up, I will plow it again, and I should not wonder if the plowshare gets into some of them at last, so that there may yet be a golden harvest to God's honor and Glory!

Let me put the plow in one minute more. The greatest rock-breaking plow that I know of is the one that broke me up. If that will not do it, I do not know of any other that will. When Christ died upon the Cross, among other wonderful things that happened, we read that "the rocks rent, and the graves were opened." Ah, it was a dying Christ that rent the rocks! Sinner, listen once more to—

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

You have offended and grieved your God and my God is just—and must punish you for your wrongdoing. But, in order that He may not punish you, He has taken upon Himself your nature and come into this world to suffer in the sinner's place and borne what was due to human sin in His own body on the Cross! Out of pure love to those who were His enemies, out of love to those hearts that are so hard that they will not love Him, out of love to those who have, perhaps, for 50 years rejected and despised Him—for love, for the sake of love, alone, He died upon the Cross, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And now,

if you will trust Him, you shall at once have the pardon of all your sins! If you will trust Him, you shall be—

"To the great Father's bosom pressed,
Once for all a child confessed!"

You shall be cleansed in a moment and accepted and saved forever if you do trust the Incarnate, dying, risen, glorified Redeemer! God grant that this plowshare of the Cross may touch you! Law and terrors, I know full well, do not affect some men, but Almighty Love—will that not affect them? God grant that it may, and unto Him shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: AMOS 6:1-8; 7:1-6.

Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. His words are rugged, but sometimes he rises to sublimity. His expressions are somewhat dark and not readily understood, but when we learn the meaning of them, we perceive that they are full of deep, earnest, solemn warning and instruction.

Amos 6:1. *Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!* It was a time of great sin and also of great judgment, yet there were some in Zion who were quite at ease under all that was happening. No sense of sin grieved them, no thought of coming judgment alarmed them. What did they care if the nation went to rack and ruin? What did it mean to them that God was angry with His people? They were atheists or, at least, they acted as if they were! Whatever might happen, they would run the risk of it. "Woe," says God, to all such people as these—and when the Lord says, "Woe," to anyone, it is indeed woe, for He never speaks thus without cause.

2. *Pass you unto Calneh, and see; and from there go you to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? Or their border greater than your border?* The Lord points to other cities which had been destroyed—to Calneh, and Hamath, and Gath which He had smitten because of the sin of the people who had lived there, and He says, "You that dwell at Jerusalem, and you that live at Samaria, do not imagine that you will escape the consequences of your sin. I was able to reach the inhabitants of these proud cities, despite their strong fortifications and their powerful armies—and I can also reach you." So, when we look back upon the judgments of God upon guilty men, we may conclude that no sinner has any right to think that he shall escape. The proudest and mightiest have been brought down by God and so will men who dare to resist the Most High continue to be humbled, even to the world's end.

3. *You that put far away the evil day.* You who say, "There is time enough yet. Let us see a little more of life; why need we be in a hurry to seek salvation?" "You that put far away the evil day"—

3. *And cause the seat of violence to come near.* For, when men try to postpone thoughts about "the judgment" which is to follow "after death," they are generally the more eager to indulge in sin. They say, "There is time enough yet," because they want a longer period for yet greater indulgence in sinful ways. The Lord cries, "Woe," to all such people as these.

4. *That lie upon beds of ivory.* They were men of wealth who spent their money upon all manner of luxuries while the poor of the land were perishing through need.

4. *And stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall.* It was, as I have said, a time of danger when war was at the gates, but the people were so careless that they lived as if peace were established forever and the enemy could never touch them! Their expenditure was at a high rate for self-indulgence and only for that.

5. *That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instrument of music, like David.* But not for the same purpose as David played and sang—his instruments of music were used for spiritual solace and the worship of God—but these people set their wits to work to find out how their music might inflame their lusts and be a vehicle for the expression of their lascivious desires.

6. *That drink wine in bowls.* For seldom can a careless man crown the edifice of his sin without indulging in drunkenness! He must have the sensual delight that he finds in "the flowing bowl."

6. *And anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.* It is not wrong for a person, to whom God has given much of the good things of this life, to enjoy them fitly and reasonably. The sin of these people consisted in the fact that when others were afflicted, they took that opportunity to indulge themselves in all the delights of the flesh. And when God's rod was being used for chastisement, they went on with their sinful mirth to show how little they cared about it. Probably I am addressing some who have, at this very moment, a sore sickness in the house. Or it may be that a beloved wife is scarcely cold in her grave, or a dear child has only just sobbed itself into its death-sleep—yet the survivors are running after amusements, pleasures and follies more wildly than ever, as if to hush the voice of conscience and to forget the strokes of God's rod! Oh, that this very solemn chapter might convey a warning message to them!

7. *Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.* Whenever God does come forth to execute judgment upon the ungodly, He will first pick out those who have defied Him the most. Those who have the proudest spirit and the hardest heart shall be the first to feel the strokes of His rod.

8. *The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, says the LORD, the God of Hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.*

The next chapter shows that even when God was very angry with the wicked, there was still wonderful power in prayer.

Amos 7:1-3. *Thus has the lord God showed unto me; and, behold, He formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowing. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech You: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this: it shall not be, says the LORD.* In a vision, the Prophet saw the locusts or grasshoppers come to devour all the green things of the land—a very terrible visitation! If you have never seen it, you cannot realize how utterly bare everything is made after the visit of the locusts. The Prophet put up a vehement and earnest prayer. He cried, "O Lord God, forgive!" And no sooner was the intercession offered than the Lord said, "It shall not be." Thus the impending judgment was turned away.

4-6. *Thus has the Lord God showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech You: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this. This also shall not be, says the Lord God.* This time the Prophet saw the fire devouring the land—perhaps the fire of war which casts its blazing brand upon peaceful dwellings. This fire, however, was something worse than that, for the very deep itself seemed to be licked up by tongues of flame and the Prophet, in hearty sympathy with the afflicted people, cried again as he had done before, and the answer came, "This also shall not be, says the Lord God." This ought to encourage you who are the King's remembrancers to make use of the position in which His Grace has placed you, and to cry earnestly to Him to turn away His wrathful hand and have pity upon sinners! God grant that many of us may have such an intercessory spirit as that of Amos the herdsman-Prophet!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 527.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—20.

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

POWER WITH GOD
NO. 2978

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 8TH, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1876.

"As a prince have you power with God."
Genesis 32:28.

MEN think a great deal of anyone who has power with royalty. If it were said, concerning somebody in this place, "That individual has very great power with the Queen," there are a great many of you who would turn at once to look at that person. He who has great power with an earthly prince is sure to have many flatterers around him who will pay him homage for the sake of the advantage which they hope to gain through his mediation. But, dear Friends, what a far greater honor it is to have power with the King of kings! Power with men may be an evil thing, but what blessing must come from power with God! How it ennobles the soul of the man who possesses it! This man, Jacob, who has power with God, is called Israel, a prince, for so he is—but princes have no such dignity as his unless they, too, have power with God, for he is "a prince of God."

What a comprehensive blessing it must be to have power with God, for he who has power with God must have power with men! Creatures must submit where the Creator, Himself, has yielded. If you can have your way with the Master, you may depend upon it that you can have your way with His servants. The man who has power with God must be safe. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" No weapon that is formed against such a man can prosper and every tongue that rises against him in judgment, he can condemn, for, having power with God, he shall be able to plant his foot upon the neck of his adversaries and to reign over those who rebel against him. Such a man as that cannot be in need. If he has power with God, he will tell Him about his needs and they shall all be supplied. He will confess his sins and they will be forgiven. God will deal well with the man who has power with Him. There is such a wide range of blessing here that I must not stop to enlarge upon it. If you have power with God, you will see that this is a weapon which, like the flaming sword at the gate of the Garden of Eden, turns every way. Or I may say of it what David said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that; give it to me." Human language can never tell a thousandth part of the value of power with God!

I. I want you to note, first, WHAT THIS POWER CANNOT BE. "Power with God."

You scarcely need to be told that *it cannot be anything like physical force in opposition to God*. It is power *with* God, not power *against* God, that is mentioned in our text. No creature, however mighty, can have any power to stand in opposition to Omnipotence. Who are we that we should ever stand up to oppose the Most High? Let the twig contend with the fierce flame, or the wax with the burning heat, but let us not contend with God! If we did so, we should be like the moth in the candle—utterly consumed. The strongest and the proudest men must be but as stubble in the day of God's anger. In fact, to think of man having any power against God is sheer madness, for we have not any power at all *apart from God*. We only exist because He wills it. The breath in our nostrils is His gift, moment by moment. We should go back to the nothingness from which we sprang if He withdrew, for a single instant, His sustaining hand! Man has no power against God. O you foolish sinners who are resisting Him, give up the unequal battle! I charge you, before God, to count the cost of a contest with your Maker before you begin it! As well might a potsherd strive with him who molds it as for you, a creature, to strive with your Creator! He will break you in pieces, like a potter's vessels, in the day of His anger. Therefore, be wise and end the fight—and be at peace with Him!

Neither can this "power with God" mean *mental power*. There are persons who seem to exalt their intellect even above God Himself! It is a fine thing to be gifted with powers of argument and to have a keen reasoning faculty. But, at the same time, to some people these are very dangerous possessions. I know certain individuals who say that they will never believe what they cannot understand. If they adhere to that determination, they will never believe in their own existence, for they certainly cannot understand that! They seek to overthrow the Word of God and the Doctrines of the Gospel with their subtle wit and profound thought, but it is sheer madness for human folly to contend with Divine Wisdom! It is insanity carried to the very highest point for even the wisest of men to think that their intellects are a match for the Omniscience of God, for, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." Even the simplicity of the Gospel—and it is very simple—and "the foolishness of preaching"—which, in some people's esteem, is utter foolishness, shall win the victory while those who imagine that they are wise shall be proved to be fools! Brothers and Sisters, let us never attempt to argue any case in opposition to God's will, for we cannot have any power with Him in that way. Let us always surrender our judgment to the teaching of His Word and conform our will to His will. If we ever think that a certain course is best, but it is evident, by the working of God's Providence, that He does not think so, let us not for a single moment hold a debate with Him, but let us say, as David did, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it." If God does anything, that is enough for us! If God *says* anything, that is enough for us! Instead of arguing and reasoning, "It is written," or "God has said it," is sufficient to settle any question that concerns a Christian!

It is almost necessary, in these days of superstition, to say that *neither can any man have any magical power with God,* for, albeit that people nowadays would be ashamed to confess that they believed in magical arts, yet something very akin to it seems still to exist among mankind. They suppose that there is some efficacy in the mere repetition of certain words. I am sure they must think so, for they do not put their hearts into the words, but they are quite content if they have galloped through a collect, or some set form of prayer. Another supposition is that the prayer is all the better for being offered by a certain individual who is ordained to that particular work, so those who are sick send for an official to come and "pray for them"—I have often heard that expression, as though it was thought that this person, by reading a prayer out of a book, could, by a sort of magic, do the sick one good! O Sirs, mere words strung together—whether they are in Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, or English—are of no use before God! It is the utterance of the *heart* that He hears, and you must never imagine that there is any excellence in a certain arrangement of letters and sounds, or that certain men, by the use of these words, can bring down blessings from above! Oh, no! Jacob had no abracadabra, no talisman, no magic, no charm, no enchantment—and God forbid that you and I should ever be such heathens as to believe that there is any power with God in any such things! God is not prevailed upon to grant His blessings by any such fooleries as these—He utterly abhors them!

And, again, when we speak of having power with God, *we must not suppose that any man can have any meritorious power with God.* It has been thought by some people that a man can attain to a certain degree of merit, and then he will receive Heaven's blessings—if he offers a certain number of prayers, if he does this, or feels that, or suffers the other, then he will stand in high favor with God. Many are living under this delusion and, in their way, are trying to get power with God by what they are, or do, or suffer! They think they would get power with God if they were to feel sin more, or if they were to weep more, or if they were to repent more. It is always something that they are to *do*, or something they are to *produce* in themselves which they are to bring before God so that, when He sees it, He will say, "Now I will have mercy upon you, and grant you the blessing you crave." O dear Friends, all this is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! There is far more power with God in the humble acknowledgment of sinfulness than in a boastful claim of cleanliness—much more power in pleading that Grace will forgive than in asking that Justice should reward—when we plead our emptiness and sin, we plead the truth—but when we talk about our goodness and meritorious doings, we plead a lie! And lies can never have any power in the Presence of the God of Truth. O Brothers and Sisters, let us forever shake off from us, as we would shake a viper from our hand, all ideas that by any goodness of ours, which even the Spirit of God might work in us, we should be able to deserve anything at God's hands and to claim as right anything from the Justice of our Maker!

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire FROM WHERE THIS POWER PROCEEDS. If anyone asks, "How can a man have power with God?" The answer is, "Not because the power is *in him*, but he can have power with God by reason of something that is in God."

First, God's people get power with Him from the very Character of God's Nature. You will soon see what I mean. Have you ever visited a family in the depths of poverty and found them with a few rags to sleep upon, with nothing whatever in the cupboard, with a child dying for lack of food, mother and father with pinched countenances who tell you that, for the last 48 hours they have had nothing whatever to eat? And have you not felt that they have had power over you, so that you could not help them? I am certain that it has been so, if you have a tender heart, and are of a gracious, generous spirit. The power that they have over you does not arise from their riches, but quite the reverse—from their poverty. Their power over you does not lie in their being respectable and well-to-do—quite the opposite—their power over you lies in their being in abject distress. Their misery has power to excite your pity! Because you see them in such a sad state, you, being a man of compassionate spirit, are straightway moved to try to help them. There is many a spectacle of suffering and sorrow in this world that even a strong man cannot bear to look at, especially if he is unable to relieve those who are in distress. Now, if we, being evil, are so stirred by the sight of human misery, how much more is our heavenly Father, who is all goodness, tenderness, gentleness and love, moved to pity by the miseries of His children? Whenever you and I come to Him, it is wise for us to plead before Him our weakness, that He may pity it and make us strong—our poverty, that He may pity it, and enrich us—our dire necessity, that He may pity it and supply all our needs—our low estate, our sinking heart, our trembling spirit, our utter nothingness! In that way we shall have power with Him.

If you have been accustomed to visit the poor, you know how those who have got to be "old stagers" at receiving charity, never put their best leg forward when they want to impress you with a due sense of their need. If they had a little of anything in the house, they would take care that you did not see it. If there has been any improvement in their circumstances since you last called upon them, you will have to fish a long while before you will find it out—but they are very adept at bringing forward the black side of their case because their power lies there with those who have generous hearts! And so, Brothers and Sisters, our power with God, when we come to Him as sinners, lies not in what *we are*, but in what *God is*! He is Love, He is full of pity, He is Tenderness, He is Gentleness. He wills not the death of a sinner, but delights to display His saving Mercy, to manifest the abundance of His Grace. The foundation of our power with God must always lie in the love and tenderness of God. He is susceptible of pity—yes, He is Tenderness itself. He is a God of Compassion and, therefore, it is that the poor, feeble sons of Adam have power with Him!

But we get a further view of the source from where this power with God proceeds when we reach the next point, namely, *God's promises*.

God has, in His Word, been pleased to say that He will do this and that and give this and that. He was quite free, once, to do whatever He pleased, but now that God has given us His promises, He is not free to break them and it would be inconsistent with His glorious attributes that He should do so. Neither will He ever be false to a single syllable that has gone forth out of His mouth. When God gave His promises, He did, as it were, put Himself in the power of those who know how to plead the promises. Every promise is so much strength given to the man who has faith in the promise, for he may, with it, overcome even the Omnipotent God Himself! Why, Brothers and Sisters, if your character is what it should be, and a person comes to you and says, "You promised to give me such-and-such a thing," has not the person who can say that, power over you to the full extent of your promise? If you are a true man, he has beaten you at once! If you say to him, "But when did I give you that promise? You may have misunderstood what I said," and he puts his hand in his pocket and brings out your promise in black and white, with your name signed to it, there is no getting away from that, is there? Now, that is just the way in which God gives us power with Him, for He has given us His promises in black and white! Here they are in the Book which we know to be His Book, His own Infallible Word! It is a blessed thing to be able to come before God on your knees and to put your finger on a promise in the Bible, and to say, "Lord, this is what You have promised that You will do. I beseech You to do it because You are the God of Truth. I know that You cannot lie, so I remind You of Your promise and plead with You to do as You have said." Do you not see what power you have with God when He has given you faith to lay hold upon Him, bringing His own gracious promise in your hand? There is a conquering power in faith, because faith pleads the promises of God!

Thus, you see, there are two sources of power—God's Nature and God's promises.

But the true child of God knows of other sources of power with God, so next, *he pleads the relationships of Grace*. God, in His infinite mercy, has been pleased to choose certain people to be His children. "You shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." There was no reason, in themselves, why they should be His sons and daughters, but His Sovereign Grace adopted them and His Spirit regenerated them. But the moment that God made any one of us His child, He did again—I speak with all reverence—give us power with Him and put Himself into our hands! Who among us does not know the power of a child over his father? There are some children who have too much power. There is a Greek story of the little boy who ruled all Athens because he ruled his mother and his mother ruled his father—and his father ruled the senate and the senate ruled Athens! And so, in that way, the little boy practically ruled the whole city! And I am afraid that there are some children who have a good deal too much power in that way. But our Heavenly Father, though He is too wise to indulge us in that way, is so good that He will not deny us any privilege that, by right, belongs to the

position of a child. When your child appeals to you because there is something that he really needs, but which you have withheld from him, and he says, at last, "But, my dear father, will you not grant me this?" Or if you have chastened him and he says, "Father, stay your hand! Am I not your child?" you cannot resist his appeal. He has power with you—you know that he has! And what a wonderful power we have when we can truly say, "Abba! Father!" We shall have power with God in our times of greatest weakness if we can cry, "Abba! Father!"

I can never forget a certain illness when I had been racked with pain and brought very low with heaviness of spirit through the nature of the complaint from which I was suffering. I felt driven almost to despair, one night, until I laid hold of God, in an agony of prayer, and pleaded with Him something like this, "If my child were in such anguish as I am in, I would listen to him and relieve him if I could. You are my Father, and I am Your child, then will You not treat me like a child?" Almost at the very moment when I presented that plea before God, my pain ceased and I fell into a sweet slumber, from which I woke up with, "Abba! Father!" on my lips and in my heart! I believe that this is an invincible plea, because, when God calls Himself our Father, He means it. There are some fathers in this world, who do not act at all as fathers should—shame upon them! But that will never be said of our Heavenly Father. He is a true Father and He has a heart of compassion towards His children. And He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men—and when we know how to appeal to His Fatherhood, we shall prevail with Him!

Once more, dear Friends, *the power that we have with God also springs from His past actions*. Look at what He has done for His own people. First, He chose them. Well, then, as He chose them, He cannot cast them away because He is an Immutable God! As He has made His choice, He stands to it. Paul asks, "Has God cast away His people?" And he answers his own question, "God has not cast away His people which He foreknew." That is what He has never done! Then, in addition to choosing us, He has also redeemed us. And after He has redeemed us from destruction by the blood of His Son, can He allow us to be lost? Can He pay for us with such a price as that and yet neglect to keep us to the end? That cannot be! When He gave His Son as a Ransom for us, He did, indeed, put Himself into our hands, for, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Do but know that God gave His Son for you, dear Friend—know that Jesus Christ is yours and the logic of your prayer is clear enough, and forcible enough, when you say, "What can You deny me, O my Father? You have given me Your Son, so, by His blood and wounds, by His life and death, and resurrection Glory, give my spirit the Grace it needs, since You have given me Jesus Christ."

Do you not see, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that every mercy which God has bestowed upon you gives you power over Him? "Therefore, sing with John Newton—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink!

Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

If He has done so much for us, will He not do still more? Does not every blessing which is bestowed by God come to us with this message in its mouth, "There is more to follow," and may we not be quite sure that He who has blessed us now for 40 years, for fifty, sixty, seventy—and I see some who have numbered 80 years, and you have had God's blessing all the while—then, has He not, by all these years of favor and mercy, pledged and bound Himself to bless you even to the end? Assuredly it is so!

III. Now, in the third place, notice HOW THIS POWER WITH GOD CAN BE EXERCISED BY CHRISTIANS. What shape does power with God take? Of course it takes the shape of prayer. Christians put forth the power they have with God when they draw near to Him to ask for blessings upon themselves and upon others, but it is not every man who prays who has power with God, or who knows how to use the power which really exists. Who are the people who really have power with God! I will tell you.

First, *this power is exercised by those who are deeply sensible of their own weakness*. No man has power with God who thinks he is strong, except in the sense in which Paul wrote, "When I am weak, then am I strong." I have an idea, and I think that Scripture supported it, that Jacob wrestled very hard with the Angel, but that he never won the victory till the Angel touched the hollow of his thigh and caused the sinew to shrink. Then, when Jacob could not any longer stand—as he fell, he clutched the Angel with all his might as though he would also pull Him down if he must himself go down—and the weight of Jacob was all the greater because he could not stand. His very weakness was an element of his strength and that moment of weakness was the moment of his victory! Now, if you go to God feeling that you are partly full, He will not fill you, but will wait till you are quite empty before He will pour His blessing into you. He will not mix oil with water and, until He has emptied all the water out of the vessel, He will not begin to pour in His oil or His wine. When you feel that you have a little strength for prayer, I think it is very likely that you will not have power with God. But when it comes to this, that you cry out, "O God, I can do nothing—all my power is turned to utter weakness! I am driven to the lowest extremity," then, in the very desperation of your weakness, you will clutch the promise-making God and, as it were, drag down the angel and win the blessing, as Jacob did. It is your weakness that will do it, not your strength!

Have you ever tried to go to God as a fully-sanctified man? I did so once. I had heard some of the "perfect" brethren, who are travelling to Heaven by the "high level" railway and I thought I would try their plan of praying. I went before the Lord as a consecrated and sanctified man. I knocked at the gate. I had been accustomed to gain admittance the first time I knocked, but this time I did not. I knocked again and kept on knocking, though I did not feel quite easy in my conscience about what I was doing. At last I clamored loudly to be let in and when they asked me

who I was, I replied that I was a perfectly-consecrated and fully sanctified man—but they said that they did not know me! The fact was, they had never seen me in that character before. At last, when I felt that I must get in, and must have a hearing, I knocked again and when the keeper of the gate asked, "Who is there?" I answered, "I am Charles Spurgeon, a poor sinner who has no sanctification or perfection of his own to talk about, but who is trusting alone to Jesus Christ, the sinners' Savior." The gatekeeper said, "Oh, it is you, is it? Come in! We know you well enough, we have known you these many years!" And then I went in directly. I believe that is the best way of praying, and the way to win the day. It is when you have got on your fine feathers and top-knots that the Lord will not know you! When you have taken them all off and gone to Him as you went at the first, then you can say to Him—

"Once a sinner near despair
Sought your Mercy Seat by prayer.
Mercy heard and set him free,
Lord, that mercy came to me"—

"and I am that poor publican who dared not lift so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smote upon his breast and cried, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' and he went home to his house justified rather than the Brother over there who talked so proudly about the higher life, but who went home without a blessing." Yes, my Brother, you are strong when you are weak, and you are perfect when you know that you are imperfect! And you are nearest to Heaven when you think you are farthest off. The less you esteem yourself, the higher is God's esteem of you.

Again, *in order to have power with God, we must have simple faith.* Nobody who doubts can prevail with God. The promise is not to the waverer, for James says, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord," The man who gets the blessing is the one who fully believes in God's promise and who so believes in it that he acts upon it. I shall never forget the faith of a certain member of this Church, who is still living. About 18 or 19 years ago, I was very ill, indeed. Most people thought that I would die, but, one morning, very early, this good Brother came down to my house and asked to see my wife. It was just about daybreak and when she saw him, he said to her, "I have been all the night wrestling with God for your husband's life. We cannot afford to lose our Pastor and I feel sure that he is going to live, so I thought I would just walk here and tell you so," "Thank you, thank you," said my wife, "I am very grateful for your prayers and for your faith." It is not everybody who can pray to God like that! And we fail to obtain the blessings that we seek because we do not pray like that. But, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we were to believe God just as we believe our friends—if we were to give God as much trust as we give to our husbands and our wives—how strong in faith we would be! He deserves a thousand times more confidence than we can ever repose in the very best of our relatives or friends and if we have faith in His promises, we shall certainly overcome Him! If you trust Him, He cannot fail you. It is possible for even a good man to fail one who trusts him, but it is quite impossible for God to fail the soul that has relied upon Him!

I am sure that if we ministers only believe God more and preach more in faith, He will honor us more. I fancy that if God were to give us Pentecostal blessings, it would be seen that many of us are by no means ready to receive them. Suppose there were 5,000 persons converted in one day here, most of the churches round here would say, "There is a shocking state of excitement aver at the Tabernacle. It is really dreadful!" The very "sound" Brethren would feel that we had gone off into Arminianism, or some other error and I expect that some of you would say, very dolefully, "Oh, dear! Dear! Dear! Dear! We do hope they will all stand." The first thought that would be excited in many Christian minds would be one of suspicion! I am sure that if we reported that anywhere in England, 3,000 were brought to know the Lord in one day, there is not one Christian in ten who would believe that such a thing was possible! And there is not one in a hundred who would think that it was true! And we ministers would be very much of the same mind. I was preaching in Bedford, and I prayed that God would bless the sermon and give me at least some few souls that afternoon. When I had done, there was an old Wesleyan Brother there who gave me a good scolding, which I richly deserved. He said to me, "I did not say, 'Amen,' when you were asking for a few souls to be converted, for I thought you were limiting the Holy One of Israel! Why did you not pray with all your heart for *all* of them to be saved. I did," he added, "and that was why I did not say, 'Amen,' to your narrow prayer." It is often the case that we preachers do not honor God by believing that He will give great blessings and, therefore, He does not honor us by giving those great blessings! But if we maintained a closer adherence to the Truth of God and had a firmer confidence that God's Word shall never return unto Him void, He would do far greater things by us than He has ever yet done!

To this sense of our own weakness and our full belief in God, we must add *earnest attention to His Word*. Brother, you cannot expect God to listen to you if you will not listen to Him. And when you ask of God, you must not imagine that He will give to you what you ask of Him if you do not give to Him what he asks of you. If a man loves to sin, his prayers cannot register with the God of Holiness. When God says to a man, "Such-and-such a thing is to be done," and the man says, "I will not do it," the next time he goes to God in prayer, it is very likely that the Lord will say to Him, "As you did not do as I wished, I shall not do as you wish." The toleration of any known sin deprives us of power with God—and the neglect of any known duty prevents a man from succeeding when he is on his knees. If you would prevail with God, you must have "a conscience void of offense." You must go before the Lord confessing your sins and saying, "O Lord, help me to do Your will in all things! I am perfectly willing to do so and I wish to be Your loyal, obedient servant in all things." If you do that, you will find that whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

In addition to all that I have said, *the man who is to prevail with God must be a man who is terribly in earnest*. What an earnest man Jacob

was in that night of wrestling! What a grand utterance that was, "I will not let You go, except You bless me"! Cold prayers do, as it were, ask God *not* to listen to them. When you pray for anything, if you do not present your petition with earnestness and fervor, you cannot expect the Lord to hear you. Some people, when they pray, are like the little boys in the street who give runaway knocks at the door—and off they go! But the man who prays rightly gets a hold of the knocker on the Door of Mercy and he knocks, and knocks, and if there is no answer, he knocks again and again, and if there is not, then, an answer, he knocks again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and the longer he is kept waiting, the more loudly he knocks till, at last, you would think that he was going to carry the house by storm and make the doorposts jump out of their sockets, he knocks so hard! That is the kind of man who wins the day with God—the man who will not let the Lord go until He blesses him! The prayers of John Knox brought down upon Scotland such copious blessings because they were the prayers of a man whose heart was all on fire with sacred earnestness, and who prayed with his whole soul and spirit. Our Lord Jesus, Himself, said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."

To all these qualifications for power with God we must add *holy importunity*. Wrestling is not merely laying hold of a man and then letting him go. I wonder how Jacob did hold that Man who wrestled with him until the breaking of the day? I guarantee you that he had a tight grip on Him and I expect that, sometimes, it was especially leg-work, and then arm-work, and then loin-work, for, when men wrestle in real earnest, all their sinews, muscles, bones and limbs are brought into play. So it must have been with Jacob that night, and he kept on holding the Angel fast, and saying in his soul, if not with his lips—

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

and, therefore, the blessing was given to him because he kept on struggling for it! There are some mercies which never will be bestowed except in answer to continued, importunate prayer. O Brother or Sister, if you know how to keep on pleading, you are the one who has power with God! You will be called Israel if you can spend the whole night in resolute, determined, humble, believing importunity! The blessing must come if you feel that you cannot do without it, because it is for God's Glory that it should be bestowed upon you!

And, dear Friends, there is great power with God when, in importunate prayer, we at last come to *tearful entreaty*. In Hosea 12: 4, the Prophet tells us that Jacob "had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him." Moses does not tell us that in the Book of Genesis, but Hosea also had the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he gives us this interesting item concerning Jacob's wrestling, that, "he wept." I think I see the Patriarch covered with sweat through his great exertions in wrestling, but, in addition, his heart is breaking within him and he is sighing and crying all the while—and the hot tears are falling on the Angel's hands and I think it was the tears that finally

won the victory. You remember that when our Lord Jesus Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane, "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." And the man who knows how to weep, if not actually, yet with real *spiritual* tears—the man whose soul gets stirred up to a passionate agony of desire—is the man who has power with God! If we have any such members in this Church—and I believe that we have many who really do weep over the souls of sinners—they are the men and women who will bring down the blessing in answer to their prayers and tears! Brothers and Sisters, if you are in the habit of weeping over your unconverted children and, in your pleading with God for their salvation, are in the habit of weeping unless the blessing comes, you are sure to get the blessing sooner or later! You are the very strength of the Church! You are the lifeguards of the Church and God will be sure to give innumerable blessings in answer to those prayers and tears of yours! May we have many such Church members, for these are people who have power with God!

IV. I close by briefly noticing TO WHAT USE THIS POWER MAY BE TURNED.

Whenever this power with God is given, *it will bring down many blessings upon the person who has it and it will also make him the means of great blessing to others*. My time has almost gone, so I will only dwell on that second point.

Abraham was a man who had power with God, but there was poor Lot living over in Sodom, just as a great many professed Christians are doing today. I hope they are God's people, but I cannot make them out. They like worldly amusements and they like worldly talk—they are like Lot in Sodom. I wonder how they can endure the foul atmosphere in which they live? I have often said that the Grace of God can live where I could not. There are some people with whom I should not like to live, yet I trust the Grace of God is in them. At least, I hope so, I must not judge them. But, dear Brethren, if ever that part of the Church which is like Lot in Sodom gets a blessing, it must be through you who are like Abraham and have power with God! Pray for your poor inconsistent Brothers and Sisters—entreat the Lord to prevent them from going any further into sin. Ask the Lord that they may not be destroyed with Sodom in the day of His vengeance, and the Lord will hear you, and bring Lot safely out of Sodom, though it may be that Lot will have to lose all that he has and lose his wife, too, before he will get out. You will get him out if you know how to pray for him.

Moses was another man who had power with God. You remember that when the Israelites made the golden calf, the Lord said to Moses, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation." Was not that a wonderful opportunity for Moses? He was to be made into a great nation, and all the rest of the people were to be destroyed. But you recollect how Moses pleaded with the Lord and he did not plead is vain. The Lord said

to him, "Let Me alone, that I may consume them," but it seems as though Moses stood up and grasped God's hand, in which He held His rod of vengeance, and at last the Lord said that He would pardon the nation and spare them in answer to the plea of Moses, the man who had power with God.

And there was Aaron, too, when the plague broke out among the people who had murmured against him and Moses, and thousands were being struck dead. At the command of Moses, he took a censer and filled it with burning coals and incense—and ran into the midst of the congregation just where the death wave had come—"and he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." Aaron, the high priest with his censer, had power with God. The Lord Jesus Christ, Aaron's great Antitype, is continually exercising this power on the behalf of His people, and He also helps some of His servants to do the same work—Martin Luther, to wit. How he seemed to stand with the censer of the Gospel between the living and the dead and, in other dark times and perilous ages, God has raised up many eminent servants to whom He has given that same censer of the Gospel which pours forth a sweet savor of Christ as they also swing it to and fro, standing between the living and the dead! Oh, that God would give power to many of you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in some such way as this! Recollect the power that the early Christians had with God to get Peter out of prison. If you have power with God, it is an engine which you may burn in all manner of ways for the blessing of your fellow Christians and of poor outcast sinners. Therefore I charge you to seek it! And when you get it, hold it fast and walk humbly before God that He may not take this power from you, but may you be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

OUR BANNER
NO. 2979

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

"You have given a banner to those who fear You,
that it may be displayed because of the truth."
Psalm 60:4.

MOST writers upon this Psalm, after having referred the banner to the Kingdom of David, say that there is here a reference to the Messiah. We believe there is. Nor is that reference an obscure allusion. In the Lord Jesus we find the clue to the history and the solution of the prophecy. He is the banner—He is the ensign that is lifted up before the people. He is Jehovah-Nissi, "the Lord My Banner," whom it is our joy to follow and around whom it is our delight to rally. We shall not stay to prove—though we might readily do so—that the banner here intended is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ in the majesty of His Person—in the efficacy of His merit—in the completeness of His righteousness—in the success of His triumph—in the glory of His advent. If you read it with an eye to Him, you have the meaning at once—"You has given Christ as a banner to those who fear You, to be displayed because of the truth." So let us consider our Lord Jesus Christ, first, *as He is compared to a banner.* Secondly, *by whom He is given.* Thirdly, *to whom He is given.* And fourthly, *for what purpose.*

I. Let us consider OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS HE IS COMPARED TO A BANNER.

The banner was far more useful, I suppose, in ancient, than it is in modern warfare. Times have changed and we are changed by them. Yet we still speak with reverence of the old flag. There is much meaning in the phrase, "the flag that's braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze." The soldier still waves the flag of his country and the sailor still looks with patriotic pride to the flag that has so long floated at England's masthead. Our metaphor, perhaps, rather points to ancient than present use.

We should notice, first of all, *that the banner was lifted up and displayed as the point of union.* When a leader was about to gather troops for a war, he hoisted his banner and then every man rallied to the standard. The coming to the standard, the rallying round the banner, was the joining with the prince, the espousing of his cause. In the day of battle, when there was always a likelihood that the host would be put to flight, the valiant men all fought around the banner. Its defense was of the first and chief consequence. They might leave the baggage for a while—they might forsake the smaller flags of the divisions—but the

great blood-red banner that with prayer had been consecrated—they must all gather round it, and there, if necessary, shed their heart's blood.

Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, is the point of union for all the soldiers of the Cross! I know of no other place where all Christians can meet. We cannot all meet—I am sorry that we cannot—at the baptismal stream. There are some who will not be baptized—they still persist in the sin of putting drops of water in the place of the ordained flood and bringing infants where faith is required. We cannot all meet even around the table of the Eucharist—there are some who thrust aside their brethren because they do not see eye to eye with them. And even the Communion Table has sometimes become a field of battle. But all Christians can meet in the Person of Christ! All true hearts can meet in the work of Christ! This is a banner that we all love, if we are Christians, and far from it are those who are not. Here to Your Cross, O Jesus, do we come! The Churchman laden with his many forms and vestments. The Presbyterian with his stern Covenant, and his love of those who stained the heather with their blood. The Independent with his passion for liberty and the separateness of the free churches. The Methodist with his intricate forms of Church Government, sometimes forms of bondage, but still forms of power. The Baptist, remembering his ancient pedigree and the days in which his fathers were hounded even by Christians, themselves, and counted not worthy of that name—they all come to Christ! Various opinions divide them. They do not see eye to eye on many matters. Here and there they will have a skirmish for the old landmarks and rightly so, for we ought to be jealous, as Josiah was, to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, and neither decline to the right hand nor to the left. But we rally to the Cross of Christ! And there all weapons of national warfare being cast aside, we meet as Brothers, fellow comrades in a blessed Evangelical Alliance who are prepared to suffer and to die for His dear sake! Forward then, Christians, to the point of union! In the crusade against the powers of darkness, with the salvation of sinners for my one undivided aim, little care I for anything but the lifting up of my Master's Gospel and the proclamation of the Word of mercy through His flowing blood!

Again, the banner, *in time of war, was the great guide-star*; it was the direction to the soldier. You remember what special care they took, in the day of battle, that in case the standard-bearer should fall, there might still be some means of guiding the warriors.

So, to this day, Christ is the great Guide of the Christian in the day of battle. There is no fear that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever, will ever fail. Fix your eyes upon Him, Christian, and if you would know the best way to fight, fight in His footsteps, imitate His every action, let your life be a copy of His life! You need never stop to ask for directions—the life of Christ is the Christian's model. You need not turn to your fellow Believer and ask, "Comrade, what are we to do now? The smoke of battle gathers and the cries are various. Which way shall I go?" The Apostle Paul has given us our directions—"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the

Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God." Press forward, in Christ's footsteps, saying, "God has given You, my Savior, to be to me a banner because of the truth."

In these two respects, as the central point for rallying, and as the direction to the warrior, Christ is our banner!

And the *banner*, let it be remembered, *is always the chief object of attack*. The moment the adversary sees it, his objective is to strike there. If it is not the most vulnerable point, it will be at least the point where the adversary's power is most felt. Did they not of old aim their shots at the flagstaff so as to cut down the banner? Whenever the old Knights of the Red Cross fought the Saracens, they always endeavored to make their steel ring upon the helmet of the man whose hand held the standard of Mohammed! The fight was always fiercest around the standard. Sometimes, when the battle was over, the field would be strewn with legs, and arms, and mangled bodies, but, in one place there would be a heap where they were piled one upon another—a great mountain of flesh and armor, broken bones and smashed skulls—and one would ask, "What does this means? How came all this carnage is here? Why are they so trampled, one upon another, and in pools of human blood?" The answer would be, "'Twas there the standard-bearer stood, and first the adversary made a dash, and stole the banner, and then 50 knights vowed to redeem it, and they dashed against their foes and took it by storm. And then again, hand to hand, they fought with the banner between them, first in one hand and then in another, changing ownership each hour."

So, dear Friends, Christ Jesus has always been the object of attack! You remember that when Divine Justice came forth against Christ on Calvary, it made five tears in the great Banner, and those five wounds, all glorious, are still in that Banner! Since that day, many a shot has sought to riddle it, but not one has been able to touch it! Borne aloft, first by one hand and then by another, the mighty God of Jacob being the strength of the standard-bearers, that Banner has bidden defiance to the leaguered hosts of the world, the flesh and the devil! And never has it been trailed in the mire, and never once carried in jeering triumph by the adversary! Blessed are the tears in the Banner, for they are the symbol of our victory! Those five wounds in the Person of the Savior are the gates of Heaven to us! But, thank God, there are no more wounds to be endured—the Person of our Lord is safe forever. "A bone of Him shall not be broken." His Gospel, too, is an unwounded Gospel and His mystical body is uninjured. Yes, the Gospel is unharmed after all the strife of ages. The infidel threatens to rend the Gospel to pieces, but it is as glorious as ever! Modern skepticism has sought to pull it thread from thread, but has not been able so much as to rend a fragment of it! Every now and then, fresh adversaries have found out some new methods of induction or declamation, attempting to prove the Gospel to be a lie, and Christ an impostor. Have they succeeded? No, verily, they have all had to fly from the field. The good old Banner of the Lord Omnipotent, even Christ Jesus, still stands exact above them all!

And why should the banner be the object of attack but for this very reason, that *it is the symbol of defiance*? As soon as ever the banner is lifted up, it is, as it were, flaunted in the face of the foe. It seems to say to him, "Do your worst, come on! We are not afraid of you—we defy you!" So, when Christ is preached, there is a defiance given to the enemies of the Lord. Every time a sermon is preached in the power of the Spirit, it is as though the shrill clarion woke up the fiends of Hell for such a sermon to say to them, "Christ is come forth again to deliver His lawful captives out of your power! The King of kings has come to take away your dominions, to wrest from you your stolen treasures, and to proclaim Himself your Master." There is a stern joy which the minister sometimes feels when he thinks of himself as the antagonist of the powers of Hell. Martin Luther seems to have felt it when he said, "Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm and let the devil do his worst!" That was lifting up the standard of the Cross! If you want to defy the devil, don't go about preaching philosophy! Don't sit down and write out fine sermons with long sentences, three quarters of a mile in length! Don't try and cull fine, smooth phrases that will sound sweetly in people's ears. The devil doesn't care a bit for this! But talk about Christ! Preach about the suffering of the Savior! Tell sinners that there is life in a look at Him and straightway the devil takes great offense.

Look at many of the ministers in London! They preach in their pulpits from the first of January to the last of December—and nobody finds fault with them because they prophesy such smooth things. But let a man preach Christ! Let him exclaim about the power of Jesus to save and press home Gospel Truths with simplicity and boldness—straightaway the fiends of darkness will be against him and, if they cannot bite, they will show that they can howl and bark! There is a symbol of defiance in the banner of the Cross—it is God's symbol of defiance, His gauntlet thrown down to the confederated powers of Darkness—a gauntlet which they dare not take up, for they know what tremendous power for good there is in the uplifting of the Cross of Christ! Wave, then, your banner, O you soldiers of the Cross! Each in your place and rank keep watch, but still wave your banner, for though the adversary shall be full of wrath, it is because he knows that his time is short when once the Cross of Christ is lifted up!

We have not quite exhausted the metaphor yet. *The banner was always a source of consolation to the wounded*. There he lies, the good knight. Right well has he fought without fear and without reproach, but a chance arrow pierced the joints of his harness and his life is oozing out from the ghastly wound. There is no one there to unbuckle his helmet, or give him a draught of cool water. His frame is locked up in that hard case of steel and though he feels the pain, he cannot gain relief. He hears the mingled cries, the hoarse shouts of men that rush in fury against their fellows and he opens his eyes—as yet he has not fainted from his bleeding. Where, do you think, does he look? He turns himself round. What is he looking for? For friend? For comrades? No. Should they come to him, he would say, "Just lift me up and let me sit against that tree, but you go to the fight." Where is that restless eye searching and what is

the object for which it is looking? Yes, he has it! And the face of the dying man is brightened. He sees the banner still waving and with his last breath he cries, "On! On! On!" and falls asleep content because the banner is safe. It has not been cast down. Though he has fallen, yet the banner is secure!

Even so, every true soldier of the Cross rejoices in its triumph! We fall, but Christ does not! We die, but the cause prospers! As I have told you before, when my heart was most sad—as it never was before nor since—that sweet text, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name," quite cheered my soul and set me again in peace and comfort. Is Jesus safe? Then it never matters what becomes of me! Is the banner all right? Does it wave on high? Then the adversary has not won the day! He has felled one and another, but he, himself, shall be broken in pieces, for the banner still shine in the sun!

And, lastly, the banner is the emblem of victory. When the fighting is over and the soldier comes home, what does he bring? His blood-stained flag. And what is borne highest in the procession as it winds through the streets? It is the flag. They hang it in the church—high up there on the roof, where the incense smokes, and where the song of praise ascends—there hangs the banner, honored and esteemed, borne in conflict and in danger. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ shall be our Banner in the last day and when all our foes shall be under our feet! A little while and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry. A little while, and we shall see—

"Jehovah's banner furled,
Sheathed His sword; He speaks! 'Tis done,
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son."

And then Jesus, high above us all, shall be exalted! And through the streets of the holy city, the acclamations shall ring, "Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!"

II. Let us turn to our second point for a few moments. It is this—Who gave us this Banner? BY WHOM WAS CHRIST GIVEN TO US?

Soldiers often esteem the colors for the sake of the person who first bestowed them. You and I ought greatly to esteem our precious Christ for the sake of God who gave Him to us—"You have given a Banner to those who fear You." God gave us this Banner in old eternity. Christ was given by the eternal Father, from everlasting, before the earth was, to His elect people, to be the Messiah of God, the Savior of the world! He was given in the manger, when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He was given upon the Cross when the Father bestowed every drop of His Son's blood, and every nerve of His body, and every power of His soul to bleed and die, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "*You* have given a banner."

That Banner was given to each one of us in the day of our conversion. Christ became, from that time forth, our glory and our boast. And He is given to some of us, especially, when we are called to the ministry, or when the Holy Spirit's guidance puts us upon any extraordinary work for Christ. Then is the banner, in a direct and especial manner, committed

to our care. There are some here who have had this Banner given to them to carry in the midst of the Sunday school. A dear Sister here has it. A beloved Brother has it to bear in the midst of many of this congregation. The young men of our College, of our Evening Classes, and many others of you, workers for Christ, have that Banner, that you may bear it in the streets, that you may lift up the name of Jesus in the causeways, and in the places of assembly. And, in a certain measure, all of you who love the Lord, have that Banner given to you, that in your various spheres of service you may talk of Jesus and lift up His holy name!

Now, inasmuch as God Himself gives us this Banner, with what reverence should we look upon it, with what ardor should we cluster round it, with what zeal should we defend it, with what enthusiasm should we follow it, with what faith and confidence should we rush even into death, itself, for its defense!

III. Thirdly, TO WHOM IS THIS BANNER GIVEN? The text says, "You have given a banner to those who fear You." Not to all men. God has a chosen people. These chosen people are known, in due time, by their outward character. That outward Divine Grace-worked character is this—they fear God, *and they that fear God are the only persons who ought to carry this banner*. Shall the banner be put into a drunkard's hands? Shall the great Truth of Christ be left to those who live in sin? Oh, it is a wretched thing when men come into the pulpit to preach who have never known and felt the power of the Gospel! Time was—but times are changed somewhat—when, in multitudes of our parish pulpits, men whose characters were unhallowed, preached to others what they never practiced themselves! To such, the banner ought not to be given! Men must fear God, or else they are not worthy to bear it.

Moreover, *none but these can bear it.* What others bear is not the banner—it is but an imitation of it. It is not Christ they preach—it is a diluted thing that is not the Gospel of Jesus. They cannot proclaim it to others till they know it themselves! It is given to them that fear God because they will have courage to bear it. Fear is often the mother of courage. To fear God makes a man brave. To fear man is cowardly, I grant, but to fear God with humble awe and holy reverence is such a noble passion that I would we were more and more full thereof, blending, as it were, the fear of Isaac with the faith of Abraham! To fear God will make the weakest of us play the man, and the most cowardly of us become heroes for the Lord our God!

Now, inasmuch as this banner is given to those that fear God, *if you fear God, it is given to you*. I do not know in what capacity you are to bear it, but I do know there is somewhere or other where you have to carry it. Mother, let the banner wave in your household! Merchant, let the banner be fixed upon your house of business. Let it be unfurled and fly at your masthead, O sailor! Bear the banner, O soldier, in your regiment! Yours is a stern duty, for, alas, the Christian soldier has a path of briar that few men have trod. God make you faithful and may you be honored as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! Some of you are poor and work hard in the midst of many artisans who fear not God. Take your banner with you

and never be ashamed of your colors. You cannot be long in a workshop before your companions will pull their colors out. They will soon begin talking to you about their sinful pleasures, their amusements, perhaps their infidel principles. Take your banner out likewise. Tell them that it is a game two can play at—never allow a man to show his banner without also showing yours! Do not do it ostentatiously—do it humbly—but do it earnestly and sincerely. Remember that your banner is one that you never need be ashamed of—the best of men have fought under it! No, He who was God as well as Man has His own name written on it! Surely, then, you need not be ashamed to wave it anywhere and everywhere. You can think bravely—now be great in action as you have been in thought—

"Presence of mind and courage in distress
Are more than armies to procure success."

IV. This is our last question, FOR WHAT PURPOSE WAS THIS BANNER GIVEN TO US?

Our text is very explicit upon that point—it was given to us to be "*displayed because of the truth*." It is to be *displayed*. In order to display a banner, you must take it out of its case. Members of this congregation, Brothers and Sisters in the Church, I pray you study the Scriptures much. I would not have men attempt to preach unless they have some power. To go forth without some study would be like a man attempting to do execution with a gun that had much powder in it and no shot. Young men, save your spare hours to study the Bible. Steal them from your sleep if you cannot get them any other way. Sunday school teachers, be diligent in your preparations for your classes. Let your banner out of the case. It is of little service lifting it up in the midst of the ranks without its being unfurled. See that you know the holy art of unfurling it. Practice it! Study it! Be well acquainted with Him who is the wisdom of God and the power of God!

And, *after the flag is unfurled, it needs to be lifted up*. So, in order to display Christ, you must lift Him up. Lift Him up with a clear voice, as one who has something to say which he would have men hear. Speak of Him boldly, as one who is not ashamed of His message. Speak affectionately, speak passionately, speak with your whole soul—let your whole heart be in every word you say, for this is to lift up the banner!

But, besides lifting up the banner, *you must carry it*, for it is the business of the standard-bearer, not merely to hold it in one place, but to bear it here and there if the plan of battle shall change. So, bear Christ to the poor lodging houses, to the workhouses, to the prisons, if you can get admittance, to the back streets, to the dark slums, to the cellars, to the solitary attic, to the crowded rooms, to the highways and the byways! And you especially who are private Christians and not preachers, bear it from house to house! We had a complaint, the other day, that some of you had been going from house to house to try and talk to others about their souls. You had entrenched upon the parochial bounds of the authored gamekeeper! I pray you to entrench again! What is *my* parish? The whole world is my parish! Let the whole world be your parish likewise! What does it matter to us if the world is parceled out among men who probably do little or nothing? Let us do all we can! No man has

any right to say to me, "Visit in such-and-such a district, not here—this is my ground." Who gave it to you? Who gave him lordship of the world, or any portion of it? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." The earth is your field and no matter upon whose district, territory, or parish! Let me encourage you who love the Savior, you who have the pure Gospel, to go and spread it! Let nothing confine you, or limit your labors, except your strength and your time!

Still, after all, if we carry the Gospel and lift up the banner, *it will never be displayed unless there is wind to blow it.* A banner would only hang like a dead flag upon the staff if there were no wind. We cannot produce the wind to expand the banner, but we can invoke heavenly aid. Prayer becomes a prophecy when we say, "Awake, O heavenly wind, and blow, and let this banner be displayed." The Holy Spirit is that gracious wind who shall make the Truth of God apparent in the hearts of those who hear it. Display the banner, talk of Christ, live Christ, proclaim Christ everywhere! He is given to you for this very purpose. Therefore, let not your light be hid under a bushel. "You are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men." Let the old flag be held up by firm hands. Go forth in new times, with new resolves, and may you have constant renewing as new opportunities open before you!

Oh, but are there not some of you who could not bear this banner? Let me invite such to come and take shelter under it. My Master's banner, wherever it goes, gives liberty! Under the banner of old England, there never breathes a slave. They tread our country, they breathe our air and their shackles fall! Beneath the banner of Christ, no slave can live. Do but look up to Jesus, relying upon His suffering in your place, and bearing your sins in your place and forthwith you shall have acceptance in the Beloved! And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. So may God enlist you beneath the banner, to His Glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GENESIS 32; PSALM 119:33-40.

Genesis 32:1. *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.* What an encouragement the visit of these angels must have been to Jacob after the strife which he had had with Laban! But, dear Friends, angels often come to meet us, though we know it not. As in the old classic story, the poor man said, "This is a plain hut, but God has been here," so we may say of every Christian's cottage, "Though it is poor, an angel has come here," for David says, "The Angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." As the angels of God met Jacob, I trust that if you have come here after some stern battle, trial and difficulty, you may find the angels of God meeting you here. They do come into the assemblies of the saints. Paul tells us that the woman ought to have her head covered in the assembly "because of the angels," that is, because they are there to see that all things are done decently and in order.

2. *And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.* He gave it a name to commemorate God's having sent the angels and called it, "two camps" or, "two hosts."

3. *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.* He is out of one trouble with Laban—now he is into another with Esau. Well did John Bunyan say—

"A Christian man is seldom long at ease;
When one trouble's gone, another does him seize."

4, 5. *And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall you speak unto my lord Esau, Your servant Jacob says thus, I have adjourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.* This is very respectful language, and rather submissive, too. But when a man knows that he has done wrong to another, he ought to be prepared to humble himself to the injured individual and, though it happened long ago, yet Jacob really had injured his brother Esau. So it was but right that in meeting him again, he should put himself into a humble position before him. There are some proud people who, when they know that they have done wrong, yet will not admit it. And it is very hard to end a quarrel when one will not yield and the other feels that he will not, either. But there is good hope of things going right when Jacob, who is the better of the two brothers, is also the humbler of the two.

6, 7. *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We went to your brother Esau, and also he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.* And well he might be, for an angry brother, with four hundred fierce followers, must mean mischief!

7, 8. *And he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau comes to the one company, and smites it, then the other company which is left shall escape.* This is characteristic of Jacob. He was a man of plans and arrangements, a man of considerable craftiness which some people, nowadays, call, "prudence." He used means and he sometimes used them a little too much. Perhaps he did so in this case, but, at the same time, he was a man of faith and, therefore, he betook himself to prayer.

9-12. *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant, for with my staff I passed over the Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the seas which cannot be numbered for multitude.* A prayer most humble, most direct in its petitions, and also full of faith. That was a grand argument for him to use—"You said, I will surely do you good." This is one of the mightiest pleas that we can urge

in praying to God—"Do as You have said. Remember Your word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." O Brothers and Sisters, if you can remind God of His own promise, you will win the day, for promised mercies are sure mercies—

"As well might He His being quit,
As break His promise, or forget."

"Has He said, and shall He not do it?" Only for this will He be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and we must take care that we call His promise to mind and plead it at the Mercy Seat.

13-21. *And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewe, and twenty rams, thirty milch camel with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space between drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, saying, 'Whose are you? And where are you going? And whose are these before you? Then you shall say, They are your servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall you speak unto Esau, when you find him. And say we moreover, Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.* If Jacob had been true to his faith in God, he would have dispensed with these very prudent preparations, for, after all, the faithfulness of God was Jacob's best defense! It was from God that his safety came—not from his own plotting, planning and scheming. There are some of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have minds that are naturally given to inventions, devices, plans and plots—and I believe that where this is the case, you have more to battle against than those have who are of an ample mind and who cast themselves more entirely upon the Lord. It is a blessed thing to be such a fool that you do not know anyone to trust in except your God. It is a sweet thing to be so weaned from your wisdom that you fall into the arms of God.

Yet, if you do feel that it is right to make such plans as Jacob made, take care that you do what Jacob also did. Pray as well as plan and if your plans are numerous, let your prayers be all the more fervent, lest the natural tendency of your constitution should degenerate into reliance upon the arm of flesh and dependence upon your own wisdom, instead of absolute reliance upon God.

22-24. *And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.* It was the Man Christ Jesus putting on the form of Manhood before the time when He would actually be Incarnate! And

the wrestling seems to have been more on His side than on Jacob's, for it is not said that *Jacob* wrestled, but that "there wrestled a Man with him." There was something that needed to be taken out of Jacob—his strength and his craftiness—and this Angel came to get it out of him. But, on the other hand, Jacob spied his opportunity and, finding the Angel wrestling with him, he in his turn began to wrestle with the angel.

25. *And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him.* So that he was made painfully to realize his own weakness while he was putting forth all his strength!

26. *And He said, let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.* Bravely said, O Jacob! And you sons of Jacob, learn to say the same! You may have what you will if you can speak thus to the Covenant Angel, "I will not let You go, except You bless me."

27, 28. *And He said unto him, what is your name? And he said Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob.* "The supplanter."

28. *But Israel.* "A prince of God."

28, 29. *For as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name.* That has often been the request of God's people—they have wanted to know God's wondrous name. The Jews superstitiously believe that we have lost the sound of the name of Jehovah—that the name is altogether unpronounceable. We think not so, but certainly, no man knows the *Nature* of God, and understands Him but he to whom the Son shall reveal Him. Perhaps Jacob's request had somewhat of curiosity in it, so the Angel would not grant it.

29. *And He said, why is it that you ask after My name. And He blessed him there.* He did not give him what he asked for, but He gave him something better and, in like manner, if the Lord does not open up a dark doctrine to you, but gives you a bright privilege, that will be better for you!

30-32. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew which shrank.*

Psalm 119:33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes.* The Psalmist is constantly talking about "the way." We have that expression in the 27th verse, then in the 29th , the 30th and the 32nd –and now again we have it here—"Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes."

33, 34. *And I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your Law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* That is not true or right understanding which permits us to go into sin. Those who are really wise in heart hate evil and love righteousness.

35. *Make me to go in the path.* Or, way—

35. *Of Your commandment; for therein do I delight.* "Make me to go." Not only show me the way, but make me to go, like a nurse does with a child when she puts her hands under its arms and strengthens its tottering footsteps. This is a very beautiful expression—"Make me to go." Lord, we are very weak. We are like little children. Make us to go in the path of Your commandments, for therein do we delight.

36. *Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.* The heart must love something—it will either love that which is good, or that which is evil. "O Lord," the Psalmist seems to pray, "incline my heart in the right direction. Make it lean towards that which is good. Cause me to count Your Grace better than all the riches of the world."

37. *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.* "Do not let me even look at it, for one may look at an ugly thing until the sense of its deformity gradually disappears and it becomes attractive. Lord, never let me so fix my eyes upon sin that, at last, I come to reckon it a desirable thing."

37. *And quicken You me in Your way.* "A man who travels quickly has not time to stop and look at the things in the road. Lord, let me go so fast to Heaven that when the devil hangs his baubles in his shop window, I may not have time even to stop and look at them! Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity and quicken You me in Your way.'"

38. *Establish Your word unto Your servant, who is devoted to Your fear.* That is, "Make Your word to me real and true. Put away my natural skepticism, my proneness to question, my tendency to doubt." "Establish Your word." "Make me to know how firm, how true, how real it is, for I would love it more and more. I do believe it, for I am devoted to Your fear, but I long to be still further established in the faith."

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear.* Are any of you fearing reproach? If so, you may well fear it, for you deserve it. Yet, even then, you may ask the Lord to turn it away from you.

39, 40. *For Your judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.* Some people whom I know long after the promises, and others long after the doctrines. I hope that they will all get an equal longing for the precepts, for true Believers love the precepts as much as they love the promises or the doctrines. "Behold, I have longed after Your precepts."

40. *Quicken me in Your righteousness.*

—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 LIFT FOR THE PROSTRATE
NO. 2980

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 1906.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1875.**

"And he (that is, Jesus) came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Mark 1:31.

PETER'S wife's mother was sick of a very terrible fever. It was no ordinary one, such as, we are told, is common in the district when she lived, but "Luke, the beloved physician," as Paul calls the Evangelist, tells us that "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever." You know that it is the nature of fever to leave the patient prostrate even when the disease departs, but Jesus Christ not only intended to heal Peter's wife's mother and to heal her at once, but He also meant that she should be so completely cured that she should have no lingering prostration. Christ's cures are always perfect cures, not partial ones! He does not cause the fever to go and permit the prostration to remain—He takes away both the fever and the prostration!

It is possible that the poor patient had almost given up all hope of recovery and, probably those who were around her would also have despaired if they had not had faith in the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was, therefore, for her encouragement and for theirs, also, that our Lord bent over the bed where the fevered woman lay, took her by the hand, thus cheering her by showing that He was not afraid to come into contact with her and then, gently lifted her up. And she, yielding to the kindly gesture, rose and sat up—no, not merely sat up, but left the bed, being so perfectly restored that she began at once to minister to them as the housewife whose duty it was to care for their comfort!

I hope that there are many in this congregation whom Jesus Christ means to bless, who are, at present, in a state of utter prostration. They are so despondent that their spirits sink almost to the point of despair. They cannot believe that there is mercy for them—they have relinquished all hope of that. They did, at one time, have some measure of hope, but it is all gone. They are in the prostrate condition of Peter's mother-in-law and they need Christ to do for them the two things which He did for her. First, *He came into contact with her* and, secondly, *He gently lifted her up and completely restored her*. May He do the same for you!

I. Our first concern, in looking after prostrate souls, is to tell them that JESUS CHRIST COMES INTO CONTACT WITH THEM.

You think, my poor distressed Friend, that Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with you. You have read and heard about Him, but He

seems to you to be a long way off and you cannot reach Him. Neither does it seem at all probable to you that He will ever come your way and look with pity upon you. Now, listen.

In the first place, *Jesus Christ has come into contact with you*, for you are a member of the human race of which Jesus Christ also became a member by His Incarnation. Never forget that! While it is perfectly true that Christ "is over all, God blessed forever," yet it is equally true that He deigned to be born into this world as the Infant of an earthly mother, and that He condescended to live here under the same conditions as the rest of us—suffering the same weakness, sickness, sorrow and death as we do—for our sakes. Never think of Jesus, I pray you, as though He were only a spirit, at whose Presence you have cause to be alarmed! But think of Him as a man like yourselves, eating and drinking as others did—not a recluse, shutting Himself away from sinners—but living as a Man among men, the perfect specimen of Manhood, the Man, Christ Jesus, for thus He has come near to you! You would not be afraid to speak to one of your fellow men—then do not be afraid to speak to Jesus! Tell Him all the details of your case, for He was never a Man of a proud and haughty spirit. He was not one who said, "Stand by, for I am holier than you!" No, He was a man with a great heart of love. He was so full of attractiveness that even children came and clustered around His feet! And when His disciples would have driven them away, He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God." He never repelled even the very worst of mankind when they approached Him—He longed to gather them to Himself. He wept over the guilty city of Jerusalem and said, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not!" Come, then, distressed spirit, and see, in the very fact that Jesus is Immanuel, God With Us, that He has come near to you and laid His hand upon you!

"Ah," you say, "I can comprehend that He has come near to *men*, but then, I am not merely a man, but a sinful man." Yes, and *Jesus has come near to sinful men* and His name is called Jesus because He is the Savior from sin! His work in this world was not to seek saints, but, "to seek and to save that which was lost." My Master's errand was not to the good, the excellent, the righteous, but to the evil, the unholy, the unrighteous! He said, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If He did not come to save sinners, why did He comes as a Sacrifice? Sacrifice is only required where there is sin—an Atonement is only needed where there is guilt! Christ comes to you, a guilty sinner, and He lays His hand upon you, even as He laid it upon Peter's wife's mother when she was sick of that great fever!

Do I hear you say, as in a whisper—as if you were afraid that anyone else might hear you, that you are not only a sinner, but a great sinner—that you have sinned beyond the ordinary guilt of the common mass of mankind—that there are some points in which the crimson of your guilt is of a deeper dye than that of any other man? My Friend, let me assure you that *Jesus Christ came to save the chief of sinners*. Do you see Him

on the Cross, enduring those indescribable pangs of death? Can you hear His death cries and that soul-piercing shriek, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and still think that such a death as that was on behalf of little sinners' trifling offenses, mere peccadilloes or mistakes? Ah, no! the Son of God came to give His life a Ransom for many great sins and many great sinners! The grandeur of the Atonement of Christ is a proof that its objective was the removal of sin, however great that sin may be! The Son of God is Himself the Savior of sinners! There must, therefore, be a colossal greatness about sin to need the *Son of God* to remove it, and to need that the Son of God *should die* before the more than Herculean labor of putting sin away could be performed. But, having put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself, He is now able to save even the greatest of sinners.

That Jesus has come into contact with great sinners is very clear, or, as you read the record of His life, you see that His preaching was constantly aimed at just such characters. If you take a survey of *His usual congregations, you will discover that they were largely made up of such characters*. The Pharisees said, with contempt, but no doubt with truth, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Just at that very time, we have the record, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him." His preaching evidently attracted them and He never seems to have been surprised that it did, nor to have expressed His disgust that He should have drawn around Him such a low and degraded class of hearers! No, but on the contrary, He said that He was sent to seek lost sheep till He found them, and to welcome the wandering prodigal when He came back to His Father's house. Our Lord Jesus Christ, from the character of His congregation and the tone of His preaching, evidently came to this world on purpose to come into contact with the very worst of sinners! I want you to realize, dear Friend, that my Lord Jesus Christ is a Man, and that He is not a Man who has come to look for congenial companions who might be worthy to be numbered among His acquaintances—He has come to look after uncongenial men and women to whom He may bring the blessings of salvation! He has come not to be ministered unto, but to minister—not to receive, but to bestow blessings. His purpose in being here, in this world, is not to pick out, here and there, a noble and notable character, but to seek after souls that need His Grace and to come to them and bless and save them! So He has, in this respect, come near to you!

Remember that commission of His, which He gave to His disciples a little while before He went back to Heaven—"Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." On another occasion, after His Resurrection, He reminded them "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." That is, beginning at the very place where the people lived who had crucified Him! "Begin where they live who have stained their hands with My blood. Begin with them and then go to every other creature in the whole world, and say to sinners in every part of the globe, 'Whoever believes on the Son of God has everlasting life." In giving that

commission, our Lord Jesus Christ reached His hand across the centuries that He might touch you—and I have come here to obey His commission by preaching the Gospel to you, for you are included in the term, "every creature." So Jesus Christ comes into contact with you through the preaching of His Word at this very moment!

There is one solemn thought that I should like you to think of. It is this—having entered this House of Prayer and having heard the Gospel, as you will have done before this service is over, *the Lord Jesus Christ has so come into contact with you that you will never lose the impress*ion *of that contact, whether you are lost or saved*. If you are lost, you will have the additional guilt of having rejected Him—neither can you ever clear yourself of that guilt, do what you may. Your ears have heard the Word of God so that if you do not receive it, you will be numbered among those to whom the Gospel came, but who judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life—like some of those to whom the Apostle Paul preached and, therefore—it shall condemn you. For, to everybody who hears the Gospel there is a savor in it—to some, it is a savor of death unto death—and to others a savor of life unto life. There is not a man, woman, or child who has understanding enough to know what we mean by preaching the Gospel, who will be able to go out of this House of Prayer without receiving some token of contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. Either His blood will be upon you to save you, or else there will be realized in you that dreadful curse which the Jews invoked upon themselves, "His blood be on us, and on our children," which abides upon them as a curse unto this day! You shall either be cleansed from guilt by the blood of Jesus, or else you shall be guilty of rejecting Him—and so putting yourselves in the same category as the Jews who rejected Him and who nailed Him to the accursed tree. One way or other, you can be sure of this, "The Kingdom of God is come unto you." It is a solemn fact to have to state this, but so it is. Jesus Christ has, in some way or other, put His hand upon you and He is now in contact with you.

II. Leaving that point, however, I feel joy in passing on to the next one. When Jesus grasped the hand of Peter's wife's mother, HE THEN BEGAN TO GENTLY LIFT HER UP. She, willingly enough, responded to His touch and, by at once recommencing her household duties, proved that she was perfectly healed!

Now, there are some poor, prostrate, desponding souls, who need somebody to give them a lift. And I would that the Lord, even while I am preaching, might take some of you by the hand and lift you up. My objective will be to mention a few things which may help to give you a lift. You need to be saved. You long to be saved, but you fear that you never will be, and it is that very fear which keeps you from being saved! If you could but hope, your hope would be realized—but you do not feel as if you dared even to hope! Now, give me your hand and let me try to give you a lift.

First, *remember that others who were very like what you now are, have been saved*. Do you not know some people who used to be very much in the condition in which you are at the present moment? If you do not, then find out the nearest Christian friend among your acquaintances—

tell him what you regard as the peculiarity of your condition—and I feel almost certain that he will say to you, "Why, that is not anything peculiar! That is just how I was before I found the Savior." If you do not find it so with the first Christian person whom you meet, you ought not to be surprised, because, of course, all Christians are not alike, but I feel sure that you will not have talked to many Christian people before you will find that what you consider to be very remarkable peculiarities in yourself will turn out to have been very common, for a great many other people have been in exactly the same state! I challenge you, who are very despondent, to see whether you cannot find some who once were as you now are, who have been saved—and when you do find them, the reasoning is very clear. If A is saved, and B is like A, then why should not B also be saved?

"Ah," you say, "I have very few Christian acquaintances of whom I can make enquiry." Very well, then, I will give you another simple test. *Take your Bible and look up the cases of conversion and see whether the saved ones were not very much like you now are.* And if that should not satisfy you, turn to the various promises that the Lord Jesus has made to seeking sinners and see whether there is not one that is suited to such a sinner as you are. I think that you cannot go far in an honest examination of the promises of the Gospel without saying, "Well, now, it really does look as if I could squeeze in there. At any rate, I think that description exactly meets my case." I should not be surprised if you meet with some text, of which you will say, "Why, that looks as if it had been written entirely for me! It is such an accurate description of my forlorn condition." Well, then, if you find that Christ has invited such sinners as you are, and that according to the Inspired record, He has saved such as you are, why should not you also have hope? Have you been a thief? Remember that—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day.
And there may you, though vile as he,
Wash all your sins away!"

Have you been a sinner in a more immodest sense? Remember that there was a woman who was "a sinner" in that very sense, who washed Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Have you been a swearer? I should think that Simon Peter had been a great swearer before he was converted, or else he would not have used oaths and curses so freely when he denied his Master! Yet, in spite of that old habit breaking out again, Simon Peter was not only saved, but he became one of the most useful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ! I might continue to mention all sorts of sinners and say to you, "Such a one as you now are has been saved, and has gone to Heaven—is not that a lift for you?" I pray the Lord to make it so! Others like you have been saved, so why should not you, also, be saved? Therefore, be of good courage, poor prostrate sinner!

Let me give you another lift. *Salvation is all of Divine Grace.* That is to say, it is altogether of God's free favor. God does not save any man because there is anything in him that deserves salvation. The Lord saves

whomever He wills to save! This is one of His grand prerogatives of which He is very firm. His own declaration is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And Paul's conclusion from that declaration is, "So then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." Well, now, if it is God's will to bestow His mercy upon sinners according to His own Sovereign Grace in Christ Jesus, irrespective of anything good in them, why should He not show mercy to you? You have been looking for some reason in yourself why He should show mercy to you, but you cannot find any such reason—and I can tell you that there never was any reason in sinners, themselves, why God should save them! He has always saved them for reasons known only to Himself which He has never revealed—and which He tells us He will not reveal. He asks, like the householder in the parable, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" And so He will! No man has any right to salvation. We have all forfeited all claims of merit, so, when the Lord gives His mercy, He gives it wherever He pleases. Why, then, should He not give it to you as well as to anybody else?

I may also remind you that *faith in Jesus Christ always saves the soul*—simply trusting Him, as we were singing just now—

"Only trust Him! Only trust Him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you! He will save you!
He will save you now!"

There have been a great many who have put this to the test and they have found that faith in Christ has saved them. There are some people, nowadays, who tell us that this is immoral doctrine—they say that we ought to preach up good works. We *do* preach up good works in the most forcible manner, for we say that faith in Jesus Christ prevents men from living in sin! We do not preach good works as a requirement of salvation. That would be as foolish as children who take flowers and stick them in the ground, and say, "Oh, what a beautiful garden we have!" We plant the seeds of the flowers, or the roots of the flowers of Grace, for faith in Jesus Christ is the seed and the root of virtue—and he that believes in Jesus Christ is saved, not merely from the punishment of sin, but from the sin itself—from the power of sin, from the habit of sin! If it is still said that this is immoral doctrine, let the thousands of men and women who have been saved from drunkenness, lasciviousness and profanity by simply believing in Jesus, rise up and enter their solemn protest against the wicked charge that there is anything immoral in this teaching! Immoral doctrine? Why, it has brought *millions* to Christ and millions to Heaven! If this Doctrine could truly be called immoral, then God, Himself, might be charged with being immoral, for this Gospel assuredly came from Him and it is nothing short of blasphemy to call it immoral! Hear this Gospel, Sinner! You have no good works and you will never have any until you repent of sin and trust the Lord Jesus Christ! If you try to have any, they will all break down because the motive at the back of those supposed good works will be this—you will do them in the hope of thereby saving yourself. What is that but sheer selfishness—dead selfishness, which cannot be acceptable with God? But, Sirs, if you will

only trust the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall receive the immediate pardon of your sin and with that pardon will come heartfelt gratitude to Him who gives you the pardon! And with that gratitude will come intense hatred of everything that He hates, and fervent love of everything that He loves. *And then you will do good works*! But from what motive? Why, out of gratitude to Him—and not being the result of selfishness, they will really be good works, for they will be done with the view of pleasing God—not as a means of getting something for yourself.

Every soul, then, that has believed in Jesus has found everlasting life and deliverance from sin. Very well, then, you also will find the same blessings if you now trust wholly in Him. They did "only trust Him"—do the same—"only trust Him now." They dropped into the arms of Christ, He caught them and holds them fast. Do the same—drop now into the arms of Christ who stands beneath you, ready to catch you—and you shall most certainly be saved! This is Christ's own declaration, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The belief is to come first, and the baptism is to follow as the confession of the belief. Christ commanded His disciples to observe that order—"Go you, therefore, and teach (or, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them, (those who are made disciples), into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This is what Christ Himself said. So, if you have believed in Him and have been baptized on profession of that faith, you are saved, just as myriads of others have been saved! I have thus tried to give you a further lift and I pray the Lord Jesus to take you by the hand and lift you up, you fevered and prostrate patients who cannot rise without His power being poured into you!

Let me try to give you a lift in another way. I think I hear you say, "O Sir, I know the Gospel but, somehow, I cannot get hold of it. I know what praying means, but I cannot pray as I would. I know what repenting is, but I cannot repent as I would." Here is a text which will, I hope, give you a lift—"The Spirit also helps our infirmities." Can you not look up to Heaven and ask that blessed Spirit to help you? What, though your heart is hard as the nether millstone, the Spirit of God can make it soft in a moment! Though it seems impossible for you to believe in Jesus, the gracious Spirit is ready right now to enable you to believe in Him! If now you seem to be the very reverse of what you ought to be, the blessed Spirit can completely change your nature! He can open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears and take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh! I know that you cannot help yourself, but I also know that the Holy Spirit can help you, for nothing is impossible to Him! Come, heavenly Wind, and breathe upon these dry bones! Quicken them into life and activity so that where there was nothing but death, there may be a living army to serve the living Lord! And, blessed be His holy name, He will do it for, wherever there is a true, heart-felt prayer for His Presence, He is already present, dictating that prayer! No one really prays until the Holy Spirit teaches him how to pray! So, you who are like Peter's wife's mother, have we been able to lift you up yet? May the Lord's

almighty hand be stretched out to you, for ours alone will be too weak to lift you up!

Here is another lift for you. Notwithstanding all that I have said, you still think that you deserve to be lost and that you must be lost, *for your being punished will show the Justice of God*. That is true, as far as it goes, but let me tell you something else that is equally true. *Your being saved will glorify the Mercy of God* and "He delights in mercy." I recollect the time when I thought that if Jesus Christ saved me, it would be the biggest thing He ever did. I thought so then, and I do not know but that I think so now. And I feel sure that when I get to Heaven, I shall still have that idea. And if you, dear Friend, think the same concerning yourself, I expect you are about right! Jesus Christ, however, loves to do big things. He delights to show great mercy to great sinners and if there is one man here who seems not to have any good point about him, but whom everybody knows as being a renowned sinner—well, I pray the Lord to save you, my Friend, because then the devils in Hell will hear of it and they will be angry! And I like them to be angry for such a reason as that! And the wicked men with whom you have been accustomed to associate, will hear of it and they will say, "What? Old Jack a Christian? Harry turned Baptist? I never would have believed such a thing to be possible!" We like to have just such converts as these and my Lord likes to have them, too, for such victories of Sovereign Grace cause a great stir in the camp of the Philistines—and they begin to tremble, and cry, "Who will be the next to turn?" And so the Kingdom of Heaven grows, Satan's fame gets dimmed and the fame of Jesus of Nazareth grows brighter and brighter!

"Ah," says one, "I never looked at it in that light, for, certainly, if Jesus Christ were to save *me*, it would be the biggest wonder on earth!" Then I think it is very likely that He *will* save you, for He delights to do great wonders and to work mighty marvels! How do you think that a doctor gets to have great fame? There are some physicians in London who have so many patients waiting to see them that the poor sufferers have to wait hours before they can get in. How did those doctors get to be so celebrated? If I were to tell you they got all their fame through curing chapped hands, sore fingers and warts, you would say, "Nonsense! Nobody gets fame through doing such little things as that!" How did they get their honor, then? Oh, there was a poor man who was near death. He had been given up by several other doctors, but this one was enabled by God to heal him. Or there was a man whose leg was about to be amputated and this doctor said, "I will save that man's limb." Or there was a complicated case of internal disease and this doctor said, "I understand that case," and he cured it—and everybody talked about the wonderful cure—and now, everybody goes to that doctor! He became famous through curing bad cases—one really bad case brought him more credit than 50 minor maladies might have done. So is it with the Great Physician and you big sinners with such a complication of disorders that nobody but Christ can cure you! My Lord and Master has a wondrous way of healing those who appear to be incurable! And when He cures such cases as yours, Heaven and earth and Hell hear of it and it makes

Him famous. So I would encourage you to hope that He will save even you, though you are as prostrate as Peter's wife's mother was before Christ took her by the hand and lifted her up. May my gracious Lord and Master help you to take encouragement from what He has done for others who were in as sad a state as you are now in!

Though your case seems so hopeless to you, or, if you have any hope of recovery, you feel that it will take a long while, I want to remind you that *Jesus Christ pardons sinners in an instant.* A man is as black as midnight one moment, and as bright as noonday the next! Jesus Christ lifted up upon the Cross has such mighty power that if a man had all the sins of mankind resting upon him, yet, if he did but look to Christ by faith, his sins would all be gone in a moment! Did you ever see that wonderful sculpture which represents the Laocoon and his sons with the monstrous snakes twisted all about their limbs? Well, though you should be another Laocoon and sinful habits should be twisted all about you, so that it would be impossible for you to free yourself from them, yet, if you look to Jesus by faith, those monsters shall drop dead at your feet! Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, sets His foot upon the monster, Sin, and breaks its head. And if you believe in Jesus, that pierced foot of His shall crush the life out of your sins and you shall be delivered from their power. Oh, that you might have Grace to trust in Jesus for instantaneous pardon, instantaneous regeneration, instantaneous deliverance from nature's darkness into God's most marvelous light! If you are as prostrate as Peter's wife's mother was, you ought not to lie still any longer when Christ is ready to give you such a lift as that!

But if you do, I bid you remember, poor desponding, despairing sinner, that *He who has come to save such as you are is a Divine Savior.* What a deathblow this ought to be to every doubt! You say that there is a difficulty in your case. Yes, there is always a difficulty where there is only *finite* power. There always will be difficulties where there are creatures with limited capacities. But here is the Creator—the Creator in human flesh—He who made the heavens and the earth has come down to live here as a Man and to die upon the Cross in order that He may save sinners! What difficulty can there be in the Presence of Omnipotence? Talk not of difficulty in the Presence of the almighty God! He has but to will anything and it is done—to speak and it stands fast forever! Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him, and He is able to save them with the greatest possible ease. What an easy thing it was for Christ to bless men, women and children when He was here upon earth! A poor woman came in the crowd and just *touched the hem of His garment*—she could not get near enough to touch Him—but she just touched the hem of His garment with her finger. There was contact between her and Christ through her finger and the hem of His garment and she was made whole that very instant! There were other cases in which Christ healed people who were miles away from Him at the time. "Go your way," He said to the nobleman, "your son lives." He had not been near him! He could work the miracle just as easily at a distance.

O Sinner, nothing is impossible with God! If you are sick and near death, Jesus Christ is able to save you! If I saw you at the very gates of Hell—so long as you had not actually crossed the threshold—if I saw you trembling there and you said to me, "Can Jesus Christ save me now?" I would reply, "Yes, my Brother, look unto Him and He will take you from the gates of Hell to the gates of Heaven in a single moment!" He said when on earth, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," and it is just as true today! "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."—

"Only trust Him! Only trust him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you! He will save you!
He will save you now!"

Oh, that He would bless this word to you! Christ is God as well as Man. He suffered on the Cross in the place of sinners, but He lives after the suffering has been accomplished! He lives as the Savior who is mighty to save and whoever will take Him as his or her own Savior shall find it to be so this very hour!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 1:14-35.

Verse 14. *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.* When one servant of God is laid aside, it is a call to the rest to be the more earnest. So after John the Baptist was put into prison, "Jesus came into Galilee." Sometimes a loss may be a gain—and if the loss of John was the means of bringing out Jesus, certainly both the Church and the world were the gainers! "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God."

15. *And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the Gospel.* It is clear, from this passage, that our Lord exhorted men to repent and to believe the Gospel. There are some who profess to be His followers who will not allow us to do this. We may teach men, and warn them, they say, but we must not exhort them to repent and believe! Well, as the contention of these people is not in accordance with the Scriptures, we are content to follow the Scriptures and to do as Jesus did—so we shall say to sinners, "Repent you, and believe the Gospel."

16-18. *Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishermen. And Jesus said unto them; Come you after Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him.* The Gospel minister is like the fisherman with a net. I have sometimes heard the comparison drawn as though the Gospel fisherman had a hook and a line, which he has not. His business is not to entice a fish to swallow his bait but to cast the net all round him and lift him, by His Grace, out of the element in which he lies in sin, into the boat where Christ still sits, as He sat in the olden days in the boat on the sea of Galilee. To shut the

sinner up to faith in Jesus Christ—that is the main work of the true Gospel fisherman!

19, 20. *And when He had gone a little farther, He saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who also were in a ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him.* They never had cause to regret that they did! Whatever they left, they were abundantly rewarded. They had a rich reward here on earth—and they have a far richer reward in Heaven. Whatever a man gives up for Christ is a blessed investment which will, sooner or later, bring him good interest!

21, 22. *And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.* He did not do as the scribes did, who made a great parade of learning by quoting this Rabbi and the other. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." He spoke as one who felt that He had authority to speak in His own name, and in the name of God, His Father. This method of teaching quite astonished the Jews. I wish that those who now hear the Gospel might be astonished at it, and be astonished into the belief of it by the power with which it comes home to their consciences and hearts.

23, 24. *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone.* How often that is still the cry of sinners, "Let us alone. Why do you not hold your own views and let us alone?" Yes, the devils and those whom they control, still say, "Let us alone." But it is a part of the Gospel to attack that which is not the Gospel—and it is as much the duty of the minister of the Gospel to denounce error as to proclaim the Truth of God. If we do so, the old cry will still be heard, "Let us alone. Let us alone!"

24, 25. *What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Are You come to destroy us? I know You who You are, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him.* He did not want any testimony from the devil. When a man of ill character once praised Plato, the philosopher said, "What can I have done wrong that such a fellow as that speaks well of me?" So when the devil bore testimony to the Divinity of Christ, "Jesus rebuked him."

25, 26. *Saying, hold your peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.* For, if Satan must come out of a man, he will do him as much mischief as he can before he departs. His wrath is all the greater because his time is so short—

"He worries whom he can't devour,
With a malicious joy."

27. *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commands He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.* It was the authority of His preaching which first astonished them. And then the authority with which He worked His miracle and subdued the world of demons. Blessed be God! Christ has not abdicated His

authority! He is still the great Messenger of God, full of Divine authority to save men and to deliver them from the power of Satan.

28-30. *And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and soon they told Him of her.* Christ was a house-to-house missionary, as well as an open-air preacher. There is much good to be done by those who know how to visit and to look after individual cases. There is great good to be done in that way—as well as by dealing with mankind in the bulk.

31-35. *And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at evening, when the sun set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils: and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.* His hard day's work probably ran on far into the night. Yet, "a great while before day," He was up at the sacred work of supplication! The more work we have to do with men for God, the longer we ought to be at work with God for men. If you plead with men, you cannot hope to prevail unless you first plead with God. And, inasmuch as our Lord had great success the day before, it teaches us that the greatest success does not release us from the necessity of still waiting upon God. If God has given you much, my Brother, go with your basket and ask for more. Never stop prayer. Increase your spiritual hunger and God will increase the richness of the gifts He will bestow upon you!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—429, 499.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—64.

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

THE SAFEGUARDS OF FORGIVENESS
NO. 2981

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1875.

"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However..."
2 Samuel 12:13, 14.

"HOWEVER." There was a qualification to the pardon granted to David. There is no need for me to enter into any of the details of his enormous sin. To make any excuse for it would to be become a partner in it. It was without excuse and if David, himself, were here with us, there is no one present who would so bitterly condemn him as he would condemn himself. He would be provoked to the utmost indignation by any attempt to offer an apology for the great transgression into which he fell, surrounded, as it were, by so many circumstances which tended to make it even worse than it otherwise might have been.

In reading this narrative, one cannot help being struck with the fact that when Nathan had brought home the sin to David—and the conscience of the monarch which had been sleeping for some months was awakened to a true sense of his guilt, pardon was at once granted to the sorrowing penitent. As soon as he said, "I have sinned against the Lord," the same Prophet who had, by God's Grace, brought him to conviction of sin, gave him the assurance of absolution—"The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die." Truly—

"Wonders of Grace to God belong."

The pardoning of great sin is amazing, but the pardoning of great sin so rapidly—the forgiveness immediately following the confession—is among the things to be set down as worthy of special gratitude in the heart and special praise with the lips. One fears, however, lest, by the preaching up of the abounding mercy of God in suddenly putting away great sin, some might be led to think lightly of sin. It has been often raised as an objection to the full proclamation of the Grace of God that it tends to make men think that the escape from sin is very easy and, consequently, causes them to imagine that sin, itself, is a less deadly thing than it really is. Now, I will not deny that Antinomianism is natural to the human heart and, as there have been men who have turned the Grace of God into licentiousness in the past, so there will be, in the future, men who will make out of God's mercy an argument in favor of their sin. Those who act thus are among the very worst of sinners, "whose damnation is just," as Paul wrote concerning those who said, "Let us do

evil, that good may come." I have read that a spider will extract poison from the flower from which the bee extracts honey so, surely, from that very Truth of God from which a renewed heart extracts reasons for holiness, unregenerate men have been known to extract excuses for sin! If they do so, I can only say that they are "without excuse." Some have actually caused the precious blood of Jesus Christ, Himself, to be to them a savor of death unto death by using the Doctrine of the Atonement as an excuse for their transgressions! If they do so, however, it certainly is not the fault of the Truth of God, nor the fault of the Infinite wisdom and prudence of God, for He has, in many remarkable ways, taken care to put safeguards around His free mercy. He does forgive and He will forgive, blessed be His holy name—and however men may pervert His mercy, He will not cease to bestow that mercy upon sinners! He will still continue His loving kindness, yet He has put safeguards around the Doctrine of forgiveness—and of the safeguards I am now going to speak.

And, first, I shall speak of *the safeguards which were provided in David's case.* And then, secondly, *of those which are provided in our own case.* This will lend us to notice, in the third place, *God's grand aim with us and what other great endeavor should be in connection with that aim.*

I. First, then, let us notice THE SAFEGUARDS THAT WERE PUT AROUND DAVID'S CASE, lest David, or anyone else, should think that because sin was readily forgiven, it was in itself a little thing.

For, notice, first, that *David was made to see his sin in its true light before it was forgiven.* Nathan did not go to him and say, "David, you have committed a much greater wrong than you have supposed. You have disgraced your character and you have brought dishonor upon the God you love—but you are forgiven." No, he uttered a parable which set David's own character before him as being of the very base and meanest kind. The description of the traveler who came to the rich man, who then went and took the one ewe lamb from the poor man with which to make a feast for the traveler, was well conceived. It was a trap in which David was cleverly caught and made to see himself, though he had not the slightest idea, at the moment, that he was seeing himself at all. But when Nathan said to him, "You are the man," he was made to feel that he was a mean wretch who deserved to be condemned to death. His indignation was awakened against himself and against his own actions—and thus the Lord took care that David should not receive pardon till he had realized the greatness of his sin! This would be a strong check to him in the future, keeping him from ever falling into that sin again.

Moreover, *he was made to condemn himself.* Before Nathan said to David, "You shall not die," the king had pronounced sentence upon himself, for he had said, concerning the man described in the parable, "As the Lord lives, the man that has done this thing shall surely die," not knowing that it was himself whom he was condemning! But he pronounced his own sentence—and after that he was forgiven. Now, dear Friends, this is just what the Lord does with sinners before He pardons them! First, He makes them see their sin. Some of us remember well when that terrible spectacle haunted us day and night. We had long

known that we had sinned, but we had no idea that sin was such a monstrous, horrible thing as we then saw it to be. We had read of strange monsters of the deep, hideous and terrible creatures, but when we saw sin, we beheld something more frightful and loathsome than our worst dreams had ever brought before our minds! Then we condemned ourselves. Well do I remember when I signed my own death warrant—had the Lord then threatened to strike me dead upon the spot, I could not, even if He had given me leave to plead with Him—have urged any reason why He should not destroy me! I have a thousand times wondered that my soul was not sent to Hell! At night I have feared that I should be there before the morning light and, in the daytime, I have often trembled lest, before the night should come, I should find myself in Hell. Having thus condemned myself, then it was that God forgave me—and I do not believe that any sinner is ever forgiven until he consents, in his soul, to the Justice of God if he should never be forgiven. He must know that he is a sinner and that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, for which he deserves to be sent to Hell! And when he reaches that point, then pardon will come to him. O dear Brothers and Sister, do you not see what a blessed check this is upon that man? Now, when he receives forgiveness, he receives it as one who knows what that forgiveness covers, and who also knows the condemnation from which that pardon has delivered him!

There was, in David's case, the further safeguard that *he was made to feel the majesty of the Divine Word*. When Nathan came to David as God's representative, he spoke to him a simple parable to which a child might listen with interest. But there was great majesty in it, for it unveiled the secrets of the guilty monarch's heart. It made him see himself as he appeared in the clear, translucent light of Heaven—and not as he might have represented himself in a more favorable light. Read the whole page and note how Nathan made the truth lash him to the quick—"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul; and I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto you such and such things. Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight. You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house; because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."

Nathan does not spare him! Every word is like a sharp sword piercing him to the heart. David is made to feel that the Word of God can search out his most secret things and make him see himself in his true character, disguise himself as he may! And then, when he had confessed his sin, the same stern Prophet who had spoken so severely, said to him, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die." Oh, how welcome that message must have been to David! How soft and sweet

those sounds must have been to his ears after the harsher notes to which he had listened—just as we have sometimes heard the martial music that has thrilled and startled us and then there has come a soft strain of gentle music, or else a brief season of welcome silence by which our ears have been rested and refreshed. So was it when Nathan turned from condemnation to comfort and said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die." This would henceforth always be a check to David, for he would feel that if he sinned, that Word of God would again find him out—that Word which had first stricken him to the dust by its severity—and then had won his heart's love by its tenderness.

A fourth safeguard was this—*David was made to see the greatness of his sin by the effect which it produced upon others*. Nathan said to David, "By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." As you read some of his Psalms, you can see that David knew that the Lord's enemies did blaspheme because of his sin. The party that loved the Lord was strong at court just then and the king was the patron and head of that party—but there were men of Belial who were the ungodly party in the land. And when they caught the king, himself, tripping thus, I guarantee you that they talked of it at every street corner. It was a sad topic for the faithful ones to speak of and the saints of God, when they met together, must have wept, for they could make no excuse for the king's crime—and they must have felt that a very deadly stab had been given to the cause of truth and righteousness. David was made to realize all that and it must have helped to keep him from sinning again in such a fashion because he loved the cause of God, and the house of God, and the servants of God—and there had been a period, in his past life, when he would not have believed that it were possible for him to be the means of breaking down the walls of Zion! When he had been forgiven, his first anxiety was that God would undo the mischief which his sin had worked and, therefore, he prayed to the Lord, "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem."

In addition to these safeguards, there is that, "however," which I have included in our text. I call the serious attention of every carelessly-walking Christian here to that, "however." How many times my eyes have rested upon that word and it has chastened my sins, and driven me to my God! David was forgiven, but from that day the sword never departed from his house. God let him know that although he was pardoned, some of the results of his sin still remained. The guilt of it was gone, as Nathan said, "The Lord has put away your sin," but the evil effect of it was still manifest—and that must be dealt with by the Lord's chastising rod. What a sad change came over David's life from this time! Recall the name of Tamar, Amnon and Absalom, and think how degraded his own family had become. Then, one and another rebelled against him—enemies within his kingdom and without sought to overthrow him and, after his sin in numbering the people, God's own angel was sent to smite the nation with a terrible pestilence. The earlier part of David's life was full of music and dancing—the latter part had far more of mourning and

lamentation in it. After his great fall, he had to go softly all the rest of his days and his dying testimony, though full of faith, was marred by the regret, "although my house is not so with God."

He was a man so highly favored of God and so much after God's own heart in many ways, that if he could have been without the rod, God would have spared him. If this sin of his could have been winked at and he could have been delivered from its consequences without chastisement, God would have delivered him. But it was not possible. God does not give such exemption as that to any of His children and He did not give it to David. That warm heart of His which in many respects was so excellent, was apt, from its very fervor of affection, to crave too much of the love of the creature. So David had to be chastised again and again. God did not afflict him willingly—He did it because it was for his good. This folly in the heart of His child could not be driven out by anything but the rod and, therefore, the rod he must have. He was a grand man, one in whom the Grace of God shone very conspicuously, but he was a man of like passions with ourselves and we have reason to thank God that he was—because his experience becomes all the more instructive to us from the fact that while it teaches us that God can and will forgive us if we repent of our great and gross sins, yet it also teaches us that sin is an evil and a bitter thing and that, though the guilt of it may be removed, the evil consequences of it will cling to us and be a subject of sorrow to us till God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

II. Now, secondly, I want to point out to you THE SAFEGUARDS IN OUR OWN CASE. I cannot say that the safeguards are the same in every case because the experience of God's children vary considerably.

In the case of some of us, when God's forgiveness came to us, we could not think lightly of sin, because, *for a long time before we found mercy, we had been under a terrible sense of guilt*. I am not speaking of all Christians, but there are some of us who were for weeks, or months, or even years, waiting in outer darkness before the Gate of Mercy was opened to us. I will not deny that it was our unbelief in Christ that kept us there, but, at the same time, I see how God, in His wise Providence, overruled even that to make us ever afterwards hate sin as burnt children dread the fire. Oh, what burns of that sort I had! They seemed as if they would never heal, the fire had gone so deep. I felt that I could sympathize with Job when he said, "My soul chooses strangling, and death rather than my life," for I feared that no mercy could ever come to me. I have blessed God a thousand times that I was so long in finding Christ because through that very experience I have been the better qualified to speak to others who are in a similar condition. John Bunyan was for years tossed about with inward tumults through a deep sense of sin. And when, at last, at the sight of the Cross, the great burden rolled off his back and disappeared in the sepulcher of Christ, he did not think sin a little thing! It had been such a dreadful burden to him for so many years that he ever afterwards abhorred it and adored the wondrous love which had forever delivered him from its power. With some persons there

is a check which operates throughout the rest of their lives as the result of that long period of depression of spirit and despair of soul which preceded the hour of light and joy. God kept us out in the cold so long in order that, ever afterwards, we might know what it was like and not want to go outside again. He made us feel the aching of the hungry belly so that we might not again wander into the far country and long to feed from the sinner's trough. After our past experience there, our Father's arms about our neck became all the more precious to us and there was the less likelihood that we should ever go back to that state of sin and sorrow from which we had escaped!

I say again that this is true only of some—it is not necessary for all, and it is only a few of God's servants who have passed through such an experience as that. But I think I may say that all who receive God's mercy have this safeguard, that *for a greater or less period, they have been made to feel the death-swoon of sin*. It may last but a few minutes, but, before Divine Mercy comes to the heart, there is usually a striking of the soul with the chill horror of despair and there is also a driving into the very marrow of the soul that sharp two-edged sword of God which kills all carnal confidence. In the case of persons who are suddenly brought into the life and light of full salvation, their sight of sin in its horror is but momentary. They hang over the precipice and feel as if they were gone, but, at that very instant, the Divine Hand is stretched out to remove them. The sentence of death must be passed upon all men because all have sinned—we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may learn not to trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. That glimpse of the open jaws of Hell, though it is but for an instant—that sight of the descending axe of Divine Vengeance and of our own neck laid upon the block is enough to make us, even in a moment, pass through a process which divorces us forever from the love of sin, makes us feel that it is a deadly and damning thing and causes us to cry unto God to deliver us from it! That sense of sin is, I take it, a part of the safeguard which God provides for each forgiven man to prevent him from drawing inferences of licentiousness from God's abundant mercy to him.

But there is a better safeguard than that. *The fact that Jesus Christ is our Sacrifice and Savior ought to prevent us from ever going into sin again.* You may have heard of the king who made a law that any person committing a certain crime in his country should have both his eyes plucked out. It happened that the very first criminal brought before him, under that law, was his own son whose guilt was clearly brought home to him. His father was the judge and there remained nothing for him to do but to pronounce upon his son the sentence that he should have both his eyes torn out. But, rigid as he was as a law-giver, such was the father's tenderness of heart that he bade the officer first pluck out one of his son's eyes and then take out one of his own. I should think that that father's empty eye socket would always remind his son of the crime which he had committed—and eventually prevent him from ever offending in that way again. Surely, that crime could never be pleasant to him after it had been so painful to his father! Believer, look at your Lord

and Savior, Jesus Christ, and say to Him, "What are these wounds in Your hands, dear Lord? What are those scars on Your feet, and what is that deep gash in Your side which leads to Your very heart?" "These," He says, "are the wounds caused by your sins, for I was wounded for your transgressions, I was bruised for your iniquities—the chastisement of your peace was upon Me, and with My stripes you are healed."

O my Brothers and Sisters, the next time you are tempted to sin, let the open wounds of Jesus appeal to you and cause you to say, "I cannot crucify my Lord afresh and put Him to open shame by again sinning against Him." This will help to hold you back when the tempter draws near you. The "cords of a man" and the "bands of love" will draw you the other way much more forcibly and you will say, with Joseph, "How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" You may also say, "It is true that sin has not slain me, but it has slain my Substitute. It is true that sin has not cast me into Hell, yet it brought Hell upon my Substitute. It is true that the wrath of God passed by me, but it fell upon my Well-Beloved, the Bridegroom of my heart, who, in Infinite mercy, bore it all for my sake." The remembrance of this fact will be a most blessed safeguard to hold you back from sin—pardon is free to you, but it cost Him His all and, because of what it cost Him, you feel that you must not sin again.

Remember also that great as the Grace of God is in pardoning sin, *He gives, with pardon, other mercies which are equally great, namely, repentance and renewal of heart.* Wherever the forgiveness of sin comes, there comes with it a turning from sin, a leaving of sin, a fresh view of sin, a different estimate of it. And the heart that once had sought its own pleasure, now seeks God's pleasure! And the man who formerly loved carnal delights is moved to long after heavenly delights from the very moment of his forgiveness. I speak advisedly when I say that the Doctrine of "believe and live" would be a very dangerous one if it were not accompanied by the Doctrine of regeneration. If God did not change the nature of the forgiven sinner, it would be a dangerous thing to give him free forgiveness—but when the two things go together, they counteract any evil which might have sprung out of either the one or the other by itself—and all good and no evil can come from them when they are preached in their due connection. "Believe and live," is true. But "You must be born again," is equally true. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," is Apostolic Doctrine, but so is this, "Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Change of heart accompanies the forgiveness of sin—and wherever that change of heart is given, there springs up in the renewed soul a deep sense of gratitude to God. "How much I owe!" says the renewed man. "How graciously the love of God has been manifested in my case! What great sin He has forgiven! What enormous transgressions He has blotted out. Now I cannot help loving Him—oh, that I loved Him even more!" And this gratitude becomes in itself a very powerful means of checking the soul in any impulse that it has towards sin—and an equally forceful

incentive in driving it onward towards righteousness, "for the love of Christ constrains us." It does constrain us! We do not say that it *ought* to do so, as some do when they misquote the text. Its constraining power draws us onward and upward towards our Lord!

These things put together, by the power of God's most blessed Spirit, lead the renewed man into a holy cautiousness and great watchfulness of soul. I wish I could say that I see as much of this spirit in all professors as I would like to see. But, alas, Brothers and Sisters, I do not! Sin, the very smallest sin—if there can be a small sin—is a great evil and we ought to be deeply and solemnly anxious that even the least deviation from the righteousness of God should not be found in us. If any of you were told serpents which had escaped from their den, were hiding somewhere in your house—perhaps near your bed, or in a cupboard or bookcase—I know that when you reached your house tonight, you would look very carefully on the doorstep and in the hall, to see whether there was a young viper there. You would turn up the doormats, in case there might be one concealed there! But you would not be satisfied until you had thoroughly searched the house from top to bottom, in order that those deadly snakes might all be captured and destroyed! This is just what you ought to do with yourselves, Brethren, for the snakes are there! In every part of your nature, these venomous creatures have been hatched and they have multiplied beyond all calculation. Sins of all shapes and sizes lurk within you! And if God's Grace does not keep you watchful—before you are aware, you may be painfully conscious of their deadly power!

There is this fact that you must have often noticed—I feel sure that *whether you are aware of the sin itself, or not, you will soon have to be aware of the consequences of it.* You cannot fall into any sin without losing, in some measure, the sweetness of your fellowship with God. I do not need to look out of my window in order to know that there are clouds across the sky. I can tell that the clouds have come, for the light is dim in the room where I am reading. So, I may not be conscious that I have fallen into sin, but the very dimness of the light of God's Presence becomes the indicator to my soul that it is so. Perhaps you have had a prosperous day in business and the friends you have met with have all been very kind and cheerful, and nothing has happened during the day to distress you. Yet when you get home, you feel heavy and dull, and you say to yourself, "Why is this?" It is simply that God has been causing you to see that the sweetness of the creature cannot make up for the lack of the Presence of the Creator. If God were to give you all earthly good and yet took His Presence from you—which He will do if sin is within you, and unrepented of—the loss of His Presence would be a greater loss than the loss of the whole world, or even of Heaven itself! If you are in the habit of walking with God—and I trust that many of you are—you will take note of the least stain of sin. You have, perhaps, seen a handkerchief that looked perfectly white. But if there has been a snowfall and you have laid that handkerchief down upon the snow, you have seen its defilement in contrast with the whiteness of the snow! So, if you live

near to God, you will have a very high standard of what you ought to be—and you will see a great deal more sin in yourself than you ever used to see. The fact of your living near to God will never lead you into presumption, nor cause you to think lightly of sin, but it will make what you used to call little things to assume hideous proportions and you will say to yourself, "What a sin it was that I, who have spoken face to face with God, should make that silly remark to my neighbor, a remark that could not minister edification to anybody—that I, who have had power with God in prayer, should be put out of temper by a poor silly maid, or be made to forget myself altogether by some trivial temptation which I ought to have been able to master, and could have mastered if I had given it the least thought!" You may rest quite certain that if God honors any man in public, He takes him aside privately and flogs him well, otherwise he would get elevated and proud, and God will not have that! He will not have Big-Self to serve Him—He will take him down from his high pinnacle and grind him to powder, so as to get all the pride out of him!"

III. The last point, on which I can only speak briefly, is this. ALL THIS INDICATES WHAT GOD'S GREAT AIM IS AND WHAT OURS OUGHT TO BE.

God's aim is not merely to forgive us and to free us from the penalty of sin, but *to take sin out of us and get rid of it altogether*. The Lord might have forgiven David and yet not have used the rod upon him as He did. That child might not have died, but might have grown up to be David's comfort and joy. And Absalom might not have turned out such a scapegrace, but might have been his father's best helper. God might have arranged matters so, but He did not see fit to do it. He seems to say, "My dear child, David, I love you so well that, while I fully forgive you, I will take such measures with you as will effectually prevent you from ever falling into that sin again. I will so deal with you that should you ever have such a temptation as this again, your tendency to that sin shall be very decidedly checked." Long before his sin with Bathsheba, there were various indications as to David's special liability to temptation. That sin only threw out upon the surface the evil that was always within him! And now God, having made him see that the deadly cancer is there, begins to use the knife to cut it out of him. God's business with you, if you are His child, is to get rid of the sin that is within you—to purge you not merely with blood and with hyssop, but with fire, till He has made your nature very different from what it now is.

Our aim should be in conformity with God's aim, that is to seek to get rid of sin altogether. You have first to realize what your sin really is. It may be that, this day, you have lived a blameless life so far as it can be seen of men, but what about your thoughts? You have never committed adultery as David did, but how many adulteries have you committed in your heart? You were never actually a murderer—God forbid that you ever should be! But when your evil passions have risen, how many times have you been a murderer in the sight of God? We are not merely to

imagine that if we bring our outward moral conduct into conformity with the will of God, we are all right—we are also to look within. Every thought of evil is sin! A photographer will tell you that the object presented to the camera leaves an impression upon it even though the exposure of the sensitive plate was only for the fraction of a moment. Notice, Brothers and Sisters, whenever sin is brought before your mind even in imagination, whether it is attractive to you or not. I hope that you catch yourself saying, "O my God, how is it that I can think of such a thing with any degree of tolerance?" You feel that you would not commit that sin—you would rather die than commit it—yet you are not as displeased as you ought to be at even the thought of it. Perhaps you almost wish that you might do this evil thing. If so, that shows which way your nature still gravitates—to the old nature which is so corrupt that it stinks! And when it stinks most in your nostrils, it is, perhaps, best for you, for then it drives you away from being proud of it and takes you to that dear Savior in whom alone your life can ever be found!

Brothers and Sisters, in all your spiritual engagements, note how far your heart is really in them. Do not be content if you can say, "I went to the Tabernacle last Thursday night." Did you really worship there in spirit and in truth? Did you profit by the Word read and preached? Do not be satisfied if you can say, "I read a chapter in the Bible and offered prayer to God this morning." What is the use of all this if your heart was not in the exercise? "Rend your hearts, and not your garments," is a message which would sometimes be appropriate to you. What we have to look at is how near the soul gets to God, and how far it gains the mastery over sin. If it is a question of the forgiveness of our sin for the sake of Him who hung upon the Cross, blessed be His name, we have that and we have it perfectly in Him! If it is a question of our righteousness in the sight of God, so far as the imputation of Christ's righteousness is concerned, that also is ours, as everything else that is His is ours! But as to the cleansing of the heart, the purging of all secret places, the driving out of every lurking sin and the getting rid of every imagination and wish and desire that is contrary to God, this has to be battled for, through faith in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Eternal Spirit! And the complete victory has yet to be gained. We must still continue to cry with Paul, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But with him we can also say, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We are not to shut our eyes and fancy that the war is over, that all our spiritual enemies are slain—but we are to press onward to the end! Perhaps, even at the very end, we may have a stern fight with fierce temptations, as John Knox and many others have had, but, in the name of the Lord, we will destroy them! In any case, we must not give way to sin. We dare not let sin have dominion over us. We must strive and struggle against it and we shall do so, for He who has pardoned us will also sanctify us. He who has delivered us from death by sin will also deliver us from the death *of* sin and will present us to Himself "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Brothers and Sisters, do not let me, for a moment, take away from you the joy of perfect pardon which is already yours if you have believed in Jesus Christ. Your sins, which were many, are all forgiven. Let no doubt upon that point come into your mind! Poor troubled Sinner, do not be distressed as though you could not find immediate pardon through Jesus Christ, for you can. If you believe in Him, your sins are forgiven you for His sake. But I am sure that if you are in a right state of heart, you do not need to have pardon and yet be allowed to live in sin. You could not be content, even if the Lord were to forgive you all your sins, if He did not also change your nature and deliver you from the power of sin. That these two things are to be had in Jesus Christ, let us firmly believe—and for the realization of these two things, let us earnestly pray and thrive! And may God graciously give them to us all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 14.

Verse 1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity*. Come back, poor wanderer! My Brother or my Sister, if your heart has grown cold toward your Lord and Master, return to Him this very hour! This message comes from God, Himself, through His servant the Prophet, "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity."

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips*. As if He feared that we could not find suitable words to speak to Him, He puts the right words into our mouths! Our Heavenly Father is so anxious to bring back His children when they wander from Him that He actually makes the prayer with which they may come back to Him—"Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render to You the praise which is Your due, which shall come from our hearts, and which our lips shall express." If there are any of you here who have grieved your Heavenly Father by growing cold at heart, I do trust that the spirit of God will sweetly draw you back to your old standing and to something higher and nearer to God than even that was!

3. *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods. For in You the fatherless finds mercy*. If you expect the Lord to smile upon you, you must have done with all your idols! You must put away all your false confidences and those other sinful things in which you have found even a little joy, and you must come back to your Father, throwing away those rivals which have been set up in your heart and asking Him to give you Grace to live henceforth for Him alone.

4. *I will heal their backsliding*. "Nobody else can do it, but I can, and I will. I will not chide them anymore, I will not keep them at a distance

from Me as unworthy to draw near to Me, but, 'I will heal their backslidings.'"

4. *I will love them freely.* That is a grand sentence! God could not love us anyway else, for what price could you and I bring with which to purchase His love? And if His love were not free, it could never come to such unworthy ones as we are—"I will love them freely."

4, 5. *For My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel.* You know that in the East the dew is a great fertilizer, even more so than it is here. When a plot of ground is all browned by the hot sun, the dew makes it green and fruitful again. So God says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel."

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* That is, upwards, bearing his flowers as near Heaven as he can—not groveling as he once did. He shall grow rapidly, as the daffodil lily does, which seems to start up, in the East, after a shower of rain and come to maturity at once! Lord, grant that we may bring forth lilies of Grace all of a sudden! May there be in us the beauty of holy Christian love which shall come all at once! "He shall grow as the lily."

5. *And cast forth his root as Lebanon.* There will be rapid growth, but sure growth. The lily has frail beauty, but Lebanon has the permanent lasting cedar—and God can make the graces of His people to be as enduring as they are beautiful!

6, 7. *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* His children, who were led into mischief by bad example, shall be drawn back again.

7-9. *They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

—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 MEMORABLE HYMN
NO. 2982

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 1906.

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

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." Matthew 26:30.

The occasion on which these words were spoken was the last meal of which Jesus partook in company with His disciples before He went from them to His shameful trial and His ignominious death. It was His farewell supper before a bitter parting—and yet they must sing. He was on the brink of that great depth of misery into which He was about to plunge—and yet He would have them sing "a hymn." It is amazing that HE sang and, in a second degree, it is remarkable that THEY sang. We will consider both these singular facts.

I. Let us dwell a while on THE FACT THAT JESUS SANG AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS. What does He teach us by this?

Does He not say to each of us, His followers, "*My religion is one of happiness and joy.* I, your Master, by My example, would instruct you to sing even when the last solemn hour is come and all the glooms of death are gathering around you. Here, at the table, I am your Singing-master and set you lessons in music, in which My dying voice shall lead you, notwithstanding all the griefs which overwhelm My heart! I will be to you the Chief Musician and the Sweet Singer of Israel." There was a time when it would have been natural and consistent with the solemnities of the occasion for the Savior to have bowed His head upon the table, bursting into a flood of tears. Or, if ever theirs was a season when He might have fittingly retired from all company and have bewailed His coming conflict in sighs and groans, it was just then. But no, that brave heart will sing "a hymn." Our glorious Jesus plays the man beyond all other men! Boldest of the sons of men, He quails not in the hour of battle, but tunes His voice to loftiest Psalmody. The genius of that Christianity of which Jesus is the Head and Founder, its object, spirit and design, are happiness and joy—and they who receive it are able to sing in the very jaws of death!

This remark, however, is quite a secondary one to the next. *Our Lord's complete fulfillment of the Law of God is even more worthy of our attention.* It was customary, when the Passover was held, to sing, and this is the main reason why the Savior did so. During the Passover it was usual to sing the 113th and five following Psalms which were called the "Hallel." The first commences, you will observe, in our version, with, "Praise you the Lord!" or, "Hallelujah!" The 115th and the three following, were

usually sung as the closing song of the Passover. Now, our Savior would not diminish the splendor of the great Jewish rite although it was the last time that He would celebrate it. No, there shall be the holy beauty and delight of Psalmody—none of it shall be stinted—the "Hallel" shall be full and complete!

We may safely believe that the Savior sang through, or probably chanted, the whole of these six Psalms. And my heart tells me that there was no one at the table who sang more devoutly or more cheerfully than did our blessed Lord. There are some parts of the 118th Psalm, especially, which strike us as having sounded singularly grand as they flowed from His blessed lips. Note verses 22, 23, 24. Particularly observe those words near the end of the Psalm and imagine you hear the Lord, Himself, singing them—"God is the Lord, which has showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good: for His mercy endures forever."

Because, then, it was the settled custom of Israel to recite or sing these Psalms, our Lord Jesus Christ did the same, for He would leave nothing unfinished. Just as when He went down into the waters of Baptism, He said, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," so He seemed to say, when sitting at the table, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Therefore let us sing unto the Lord, as God's people in past ages have done." Beloved, let us view with holy wonder the strictness of the Savior's obedience to His Father's will! And let us endeavor to follow in His steps in all things, seeking to be obedient to the Lord's Word in the little matters as well as in the great ones.

May we not venture to suggest another and deeper reason? Did not the singing of "a hymn" at the supper show *the holy absorption of the Savior's soul in His Father's will*? If, Beloved, you knew that at, say, ten o'clock tonight, you would be led away to be mocked, despised and scourged—and that tomorrow's sun would see you falsely accused, hanging, a convicted criminal, to die upon a cross—do you think that you could sing tonight, after your last meal? I am sure you could not unless with more than earth-born courage and resignation your soul could say, "bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." You would sing if your spirit were like the Savior's spirit—if, like He, you could exclaim, "Not as I will, but as You will." But if there should remain in you any selfishness, any desire to be spared the bitterness of death, you would not be able to chant the "Hallel" with the Master! Blessed Jesus, how wholly were You given up! How perfectly consecrated! So that, whereas other men sing when they are marching to their joys, You sang on Your way to death! Whereas other men lift up their cheerful voices when honor awaits them, You had a brave and holy sonnet on Your lips when shame, spitting and death were to be Your portion!

This singing of the Savior also teaches us *the whole-heartedness of the Master in the work which He was about to do*. The patriot warrior sings as he hastens to battle to the strains of martial music He advances to

meet the enemy and even thus the heart of our all-glorious Champion supplies Him with song even in the dreadful hour of His solitary agony! He views the battle, but He dreads it not—though in the contest His soul will be "exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." Before it He is like Job's warhorse, "He says among the trumpets, Ha, ha and He smells the battle afar off." He has a baptism to be baptized with and He is straitened until it is accomplished. The Master does not go forth to the agony in the garden with a cowed and trembling spirit, all bowed and crushed in the dust, but He advances to the conflict like a Man who has His full strength about Him—taken out to be a Victim, (if I may use such a figure), not as a worn-out ox that has long borne the yoke, but as the firstling of the bullock, in the fullness of His strength! He goes forth to the slaughter with His glorious undaunted spirit fast and firm within Him, glad to suffer for His people's sake and for His Father's Glory!—

"For as at first Your all-pervading look
Saw from your Father's bosom to the abyss,
Measuring in calm presage
The infinite descent.
So to the end, though now of mortal pangs
Made heir, and emptied of Your Glory a while,
With unaverted eyes
You meet all the storm."

Let us, O fellow-heirs of salvation, learn to sing when our suffering time comes, when our season for stern labor approaches! Yes, let us pour forth a canticle of deep, mysterious melody of bliss when our dying hour is near at hand! Courage, Brothers and Sisters! The waters are chilly, but fear will not by any means diminish the terrors of the river! Courage, Brothers and Sisters! Death is solemn work, but playing the coward will not make it less so! Bring out the silver trumpet—let your lips remember the long-loved music—and let the notes be clear and shrill as you dip your feet in the Jordan! "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."

Dear Friends, let the remembrance of the melodies of that upper room go with you tomorrow into business! And if you expect a great trial and are afraid you will not be able to sing after it, then sing *before* it comes. Get your holy praise work done before affliction mars the tune! Fill the air with music while you can. While yet there is bread upon the table, sing, though famine may threaten. While yet the child runs laughing about the house, while yet the flush of health is in your own cheeks, while yet your goods are spared, while yet your heart is whole and sound, lift up your song of praise to the Most High God and let your Master, the singing Savior, be in this your goodly and comfortable example!

II. We will now consider THE SINGING OF THE DISCIPLES. They united in the "Hallel"—like true Jews, they joined in the national song. Israel had good cause to sing at the Passover, for God had worked for His people what He had done for no other nation on the face of the earth! Every Hebrew must have felt his soul elevated and rejoiced on the

Paschal night! He was "a citizen of no mean city," and the pedigree which he could look back upon was one compared with which kings and princes were but of yesterday.

Remembering the fact commemorated by the Paschal Supper, Israel might well rejoice. They sang of their nation in bondage, trodden beneath the tyrannical foot of Pharaoh. They began the Psalm right sorrowfully, as they thought of the bricks made without straw and of the iron furnace. But the strain soon mounted from the deep bass and began to climb the scale as they sang of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lord appearing to Him in the burning bush. They remembered the mystic rod which became a serpent and which swallowed up the rods of the magicians. Their music told of the plagues and wonders which God had worked upon Zoan and of that dread night when the first-born of Egypt fell before the avenging sword of the angel of death, while they, themselves, feeding on the lamb which had been slain for them, and who's blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and upon the side posts of the door, had been graciously preserved. Then the song went up concerning the hour in which all Egypt was humbled at the feet of Jehovah, while as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and they went by the way of the sea, even of the Red Sea. The strain rose still higher as they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Jubilantly they sang of the Red Sea and of the chariots of Pharaoh which went down into the midst thereof, and the depths covered them till there was not one of them left. It was a glorious chant, indeed, when they sang of Rahab cut in pieces and of the dragon wounded at the sea by the right hand of the Most High for the deliverance of the chosen people!

But, Beloved, if I have said that Israel could so properly sing, *what shall I say of those of us who are the Lord spiritually redeemed*? We have been emancipated from a slavery worse than that of Egypt! "With a high hand and with an outstretched arm," has God delivered us! The blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God's Passover, has been sprinkled on our hearts and consciences. By faith we keep the Passover, for we have been saved—we have been brought out of Egypt—and though our sins did once oppose us, they have all been drowned in the Red Sea of the atoning blood of Jesus! "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." If the Jew could sing a "great Hallel," our "Hallel" ought to be more glowing still! And if every house in "Judaea's happy land" was full of music when the people ate the Paschal feast, tonight we have much more reason for filling every heart with sacred harmony while we feast upon Jesus Christ who was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood!

III. The time has now come for me to say HOW EARNESTLY I DESIRE YOU TO "SING A HYMN."

I do not mean to ask you to use your voices, but let your hearts be brimming with the essence of praise. Whenever we repair to the Lord's Table, which represents to us the Passover, we ought not to come to it as to a funeral. Let us select solemn hymns, but not dirges. Let us sing

softly, but none the less joyfully. This is no burial feast! These are not funeral cakes which lie upon this Table, and yonder fair white linen cloth is no winding sheet. "This is My body," said Jesus, but the body so represented was no corpse! We feed upon a living Christ! The blood set forth by yonder wine is the fresh life blood of our immortal King. We view not our Lord's body as clay-cold flesh, pierced with wounds, but as glorified at the right hand of the Father! We hold a happy festival when we break bread on the first day of the week. We come not here trembling like bondsmen, cringing before the Lord as wretched condemned serfs! They eat on their knees—we approach as freemen to our Lord's banquet, like His Apostles, to recline at length or sit at ease—not merely to eat bread which may belong to the most sorrowful, but to drink wine which belongs to men whose souls are glad. Let us recognize the rightness, yes, the *duty* of cheerfulness at this commemorative supper and, therefore, let us sing a hymn!

Being satisfied on this point, perhaps you ask, *"What hymn shall we sing*?" Many sorts of hymns were sung in the olden time. Look down the list and you will scarcely find one which may not suit us now.

One of the earliest of earthy things was the war-song. They sang of old a song to the conqueror, when he returned from the battle. "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." Women took their timbrels and rejoiced in the day when the hero returned from the war. Even thus, of old, did the people of God extol Him for His mighty acts, singing aloud with the high-sounding cymbals—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously…The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name." My Brothers and Sisters, let us lift up a war song tonight! Why not? "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Come, let us praise our Emmanuel, as we see the head of our foe in His right hand! As we behold Him leading captivity captive, ascending up on high with trumpets' joyful sound, let us chant the song—let us shout the war-song—*"Io Triumphe*!" Behold, He comes, all glorious from the war! As we gather at this festive Table which reminds us both of His conflict and of His victory, let us salute Him with a Psalm of gladsome triumph which shall be but the prelude of the song we expect to sing when we get up—

"Where all the singers meet."

Another early form of song was *the pastoral*. When the shepherds sat down among the sheep, they tuned their pipes and warbled forth soft and sweet airs in harmony with rustic quietude. All around was calm and still. The sun was brightly shining and the birds were making melody among the leafy branches. Shall I seem fanciful if I say, "Let us unite in a pastoral tonight?" Sitting round the Table, why should we not sing, "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"? If there is a place beneath the stars where we might feel perfectly at rest and ease, surely it is at the Table of the Lord! Here, then, let us sing to our great

Shepherd a pastoral of delight. Let the bleating of sheep be in our ears as we remember the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His flock!

You need not to be reminded that the ancients were very fond of *festive songs*. When they assembled at their great festivals, led by their chosen minstrels, they sang right joyously, with boisterous mirth. Let those who will, speak to the praise of wine—my soul shall extol the precious blood of Jesus! Let who will, laud corn and oil, the rich produce of the harvest—my heart shall sing of the Bread which came down from Heaven, whereof, if a man eats, he shall never hunger! Do you speak of royal banquets and minstrelsy fit for a monarch's ears? Ours is a nobler festival and our song is sweeter by far! Here is room at this Table, tonight, for all earth's poetry and music, for this place deserves songs more lustrous with delight, more sparkling with gems of holy mirth than any of which the ancients could conceive!

The *love song* we must not forget, for that is peculiarly the song of this evening. "Now will I sing unto my Well-Beloved a song." His love to us is an immortal theme and as our love, fanned by the breath of Heaven, bursts into a vehement flame! We may sing, yes, and we *will sing* among the lilies, a song of love!

In the Old Testament, we find many Psalms called by the title, "*A Song of Degrees*." This "Song of Degrees" is supposed by me to have been sung as the people ascended the Temple steps, or made pilgrimages to the holy place. The strain often changes—sometimes it is dolorous, but soon it is gladsome. At one season the notes are long drawn out and heavy. At another, they are cheerful and jubilant. We will sing a "Song of Degrees" tonight. We will mourn that we pierced the Lord and we will rejoice in pardon bought with blood! Our strain must vary as we talk of sin, feeling its bitterness and lamenting it—and then of pardon, rejoicing in its glorious fullness!

David wrote a considerable number of Psalms which he entitled "*Maschil*," which may be called in English, "instructive Psalms." Where, Beloved, can we find richer instruction than at the Table of our Lord? He who understands the mystery of Incarnation and of Substitution is a master in Scriptural theology. There is more teaching in the Savior's body and in the Savior's blood than in all the world! O you who wish to learn the way to comfort and how to tread the royal road to heavenly wisdom, come to the Cross and see the Savior suffer and pour out His heart's blood for human sin!

Some of David's Psalms are called, "*Michtam*," which means "golden Psalm." Surely we must sing one of these! Our Psalms must be golden when we sing of the Head of the Church who is as much fine gold. More precious than silver or gold is the inestimable price which He has paid for our ransom! Yes, you sons of harmony, bring your most melodious anthems here and let your Savior have your golden Psalms!

Certain Psalms in the Old Testament are entitled, "*Upon Shoshannim*," that is, "Upon the lilies." O you virgin souls, whose hearts have been

washed in blood and have been made white and pure, bring forth your instruments of song—

"Here, then, your music bring,
Strike aloud each cheerful string!"

Let your hearts, when they are in their best state, when they are purest and most cleansed from earthly dross, give to Jesus their glory and their excellence!

Then there are other Psalms which are dedicated "*To the sons of Korah*." If the guess is right, the reason why we get the title, "To the sons of Korah"—"a song of loves" must be this—when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up, the sons of Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up, too—but the sons of Korah perished not. Why they were not destroyed, we cannot tell. Perhaps it was that Sovereign Grace spared those whom Justice might have doomed and "the sons of Korah" were ever after made the sweet singers of the sanctuary. And whenever there was a special "song of loves," it was always dedicated to them. Ah, we will have one of those songs of love tonight, around the Table, for we, too, are saved by distinguishing Grace. We will sing of the heavenly Lover and the many waters which could not quench His love!

We have not half exhausted the list, but it is clear that sitting at the Lord's Table, we shall have no lack of suitable psalmody. Perhaps no one hymn will quite meet the sentiments of all and, while we would not write a hymn for you, we would pray the Holy Spirit to now write the spirit of praise upon your hearts, that sitting here, you may "after supper" sing "a hymn."

IV. For one or two minutes let us ask, WHAT SHALL THE TUNE BE?

It must be a strange one, for if we are to sing "a hymn tonight, around the Table, *the tune most have all the parts of music*. Yonder Believer is heavy of heart through manifold sorrows, bereavements and watching by the sick. He loves his Lord and would gladly praise Him, but his soul refuses to use her wings. Brother, we will have a tune in which you can join—and you shall lead the bass. You shall sing of your fellowship with your Beloved in His sufferings—how He, too, lost a friend. How He spent whole nights in sleeplessness. How His soul was exceedingly sorrowful. But the tune must not be all bass, or it would not suit all of us tonight, for some can reach the highest note. We have seen the Lord and our spirit has rejoiced in God our Savior. We want to lift the chorus high, yes, there are some here who are at times so full of joy that they will need special music written for them! "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell," said Paul, and so have others said since, when Christ has been with them! Ah, then they have been obliged to mount to the highest notes, to the very loftiest range of song!

Remember, Beloved, that the same Savior who will accept the joyful shouts of the strong, will also receive the plaintive notes of the weak and weeping. You little ones, you babes in Grace, may cry, "Hosanna," and the King will not silence you. And you strong men, with all your power of faith, may shout, "Hallelujah!" and your notes shall be accepted, too.

Come, then, let us have a tune in which we can all unite, but ah, we cannot make one which will suit the dead—the dead, I mean, "in trespasses and sins"—and there are some such here. Oh, may God open their mouths and unloose their tongues! But as for those of us who are alive unto God, let us, as we come to the Table, all contribute our own share of the music and so make up a song of blended harmony, with many parts—one great united song of praise to Jesus our Lord!

We should not choose a tune for the Communion Table which is not very soft. These are no boisterous themes with which we have to deal when we tarry here. A bleeding Savior, robed in a vesture dyed with blood—this is a theme which you must treat with loving gentleness, for everything that is coarse is out of place. While the tune is soft, it must also be sweet. Silence, you doubts! Be dumb, you fears! Be hushed, you cares! Why do you come here? My music must be sweet and soft when I sing of Him. But oh, it must also be strong! There must be a full swell in my praise. Draw out the stops, and let the organ swell the diapason! In fullness let its roll of thundering harmony go up to Heaven! Let every note be sounded at its loudest. "Praise you Him upon the cymbals, upon the high-sounding cymbals; upon the harp with a solemn sound." Let the music be soft, sweet and strong.

Alas, you complain that your soul is out of tune. Then ask the Master to tune the heart-strings. Those "Selahs" which we find so often in the Psalms are supposed by many scholars to mean, "Put the harp-strings in tune." Truly we require many "Selahs," for our hearts are constantly unstrung. Oh, that tonight the Master would enable each one of us to offer that tuneful prayer which we so often sing—

"Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above!
Frame the mount—oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God's unchanging love!"

V. We close by enquiring, WHO SHALL SING THIS HYMN?

Sitting around the Father's board, we will raise a joyful song, but who shall do it? "I will," says one. "And we will," say others. What is the reason why so many are willing to join? The reason is to be found in the theme we were singing just now—

"When He's the subject of the song,
Who can refuse to sing?"

What? A Christian silent when others are praising His Master? No! He must join in the song. Satan tries to make God's people dumb, but he cannot, for the Lord has not a tongue-tied child in all His family! They can all speak and they can all cry, even if they cannot all sing—but I think there are times when they *can* all sing—yes, they must, for you know the promise, "Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing." Surely, when Jesus leads the tune, if there should be any silent ones in the Lord's family, they must begin to praise the name of the Lord! After Giant Despair's head had been cut off, Christians and Mr. Greatheart and all the rest of them brought out the best of the provisions and made a feast. And Mr. Bunyan says that after they had feasted, they danced. In the

dance there was one remarkable dancer, namely, Mr. Ready-to-Halt. Now, Mr. Ready-to-Halt usually went upon crutches, but for once he laid them aside. "And," says Bunyan, "I guarantee you he footed it well!" This is quaintly showing us that the very sorrowful ones, the Ready-to-Halts, when they see Giant Despair's head cut off—when they see death, Hell, and sin led in triumphant captivity at the wheels of Christ's victorious chariot—I say they feel that even *they* must for once indulge in a song of gladness! So, when I put the question tonight, "Who will sing?" I trust that Ready-to-Halt will promise, "I will!"

You have not much comfort at home, perhaps. By very hard work you earn that little. Sunday is to you a day of true rest, for you are worked very cruelly all the week. Those cheeks of yours, poor girl, are getting very pale and who knows but what Hood's pathetic line may be true of you?—

"Stitch, stitch, stitch
In poverty, hunger, and dirt.
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A shroud as well as a shirt."

But, my Sister, you may surely rejoice tonight in spite of all this! There may be little on earth, but there is much in Heaven. There may be but small comfort for you here apart from Christ but oh when, by faith, you mount into His Glory, your soul is glad! You shall be as rich as the richest tonight if the Holy Spirit shall but bring you to the Table and enable you to feed upon your Lord and Master! Perhaps you have come here tonight when you ought not to have done so. The physician would have told you to stay in your bed, but you persisted in coming up to the House where the Lord has so often met with you. I trust that we shall hear your voice in the song. There appears to have been, in David's day, many things to silence the praise of God, but David was one who would sing. I like that expression of his where the devil seems to come up and put his hand on his mouth and say, "Be quiet!" "No," said David, "I will sing!" Again the devil tries to quiet him, but David is not to be silenced, for three times he puts it, "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord!" May the Lord make you resolve, this night, that you will praise the Lord Jesus with all your heart!

Alas, there are many of you here whom I cannot invite to this feast of song and who could not truly come if you were invited. Your sins are not forgiven. Your souls are not saved. You have not trusted Christ. You are still in Nature's darkness, still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! Must it always be so? Will you destroy yourselves? Have you made a league with death and a covenant with Hell? Mercy lingers! Long-suffering continues! Jesus waits! Remember that He hung upon the Cross for sinners such as you are and that if you believe in Him, now, you shall be saved! One act of faith and all the sin you have committed is blotted out. A single glance of faith's eye to the wounds of the Messiah and your load of iniquity is rolled into the depths of the sea—and you are forgiven in a moment!

"Oh," says one, "would God I could believe!" Poor Soul, may God help you to believe now! God took upon Himself our flesh. Christ was born among men and suffered on account of human guilt, being made to suffer "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Christ was punished in the place of every man and woman who will believe on Him. If you believe on Him, He was punished for you—and you will never be punished! Your debts are paid, your sins are forgiven. God cannot punish you, for He has punished Christ instead of you—and He will never punish twice for one offense. To believe is to trust. If you will now trust your soul entirely with Him, you are saved, for He loved you and gave Himself for you.

When you know this and feel it to be true, then come to the Lord's Table and join with us, when, AFTER SUPPER WE SING OUR HYMN—

"'It is finished!'—Oh what pleasure,
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord—
'It is finished!'
Saints, the dying words record.
Tune your harps anew, you seraphs,
Join to sing the pleasing theme!
All on earth, and all in Heaven,
Join to praise Immanuel's name!
Hallelujah!
Glory to the bleeding Lamb!"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—421, 439, 300.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:20-30; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-26.

Matthew 26:20. *Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve*. Why so many people celebrate the Lord's Supper in the morning, I cannot imagine, unless it is that they desire to do everything contrary to their Lord's command and example! "When the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve." I do not think there is any binding ordinance making the evening the only time for the observance of this ordinance—but to make the morning the only time is certainly not according to the Word of God!

21, 22. *And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful.* There was enough to make them sorrowful in the fact that their Lord had just told them that one of the 12 who were His bodyguard, His closest companions, His nearest and dearest friends, would betray Him. "They were exceedingly sorrowful."

22. *And began everyone of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?* It shows a beautiful trait in their character that they did not suspect one another and, least of all, I suppose, they did not suspect Judas, but each one

asked, "Lord, is it I?" It is an admirable way of hearing a sermon to take it home to yourself, especially if there is a rebuke or a caution in it.

23, 24. *And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.* The doom of the wicked is something far worse than non-existence, or Christ would not have said, concerning Judas Iscariot, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born." This is especially true of all those who, having for a while consorted with Christ, afterwards deny it and betray Him. O Brothers and Sisters, may all of us be kept from this terrible sin! May none of us ever betray our Master after all the fellowship we have had with Him! It would be better to die for Him than to deny Him—and it would be better never to have been born than to have been in intimate association with Him and then to have betrayed Him.

25. *Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* "It is even so." With a sorrowful gesture, He made it plain to His sad little circle of friends and followers that He knew all that was going to happen and that Judas was the man who was going to turn traitor.

26. *And as they were eating.* As they were eating the Passover. The one ordinance gradually melted into the other—"As they were eating."

26, 27. *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it.* "Each one of you, My disciples, take a draught of this cup."

28. *For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* They had had gross sin brought prominently to their minds. They had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin and now they were to have a personal pledge concerning the pardon of sin—"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sin."

29. *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom.* Taking, as it were, the great Nazarite vow to never taste of the fruit of the vine "until that day." He will keep His tryst with us, my Brothers and Sisters; and we shall drink the new vine of His Father's Kingdom with Him by-and-by. But until then, He waits.

30. *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

1 Corinthians 16:20. *When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.* Merely meeting together, each person bringing his or her own portion of bread and wine, and each one eating the provided portion, was *not* celebrating the Lord's Supper.

21. *For in eating, everyone takes before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunk.* Bad as some professing Christians are even now, they are not as bad as these Corinthians were! One was

hungry, and another was drunk because they had turned the holy feast into a kind of banquet of a most disorderly sort! There was nothing in their conduct to indicate true Christian fellowship. The very meaning of the ordinance was lost in the fact that each one was feasting himself without fear.

22. *What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.* The Lord's Supper is not to be made an opportunity for eating and drinking in disorderly self-enjoyment. It is a hallowed and holy institution, setting forth the fellowship of true Believers with one another, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was an Apostle, yet he had not been present at the institution of the Lord's Supper, so He had a special Revelation given to him concerning the way in which this ordinance is to be observed.

23. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.* That is the right kind of teaching which a man first receives from God, and then delivers to the people! Nothing is of authority in the Christian ministry unless we can say of it, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

23. *That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.* What a sad interest is given to the Lord's Supper by the fact that it was instituted "the same night in which He was betrayed." Never forget that! God grant that none of us may betray our Lord this night, or any other night! It would be the darkest night in our life should it ever be so. "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread."

24, 25. *And when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament.* "The New Covenant."

26, 26. *In My blood: this do you as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes.*

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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NO. 2983

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 12,1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3, 1875.

"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."
John 16:20.

You all know that at that time, our Lord was speaking of His death which would cause the deepest grief to His own people, while the ungodly world would rejoice and laugh them to scorn. So He bade them look beyond the immediate present into the future and believe that, ultimately, the cause of their sorrow would become a fountain of perpetual joy to them. It is always well to look a little ahead. Instead of deploring the dark clouds, let us anticipate the fruits and the flowers that will follow the descent of the needed showers. We might be always wretched if we lived only in the present, for our brightest time is yet to come. We are now, as Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, only in the twilight of our day—the high noon shall come to us by-and-by.

But although our Savior's words, just then, related immediately to His death, He was such a wonderful speaker that everything He said had a wider meaning in it than one might at first imagine. Even the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations—and even those words of Christ which have a direct application to a special occasion have a further wondrous power about them—and may be used on other occasions as well as upon the one when they were first uttered. I think I may fairly say that our Lord did not merely mean that just when He died, His children would have sorrow, but that we may take His words as a prophecy that all who truly follow Him will have their seasons of darkness and gloom. Our Lord Jesus Christ has nowhere promised to His people immunity from trial. On the contrary, He said to His disciples, "In the world you shall have tribulation." I cannot imagine a better promise for the wheat than that it shall be threshed—and that is the promise that is made to us if we are the Lord's wheat—and not the enemy's tares, "You shall have the threshing which shall fit you for the heavenly garner." You need not mourn, Beloved, that it is to be so. If you do, it will make no difference, for your Lord has declared that "in the world you shall have tribulation." Rest quite sure of that. If you could ask those Believers who are now in Heaven, they would tell you that they came through great tribulation—many of them not only washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, but they sealed their faithfulness to Him with their own blood!

Our Lord meant His disciples to feel the sorrow that was to come upon them, for He said to them, "You shall weep and lament," and He did not express any blame upon them for doing so. I would not have any of you imaging that there is any virtue in stoicism. I once heard a woman who wished to show the wonders worked in her by the Grace of God, say that when her baby was taken from her, she was so resigned to the Divine will that she did not even shed a tear! But I do not believe that it ever was the Divine will that mothers should lose their babies without shedding tears over them. I thank God that I did not have a mother who could have acted like that. And I believe that as Jesus, Himself, wept, there can be no virtue in our saying that we do not weep. God means you to feel the rod, my Brother, my Sister. He intends you to sometimes weep and lament, as Peter says, "if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." It is not merely the temptation or trial for which there is a necessity, but that we should be in heaviness is also a necessary part of our earthly discipline. Unfelt trial is no trial! Certainly it would be an unsanctified trial. Christ never meant Christians to be stoics. There is a wide and grave distinction between a gracious acquiescence in the Divine will and a callous steeling of your heart to bear anything that happens without any feeling whatever. "You shall be sorrowful," says our Lord to His disciples, and "you shall weep and lament." It is through the weeping and the lamenting, oftentimes, that the very kernel of the blessing comes to us!

Our Savior mentions one aggravation of our grief which some of us have often felt—"the world shall rejoice." That is the old story. David found his own trials all the harder to bear when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. He had been plagued all the day long and chastened every morning—he could have endured that if he had not seen that the ungodly had more than heart could wish! He found himself, sometimes, even troubled with the fear of death, but as for the wicked, he said, "There are no bonds in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." It makes our bitterness all the more bitter when the saints of God are afflicted and the enemies of God are made to dwell in ease. I daresay when you were a boy, you may have fallen and hurt yourself—and while you were smarting from your bruises, the other lads who were around you, were laughing at you! The pain was all the sharper because of their laughing. And the righteous are wounded to the quick when they see the ungodly prospering—prospering, apparently, by their ungodliness. And when these ungodly persons point the finger of scorn at them and ask, "Where is your God now? Is this the result of serving Him?" When this is your lot, remember that your Savior told His disciples that it would be so—and He has told you the same. While you are sorrowing, you shall hear their shouts of revelry. You shall be up in your own room weeping and you shall hear the sound of their merry feet in the dizzy dance. The very contrast between their circumstances and your own will make you feel your grief more. Well, if this is to be our lot, we must not count it a

strange thing when it comes, but we may hear our Master say to us, "I told you that it would be so." When it happens to any of you, Beloved, you must say, "This is even as Jesus Christ said it would be."

His first disciples, if they ventured out into the streets of Jerusalem after their Savior's crucifixion, and while He was lying in the tomb of Joseph, must have found it very trying to hear the jests and jeers of those who had put the Nazarene to death. "There is an end of Him now," they said. "His imposture is exposed and His disciples—poor, foolish fanatics—will soon come to their senses and the whole thing will collapse." Just so. That was what Jesus said would happen, "you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice."

Now, what was the Savior's cure for all this? It was the fact that this trial was to last only for a little while—for a very little while. In the case of His first disciples, it was only to last for a few days and then it would to over, for they would hear the joyful announcement, "The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon." So is it to be with you and with me, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Our sorrows are all, like ourselves, mortal. There are no immortal sorrows for immortal saints! They come, but, blessed be God, they also go like birds of the air—they fly over our heads but they cannot make their abode in our souls. We suffer today, but we shall rejoice tomorrow! "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." But as for yonder laughing sinner, what weeping and wailing will be his portion unless he repents and weeps in penitence over his many sins! The prosperity of the wicked is like a thin layer of ice on which they always stand in peril. In a moment they may be brought down to destruction! And the place that knew them will know them no more forever. Our weeping is soon to end, but their weeping will never end. Our joy will be forever, but their joy will speedily come to an end. Look a little ahead, Christian pilgrims, for you will soon have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and have come into the land where even the shadow of death shall never fall across your pathway again!

In speaking those comforting words to His disciples, our Savior made use of this memorable sentence, "Your sorrow shall to turned into joy." As I read the whole passage, I pondered over those words and tried to find out their meaning. Perhaps you think, as you glance at them, that they mean that the man who was sorrowful would be joyous. That is part of their meaning, but they mean a great deal more than that. They mean, literally and actually, your sorrow, itself, shall be *turned into joy*—not the sorrow to be taken away and joy to be put in its place—but the very sorrow which now grieves you, shall be turned into joy! This is a very wonderful transformation and only the God who works great marvels could possibly accomplish it—could, somehow, not only take away the bitterness and give sweetness in its place, but turn the bitterness, itself, into sweetness!

That is to be the subject of our present meditation and I am glad to have, in the communion at which many of us will presently unite in the

highest act of Christian fellowship, an apt illustration of my theme. You know that the Supper of the Lord is not at all a funereal gathering, but it is a sacred festival at which we sit at our ease, restfully enjoying ourselves as at a banquet. But what are the provisions for this feast and what do they represent? That bread, that wine—what do they mean? They represent, my dear Friends, sorrow—sorrow even unto death! The bread, separate from the wine, represents the flesh of Christ separate from His blood, and so they set forth death. The broken bread represents the flesh of Christ bruised, marred, suffering, full of anguish. The wine represents Christ's blood poured out upon the Cross amidst agony which only ended with His death. Yet these emblems of sorrow and suffering furnish us with our great feast of love! This is, indeed, joy arising out of sorrow! The festival is itself the ordained memorial of the greatest grief that was ever endured on earth. Here, then, as you gather around this Table, you shall see, in the outward signs and emblems, that sorrow is turned into joy!

I. If you will keep that picture in your mind's eye, it will help me to bring out the meaning of the text. And our first point will be this—OUR SORROW AS TO OUR BLESSED LORD IS NOW TURNED INTO JOY. The very things that make us grieve concerning Him are the things which make us rejoice concerning Him!

And, first, *this comes to pass when we look upon Him as tempted, tried and tested in a thousand ways.* We see Him no sooner rising from the waters of Baptism than He is led into the desert to be tempted by the devil. And we grieve to think that, for our sakes, it was necessary that He should there bear the brunt of a fierce duel with the Prince of Darkness. We see Him afterwards, all His life, tempted, tried and tested this way and that—sometimes by a scribe or a Pharisee, sometimes by a Sadducee. All sorts of temptations were brought to bear upon Him, for He "was in all points tempted like as we are." But, oh, how thankful we are to know that He was thus tempted, for those very temptations helped to prove the sinlessness of His Character! How could we know what there was in a man who was never tested and tried? But our Lord was tested at every point—and at no point did He fall. It is established, beyond all question, that He is the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot. You cannot tell what a man's strength of character is unless he is tried. There must be something to develop the excellence that lies hidden in his nature. And we ought to rejoice and bless God that our Savior was passed, like silver, through the furnace seven times and, like gold, was tried again and again in the crucible in the hottest part of the furnace yet there was found no dross in Him, but only the pure, precious metal without a particle of alloy! Therein do we greatly rejoice! He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He was tempted by Satan and contradicted by sinners, yet He was found faultless to the end and, thus, our joy arises out of that which otherwise would have made us mourn!

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, remember that the griefs and trials of our Lord not only manifested His sinless Character, but *they made Him fit for that priestly office which He has undertaken on our behalf*. The Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through sufferings." It was necessary that He who would really be a Benefactor to men should know them thoroughly and understand them. How can He sympathize with them in their sorrows unless He has, at least to some extent, felt as they do? So, our merciful and faithful High Priest is one who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," seeing that He was tempted and tried even as we are. I think that had I been alive at the time, I would have spared my Lord many of His griefs had it been in my power—and many of you will say the same. He would never have needed to say, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," for you would gladly have given Him the best room in your house! Ah, but then the poor would have missed that gracious Word of God which, I have no doubt, has often comforted them when they have been houseless and forlorn! You would not have allowed Him, if you could have helped it, to be weary, and worn, and hungry, and thirsty. You would have liberally supplied all His needs to the utmost of your power. But then He would not have been so fully in sympathy as He now is with those who have to endure the direst straits of poverty, seeing that He has passed through a similar experience to theirs. What joy it is to a sorrowing soul to know that Jesus has gone that way long before!

I had a great grief that struck me down to the very dust, but I looked up and saw that face that was marred more than any other. And I rose to my feet in hope and joyful confidence and I said, "Are You, my Lord, here where I am? Have you suffered thus, and did you endure far more than I can ever know of grief and brokenness of heart? Then, Savior, I rejoice and bless Your holy name!" I know that you, Beloved, must often have grieved over your Savior's suffering, though you have been, at the same time, glad to remember that He passed through it all—because He thus became such a matchless Comforter, "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" because of the very experience through which He passed—"for in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

The meaning of the text comes out even more clearly when we think of *the sorrows to which our Lord had been referring, which ended in His death*. Oh, the griefs of Jesus when He laid down His life for His sheep! Have you not sometimes said, or at least thought, that the ransom price was too costly for such insignificant creatures as we are? Think of the agony and bloody sweat, the scourging, the spitting, the shame, the hounding through the streets, the piercing of the hands and feet, the mockery, the vinegar, the gall, the "Eloi Eloi, lama Sabachthani?" and all the other horrors and terrors that gathered around the Cross! We wish that this might never have happened and yet the fact that they *did* happen brings to us unspeakable bliss! It is our greatest joy to know that

Jesus bled and died upon the tree! How else could our sins be put away? How else could we, who are God's enemies, be reconciled and brought near to Him? How else could Heaven be made secure for us? We might, from one aspect of Christ's sufferings, chant a mournful *miserere* at the foot of the Cross, but before we have done more than just commence the sad strain, we perceive the blessed results that come to the children of men through Christ's death—so we lay down our instruments of mourning and take up the harp and the trumpet—and sound forth glad notes of rejoicing and thanksgiving!

Our sorrow about Christ's death is also turned into joy because not only do we derive the greatest possible benefit from it, but *Jesus Himself, by His death, achieved such wonders*. That precious body of His, that fair lily all stained with crimson lines where flowed His heart's blood must have been a piteous sight for anyone to see. I wonder how any artist could ever paint the taking down of Christ from the Cross, or the robing Him for the sepulcher? They were sorrowful sights for art to spend itself upon. Jesus, the final Conqueror, lies in the grave! The cerements of the tomb are wrapped about Him who once wore the purple of the universe! But we have scarcely time to sorrow over these facts before we recollect that the death of Christ was the death of sin! The death of Christ was the overthrow of Satan! The death of Christ was the death of death! And out of His very tomb we hear that pealing trumpet note, "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." I am glad that He fought with Satan in the Garden and vanquished Him. I am glad that He fought with sin upon the Cross and destroyed it. I am glad that He fought with grim death in that dark hour and that He seized him by the throat and held him captive. I am glad that He ever entered the gloomy sepulcher, for He rifled it of all its terrors for all His loved ones, tore its iron bars away and set His people free! So you see, it is all gladness, even as He said to His disciples, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

And whatever else there may be of sorrow that came out of Christ's Cross, we may all be glad of it, for *now Christ Himself is the more glorious because of it*. It is true that nothing could add to His Glory as God, but seeing that He assumed our Nature and became Man as well as God, He added to His Glory by all the shame He bore! There is not a reproach that pierced His heart which did not make Him more beautiful! There is not a line of sorrow that furrowed His face which did not make Him more lovely—that marred Countenance is more to be admired by us than all the comeliness of earthly beauty! He was always superlatively beautiful. His beauty was such as might well hold the angels spellbound as they looked upon Him! The sun and moon and stars were dim compared with the brightness of His eyes. Heaven and earth could not find His equal and if all Heaven had been sold, it could not have purchased this precious Pearl! Yet the setting of the pearl has made Christ appear even brighter than before—the setting of His Humanity, the setting of His

sufferings, His pangs, His shameful death has made His beauty shine out the more resplendent! The plant that sprang from Jesse's root is now the plant of renown! He who was despised at Nazareth is glorified in Paradise and the more glorified because, between Nazareth and Paradise, He was "despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." Blessed Savior, we rejoice that You have gained by all Your sorrows, for therefore has God highly exalted You, and given You a name which is above every name!

II. But, now, secondly, and very briefly, I want to remind you that THE SORROW OF THE WHOLE CHURCH HAS ALSO BEEN TURNED INTO JOY.

In speaking of the *sorrows of the persecuted Church of Christ*, I will not compare them to the sorrows of her Lord. But if anything could have been comparable to the suffering of the Bridegroom, it would have been the suffering of the bride. Think of the early ages of the Church of God under the Roman persecutions. Think of the Church of Christ among the Vaudois of the Alps, or in England during the Marian persecution. Our blood runs cold as we read of what the saints of God have suffered! I have often put up Foxe's Book of Martyrs upon the shelf and thought that I could not read it any more—it is such a terribly true account of what human nature can bear when faith in Christ sustains it. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we are not sorry that the martyrs suffered as they did. Or if we are, that very sorrow is turned into joy at the remembrance of how Christ has been glorified through the sufferings of His saints! Even our poor humanity looks more comely when we recall what it endured for Christ's sake. When I think of the honor of being a martyr for the Truth of God, I confess that I would sooner be a martyr than be the angel Gabriel, for I think it would be far better to have gone to Heaven from one of Smithfield's stakes than to have been always in Heaven. What honor it has brought to Christ that poor, feeble men could love Him so that they could bleed and die for Him! Yes, and women, too, like that brave Anne Askew, who, after they had racked her till they had put every bone out of joint, was still courageous enough to argue on behalf of her dear Lord! When they thought that her womanly weakness would make her give way, she seemed stronger than any man might have been as she said to her persecutors—

"I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall
For every dryslynge myst;
My shippe's substancyal"—

and so defied them to do their worst! The Church of God may well rejoice as she thinks of the noble army of martyrs who praise the Lord on high for, among the sweetest notes that ascend even in Heaven, are the songs that come from the white-robed throng who shed their blood rather than deny their Lord!

The Church of Christ has also passed through a fierce fire of opposition, as well as of persecution. Heresy after heresy has raged. Men have arisen

who have denied this, and that, and the other Doctrines taught in the Scriptures. And every time these oppositions have come, certain feeble folk in the Church have been greatly alarmed but, in looking back upon them all up to the present, I think that they are causes for joy rather than sorrow! Whenever what is supposed to be a new heresy comes up, I say to myself, "Ah, I know you! I remember reading about you. There was an old pair of shoes, worn by heresy many hundreds of years ago which were thrown on a dunghill—and you have picked them up and refurbished them a little, and brought them forth as if they had been new." I bless the Lord that at this moment there scarcely remains *any* Doctrine to be defended for the first time, for they have all been fought over so fiercely in years gone by that there is hardly any point that our noble forefathers did not defend! And they did their work so well that we can frequently use their weapons for the defense of the Truth today. Who would wish to have kept the Word of God from going through this furnace of opposition? It is like silver seven times purified in a furnace of earth. Philosophers have tried you, O precious Book, but you were not found wanting! Atheists have tried you! Sneering skeptics have tried you! They have all passed you through the fire, but not even the smell of fire is upon you to this day! And therein do we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! And the day will come when the present errors and opposition will only be recorded on the pages of history as things for our successors to rejoice over just as we now rejoice over the past victories of the Truth of God!

And once again, dear Friends, not only is it so with the persecutions and oppositions of the Church of Christ, but the *Church's difficulties have also become themes of rejoicing.* As I look abroad upon the world at the present time, it does seem an impossible thing that the nations of the earth should ever be converted to Christ. It is impossible so far as man alone is concerned, yet God has commanded the Christian Church to evangelize the world! Someone complains that the Church is too feeble and its adherents too few to accomplish such a task as this. The fewer the fighters, the greater their share of glory when the victory is won! In order to overcome indifference, idolatry, atheism, Mohammedanism and Popery, the battle must be a very stern one, but who wants Christ's followers to fight only little battles? My Brothers and Sisters, let us thank God that our foes are so numerous! It matters not how many there may be of them—there are only the more to be destroyed! What said David concerning his adversaries? "They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." When the Last Great Day shall come and Jehovah's banner shall be finally furled because the Book of the Wars of the Lord shall have reached its last page, it will be a grand thing to tell the story of the whole campaign! Then it will be known to all that the fight for the faith was not a mere skirmish against a few feeble folk, nor was it a brief battle which began and ended in an hour—but it was a tremendous conflict "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." They gather, they

gather, my Brothers and Sisters, thick as the clouds in the day of tempest, but, out of Heaven Jehovah, Himself, will thunder and give battle and scatter them—and they shall fly before Him like the chaff before the wind!

III. Now, lastly, to come down from those high themes to minor matters, OUR OWN PERSONAL SORROW SHALL BE TURNED INTO JOY.

When I think of the sorrows of Christ and the sorrows of His Church as a whole, I say to myself, "What pin pricks are our griefs compared with the great gash in the Savior's side, and the many scars that adorn His Church today!" But, dear Friends, whatever our sorrows may be, they will be turned into joy. Sometimes we witness this wonderful transformation. Poor old Jacob sorrowed greatly when he thought that he had lost his favorite son, Joseph. "An evil beast has devoured him," he said. "Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces." And he wrung his hands and wept bitterly for many a day over his lost Joseph. Then came the famine and the poor old man was dreadfully alarmed concerning his large family. He must send some of his sons into Egypt to buy corn, and when he sends them there, they do not all come back, for Simeon is detained as a hostage—and the lord of the land says that they shall not see his face again unless they bring Benjamin with them—Benjamin, the dear and only remaining child of the beloved Rachel! Jacob cannot bear the thought of parting with him, so he says to his sons, "You have bereaved me of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Poor old soul, what a mistake he made! Why, everything was as much for him as it could possibly be! There was his dear Joseph, down in Egypt, next to Pharaoh on the throne and ready to provide for his poor old father and all the family during the time of famine! Then there was the famine to make him send down to Egypt and find out where Joseph was, so that he might go and see his face again, and confess that the Lord had dealt graciously with him. You dear children of God who get to fretting and are troubled should carry out Cowper's good advice—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace—
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!"

You have quite enough to cry over without fretting concerning things that, some day, you will rejoice over! The Lord will put your tears into His bottle and when He shows them to you, by-and-by, I think you will say, "How foolish I was ever to shed them, because the very thing I wept over was really a cause for rejoicing if I could but have seen a little way ahead." It is so sometimes, in Providence, as you will find over and over again between here and Heaven!

Our sorrows, dear Friends, are turned into joy in many different ways. For instance, there are some of us who are such naughty children *that we never seem to come close to our Heavenly Father unless some sorrow drives us to Him.* We ought to be more with Him in days of sunshine, if it

were possible, than in days of storm, but it is not always so. It is said that there are some dogs which, the more you whip them, the more they love you. I should not like to try that plan even on a dog, but I fear that some of us are very much like dogs in that respect, if the saying is true. When we have a great trouble, or get a sharp cut, we seem to wake up and say, "Lord, we forgot You when all was going smoothly. We wandered from You, then, but now we must come back to You." And there is a special softness of heart and mellowness of spirit which we often get through being tried and troubled. And when that is the case, you and I have great cause to rejoice in our sorrows, if they draw us nearer to God and bring us to a clear and more careful walk with Him. If they draw us away from worldliness, self-sufficiency and self-complacency, our sorrows, if we are wise men and women, will be immediately turned into joy!

Again, there is no doubt that, to many, *sorrow is a great means of opening the eyes to the preciousness of the promises of God*. I believe that there are some of God's promises of which we shall never get to know the meaning until we have been placed in the circumstances for which those promises were written. Certain objects in Nature can only be seen from certain points of view. And there are precious things in the Covenant of Grace that can only be perceived from the deep places of trouble. Well, then, if your trouble brings you into a position where you can understand more of the loving kindness of the Lord, you may be very thankful that you were ever put there and may thus find your sorrow turned into joy.

Again, *sorrow often gives us further fellowship with Christ*. There are times when we can say, "Now, Lord, we can sympathize with You better than we ever did before, for we have felt somewhat as You did in Your agony here below." We have sometimes felt as though that prophecy had been fulfilled to us, "You shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." For instance, if friends forsake you—if he that eats bread with you lifts up his heel against you, you can say, "Now, Lord, I know a little better what Your feeling was when Judas so basely betrayed You." You cannot so fully comprehend the griefs of Christ unless, in your humble measure, you have to pass through a somewhat similar experience. But when you perceive that you can sympathize more with Christ because of your own sorrow, then, for certain, your sorrow is turned into joy.

Sorrow also gives us fellowship with our Lord in another way—*when we feel as if Christ and we had become partners in one trouble*. Here is a cross and I have to carry one end of it. But I look around and see that my Lord is carrying the heavier end of it—and then it is a very sweet sorrow to carry the cross in partnership with Christ! Rutherford says, in one of his letters, "When Christ's dear child is carrying a burden, it often happens that Christ says, 'Halves, My love,' and carries half of it for him." It is indeed sweet when it is so. If there is a ring of fire on your finger and that ring means that you are married to Christ, you may well

be willing to wear it, whatever suffering it may cause you. Those were blessed bolts that fastened you to the Cross even though they were bolts of iron that went right through your flesh, for they kept you the more closely to your Lord! Our motto must be, "Anywhere with Jesus, nowhere without Jesus." Anywhere with Jesus! Yes, even in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace! When we have the Son of God with us, the glowing coals cannot hurt us—they become a bed of roses to us when He is there! Where Jesus is, our sorrow is turned into joy.

I must not fail to remind you that there is a time coming when "the sorrows of death" will get hold upon us and I want you, Brothers and Sisters, to understand that unless the Lord shall come first, *we shall not escape the sorrow of dying, but it will be turned into joy*. It has been my great joy to see many Christians in their last moments an earth and I am sure that the merriest people I have ever seen have been dying saints! I have been to wedding feasts. I have seen the joy of young people in their youth. I have seen the joy of the merchant when he has made a prosperous venture and I have, myself, experienced joys of various kinds, but I have never seen any joy that I have so envied as that which has sparkled in the eyes of departing Believers! There rises up before me now a vision of the two eyes of a poor consumptive girl—oh, how bright they were! I heard that she must soon die, so I went to try to comfort her. To comfort her? Oh, dear, she needed no comforting from me! Every now and then she would burst forth into a verse of sacred song and when she stopped, she would tell me how precious Jesus was to her, what love visits He had already paid her, and how soon she expected to be with Him forever! There was not, in all the palaces of Europe, or in all the mansions of the wealthy, or in all the ballrooms of the happy, such a merry and joyous spirit as I saw shining through the bright eyes of that poor consumptive girl who had very little here below, but who had so much laid up for her in Heaven that it did not matter what she had here!

Yes, Beloved, your sorrow will be turned into joy! Many of you will not even know that you are dying—you will shut your eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! Some of you may be dreading death, for there is still a measure of unbelief remaining in you, but also in your case, death will be swallowed up in victory! Just as when some people have to take medicine which is very bitter, it is put into some sweet liquid and they drink it down without tasting the bitterness, so will it be with all of us who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ when we have to drink our last potion. In a few more days, or weeks, or months, or years—it does not matter which, for it will be a very short time at the longest—all of us who love the Lord will be with Him where He is—to behold His Glory and to share it with Him forever! Have any of you any sorrows that you still wish to talk about? Some of you are very poor and others of you are very much tried and troubled in many ways, but, my dear Friends, when you and I get up there—and we shall do so before long—I think you will have the best of it! If there is any truth in that line—

"The deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing"—

the more sorrows you have had, the more will you sing! Nobody enjoys wealth like a man who has been poor. Nobody enjoys health like a man who has been sick. I think that the most pleasant days I ever spend are they that follow a long illness when I, at last, begin to creep outside and drink in the sweet fresh air again. And, oh, what joy it will be to you poor ones and you sick ones and you tried ones to get into the land where all is plentiful, where all is peaceful, where all is gladsome, where all is holy! You will be there soon—some of you will be there very soon. Dr. Watts says that—

"There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit.
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet."

That is to say, the very sorrows that we pass through in our earthly pilgrimage will constitute topics for joyful conversations in Heaven. I do not doubt that it will be so.

In Heaven we shall be as glad of our troubles as of our mercies! Perhaps it will appear to us, then, that God never loved us so much as when He chastened and tried us. When we get home to Glory, we shall be like children who have grown up, who, sometimes say to a wise parent, "Father, I have forgotten about the holidays you gave me. I have forgotten about the pocket money you gave me. I have forgotten about a great many sweet things that I very much liked when I was a child, but I have never forgotten that whipping which you gave me when I did wrong, for it saved me from turning altogether aside. Dear Father, I know you did not like to do it, but I am very grateful to you for it now—more grateful for that whipping than for all the sponge cakes and sweetmeats that you gave me." And, in like manner, when we get home to Heaven, I have no doubt that we shall feel and perhaps say, "Lord, we are grateful to You for everything, but most of all for our sorrows. We see that had You left us unchastised, we would never have been what we now are and, thus, our sorrows are turned into joy."

As for you who are not Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to ponder most solemnly these few words and carry them home with you. *If you remain as you are, your joys will be turned into sorrows. God grant that they may not be, 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.

A SILLY DOVE
NO. 2984

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

"Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart."
Hosea 7:11.

THE race of Ephraim is not extinct. Men are to this very day very much like what they were in the days of the Prophets. The same rebukes are still suitable, as well as the same comforts. As man has altered very little, if at all, in his outward bodily conformation, so has he not varied in the inner constitution—he is much the same today as he was in the time of Hosea. In this congregation, in the midst of the city of London, we have too large a company of those who are "like a silly dove without heart."

To proceed at once with the text, I want you to notice four things. First—*a saintly similitude.* Secondly—*a secret distinction.* Thirdly—*a severe description.* And lastly, *a serious consideration.*

I. Here we have A SAINTLY SIMILITUDE—"Ephraim is like a dove!"

The people are not compared here to the eagle that soars aloft and scents its prey from afar, nor to the vulture which delights to gorge itself with carrion. They are not likened to any foul and unclean bird which was put aside under the Law of God, but the very figure which is constantly chosen to set forth the beauty of holiness, to describe the Believer, and to picture the whole Church—no, that very emblem by which we set forth Him who is Holiness, itself, God the Holy Spirit—that same comparison to a dove is here used to describe those who were without heart. "Ephraim is like a dove"—it is a *saintly similitude.*

Let me remind you that in all congregations there are those who are *like* doves, but not Christ's doves, who never build their nests in the clefts of the rock, in the bosom of the Savior. They are *like* doves—you can never tell them from genuine Believers and, *like doves, they are perfectly harmless.* They do no mischief to others in all their lives. Track them, if you will, you will never find them in the alehouse. They sing not the song of the drunkard. No man ever lost anything in business by them. Men may have their pockets picked in the streets, but never by them. Persons may go staggering home under a wound, but that wound never comes from their hands—there is no uncleanness in their heart and no slander on their tongue—they are amiable, admirable. We might almost hold them up for examples of propriety. Alas, alas, that we have only to look *within* to find that they are not what they seem!

Moreover, being like doves for harmlessness, *they are also like them for loving good company.* We find not the dove flying with a host of eagles, but it consorts with its own kind. Some of you are never happier than

when you are either in the Tabernacle or else in some of the classes formed by various members of the congregation. You also find such a pleasant excitement in the Prayer Meeting that you are not absent from it except when you are prevented by business. You love being where God's people go—their hymns are sweet to your ears. In their prayers you find some sort of comfort and in the ministry of the Word you take delight. You fly like a cloud and like doves to their windows, and it is a joy to us to see you do it. And yet it may be that although you know how to congregate like doves, you are simply "like a silly dove without heart."

Moreover, these persons are still more like the dove in that *they have the same meekness, apparently, as distinguishes the dove*. They hear as God's people hear and sit as His people sit. They are not skeptics. They never object to the exposition of the Doctrines to which they listen. They pick no holes in the preacher's coat—they have no particular fault to find either with the style or the matter of his discourse. They decorously frequent the House of God and behave themselves in a seemly manner when there. No, more than that, they seem with meekness to receive the Word, though they do not receive it as engrafted into their own hearts. They even receive it with joy when the Seed is scattered on them, but having no root in themselves, the good Seed comes to nothing. O my dear Hearers, it is a great subject for thanksgiving that so many of you are ready and willing to listen to the Word with deep and profound respect! But I do beseech you to remember that you may, in this, be like the dove, and yet, after all, you may be taken in the same net and destroyed with the same destruction as that which fell upon the Ephraimites who were "like a silly dove without heart!"

The dove, you know, is *a clean feeder*, and so we have many who get as far as that. They know the distinction between the precious and the vile—they will not feed on Law—they can only live on Grace. They have come to know the Doctrines of the Gospel and they feed on them—upon pure corn, well winnowed. You have only to bring in a little free will and straightway they know the chaff from the wheat and refuse to receive it! They cast it away as refuse metal which is of no value to them. But, while they have an orthodox head, they have a heterodox heart—while they know the Truth of God and feel it, yet it is still not the right kind of feeling—they have never so received it as to incorporate it into their very being. They have accepted it with the same sort of belief and in somewhat the same manner as Simon did in Samaria. But, after a while, when trouble and persecution shall come, and waxes too hot, they will turn aside.

But I have to add yet further that there are some of these persons who are like doves in another respect still more singular—as *a dove is molested by all sorts of birds of prey,* so these persons do, for a time, share the lot which befalls the people of God! Why, there are some who for the mere coming to the House of God, get nicknamed, "saints." They are not saints, but they have to bear the scoffing which is given to saints. And I know some who have turned out to be great sinners, who have, for a time, put up with much scoffing and rebuke for the sake of Christ! When pointed at in the street, it has been part of the manliness of their

character to acknowledge that they did frequent such a place of worship. Though their soul has never been stricken by the Divine Word, yet it has become so sweet in their ears that they are willing to bear some degree of reproach for the sake of it! I should not like to be compelled to say precisely wherein the saint is to be distinguished by outward signs, for really, the counterfeits nowadays are so much like the genuine that it needs the Wisdom of the Infallible God, Himself, to discern between the one and the other! We can have false faith, false repentance, false hope and false good works. We have all sorts of things—paint, varnish, tinsel—and we may so grain that a skillful eye will scarcely know whether it is the genuine wood or the artist's skill. There are many ways of preparing metals and sometimes the alloy seems to have in it, for some purpose, qualities which the unalloyed metal lacks. O Lord, the great Searcher of hearts, do search us lest we should have applied to us saintly names and pass the saintly reputation and character—and hold saintly offices—and after all be cast away with the rubbish over the wall and left to be consumed forever and ever! But, enough on that point.

II. I have now to call your attention to A SECRET DISTINCTION—"Ephraim is like a dove *without heart*."

This implies *a lack of understanding*. The dove knows but little and experience scarcely teaches it anything. We may almost spread the snare in the flight of that bird and yet it will fly to it, it is so silly. It does not seem to possess, at least to the outward eye, the wits and sense of some others of the feathered tribe. It has little or no understanding. And oh, how many there are who are, spiritually, like the dove! They have no real knowledge of the Truth of God! They rest in the letter and think that is enough. I solemnly believe that there are those who have not the shadow of an idea of the meaning of the words which they hear every Sabbath in a form of prayer! They repeat those prayers without any appreciation of the sense of them. They would probably not notice if the words were put in any other way. Doubtless they would get as much good out of them if they were thrown together in wild disorder, as they do out of the beautiful and magnificent array in which they are marshaled! Many who come and hear the most simple Truths, go away and say, "It is a riddle to us. We cannot understand how people can sit and listen to that." Either they condemn the preacher's words as trite or else as fanatical—they cannot understand them.

You may fetch a clodhopper and set before him the masterpiece of an eminent old painter and tell him, "That picture is worth sixty thousand pounds." He looks, opens his mouth, starts again and says he can't make anything of it. He can't see where the money could go. He'd sooner have carts, and horses, and pigs, and cows, and sheep. Well, now, to some extent we might almost sympathize with him, but the high-art critics despise the man at once for having no soul above his clod. And it is just the same in spiritual things! Exhibit the glories of the Person of Christ and the matchless wisdom of the plan of salvation—that man can see nothing in it. "It is, no doubt, a very good and very proper thing." He will attend to it and so on—and then he goes to church and thinks he is

pious, sits in his seat and goes through the routine—and then supposes he is reconciled to God! Oh, how many such silly doves we have fluttering in and out of our places of worship! As a quaint old preacher said, there were scarcely seats enough for the saints on account of the number of simpletons that came to listen!

But, again, they were silly doves without heart, because, lacking an understanding heart, *they also lacked a decided heart*. Sometimes, however, the dove would be slandered if we should use her as a metaphor in this respect. Have you not seen the dove when, from afar, with her quick eyes she has seen her cot, fly straight away, over miles of sea and land, straight to her beloved home? There, she could not be used as a metaphor of the ungodly—but of a child of Jesus who thus flies to Him over the wild waves of sin. But, perhaps, you have seen the dove as first she rises in the air and then flies round and round. She deliberates in order to find out which is the right direction and, when she has made up her mind, away she flies straight as an arrow to the goal. But, while she is fluttering about, she is an apt emblem of some men. They are undecided whether for God or Baal. They halt, to use Elijah's figure, between two opinions. "How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." On Sundays, they go to church, but on Mondays, they put off their religious habits—the weather is too rough, or something else prevents them from going to the Prayer Meeting. On Sunday, they say—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss"—

but, on Monday or Tuesday, the sound of the wheels in the street and the noise of them that buy and sell put the music of Jerusalem out of their ears and they would gladly go back to the world again! Ah, they are silly doves without understanding and without decision!

No, there are some who may be said to have a sort of decision for a time, but they are like the dove in that *they are without resolution*. The doves seeks to fly in one direction. Somebody claps his hands and she changes in a moment. Or else he sprinkles a handful of barley on the ground and, though she was flying yonder, she is over here again! How many persons there are of that kind, setting their faces to Zion, intending to join the church—perhaps they have seen the elders and the pastor and been accepted—but, after a little time, they say, "Well, they did not know all about it. There are more frightful things than they dreamt of in it!" Like Pliable, they would go to Heaven, but they get into the Slough of Despond and there is strange stuff there that gets into the ears and mouth—and so they get out on the side nearest home and tell Christian he may have the brave country all to himself, for they don't like the miry places on the way. Or, it may be that some old companion comes up from the country and he will treat them to some place of amusement. Or, perhaps, it may be that there is a prospect of gain to be got in some branch of business that is not quite as honest as it might be. But does not the money count as well? Isn't it as good to spend? Will not other men think it worth twenty shillings to the pound, however it may have

been gained? These people who seemed so true and warm-hearted are like the silly dove without resolution—and fly away again to their old haunts and become just what they used to be.

So likewise there are many, like a dove, *without bold hearts*. They never turn upon a persecutor. They never stood in the gap with Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, holding the sword in their hand. They cannot open their mouth to speak for Jesus, but they run away when they ought to stand out like a lion against their foes. They never give a reason for the hope that is in them. We have plenty of Baptist churches educating cowards by the score! They never come out before the whole church—that would be too trying for their nerves! They are never expected to come out boldly on the Lord's side. Too often, Baptism is administered somewhere in a corner, when as few as possible are present and, in that way, where we ought to have lion-like men, we breed those who hide their principles and are ready to amalgamate with any sect of people so long as they can but bear the name of Christians! I would to God, dear Friends, we had bolder men for our Lord and Master! Be as full of love as you can, but take care that you mix iron with your constitution! Silly are the doves that have no bold heart for God. The day will come when only the bold heart shall win, for the fearful and unbelieving are to have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone!

Too many, also, there are like a silly dove, in that they *have a powerless heart*. If you visit a great factory where there is a large engine, you will notice that the amount of power used in the factory is proportionate to the capacity of the steam-engine. If that should work but feebly, then the wheels cannot revolve beyond a proportionate rate—and every part soon discovers that there is some lack of motive force. Now, man's heart is the great steam-engine of his whole being—and if he has a heart that palpitates with swift strokes, it will put his whole nature in motion and that man will be mighty for his Lord and Master! But if he has a little, insignificant heart that never did glow, and never did burn, and never did know anything about the warmth, life, heat, power and benediction of God's Love, then his will fritter away his time, knowing the right and doing the wrong, loving in some sort the thing that is beautiful, but still following that which is deformed, giving his name to God and giving what little strength he has to the other side! Brothers and Sisters, I would to God there were not so many in all our communities that have but a pigeon's heart, or a dove's heart, or no heart at all!

The root of the master lies here—*these Ephraimites have not renewed hearts* and so they fail. Verily, verily, it is true to this hour, as in Jesus' day, "except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Many strive to see it in their own way, but, until the effectual Grace of God comes down to turn their hearts from the great and extraordinary confidence which their proud flesh has in their own works, they never will see, they never *can* see, the Kingdom of God! How many like Ephraim, then, have the heart altogether wrong because it is not renewed? Therefore it has none of those qualifications which tend to make the man what he should be.

III. With great brevity, we notice, in the third place, A SEVERE DESCRIPTION—"Ephraim is like a *silly* dove."

It is a fine word, that word, "*silly*." Hardly do I know another that is so eminently descriptive. There may be some sort of dignity in being a fool—but to be *silly*—to attract no attention except ridicule—is so utterly contemptible that I do not know how a more sarcastic epithet could be applied!

"Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart." And why silly? Why, *it is silly, of course, to profess to be a dove at all, unless a dove at heart!* Silly of you to enslave yourselves with the customs of a country of which you are not a citizen—to bind yourselves with the rules of a family of which you are not a member! We find men, when they go to another country, if there is a conscription there, only too willing to plead their own nationality in order to escape it! And yet we have persons who will serve in the Christian conscription, who give as God's people give and outwardly do what God's people do—and yet they are not of the godly nation, but are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel! Is not this silly—to take the irksome toil and not to get the joy and the benefit of it? You are silly to go and work in the vineyard, though you have never eaten of the clusters, and never can unless your heart is right in the sight of God.

Isn't it silly, then, to profess to be a dove at all, and yet not to be a dove? Isn't it silly, again, to think you can pass muster when your heart is wrong—*to fancy that if you go with the crowd, you shall enter Heaven without being seen*? Do you think to deceive Omniscience? Do you think Infallible Wisdom will not discern you? Do you think to enter Heaven while your soul is estranged from God? Then, indeed, you are worse than a fool! You are "silly" to think such a thing! How can you thus hope to deceive your God? What is more silly than to play fast and loose in this way—first, to sing the song of Zion, and then the song of lasciviousness! There is something dignified even in the devil, himself—there is something awful about the grandeur of his wickedness because he is consistent in it! But there is nothing of that consistency in you because you are here and there, everywhere and nowhere—everything by turns, and nothing long.

Some of you are *so silly as to hasten your own condemnation*. You know that to be without God and without Christ will ruin you, and yet you do that which keeps you from going to Christ! You hug the sins that prevent your laying hold on Him and still dandle upon your knee the lusts which you know will shut the gates of Heaven against you! Like Ephraim, you are silly enough to trust in that which will be your ruin. Some of you rest upon good works, or hope to be saved by good feelings. The two powers which had oppressed Ephraim—Egypt and Assyria—were still the powers in which he trusted. Do not imitate his folly by trusting to that which will ruin you!

You are silly, again, because *when there is so much danger, you do not fly to the place of shelter*. O silly dove, when the hawk is abroad, not to seek the clefts of the rock to hide yourself! And how silly are some of you! Day after day, year after year, Satan is hawking after you! The great fowler is seeking your destruction, but the wounds of Christ are open to

you and the invitation of the Gospel is freely given to you—and yet, you are so silly that though you know better, you prefer the pleasures of the day to the joys of eternity! Yet I know not that you do prefer them, only somehow or other you are too silly to prove your preference and go on, like a child that is playing on the hole of the cockatrice, making mirth over your damnation—too silly to make up your minds to choose either Heaven or Hell! I know there are some such people in this house—would God that the arrow might find out the right persons, but, too often, these doves are so silly, in another respect, that they will not let the appeal of the Gospel come home to them. They say, "it cannot be for me, for I go to Mr. A's or Mr. B's class! It cannot be for me, for I go to the Prayer Meeting, I contribute to the College and every good work!" Yet all the while it means just you who act upon your own whims, but not for God, who give God anything but your heart, who are ready to make a sacrifice of all, except that you refuse that which He asks of you! "My son, give Me your heart." It was considered to be a sign of great calamity when the Roman prophet slew a bull and found no heart—and it is the worst of all calamities when a man has no heart to give to God! "This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me," is one of the complaints against Israel of old, and one of the sins which made the Prophets weep and caused Jerusalem to be plowed like a field.

IV. I close with just a few words upon the fourth point, and that is, A SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. There are one or two things I would say solemnly, softly and hopefully. Oh, that they may stick in the memory and the conscience of many of you!

Those of you, my Hearers, who have been long sitting in this Tabernacle—some of you ever since it was built and before then in other places under our ministry—yet are just the same as you used to be, ought to recollect how sadly we look on those who are not saved. It is no rare thing to find the attendant of the sanctuary an unbeliever. It is a common thing to find the child of converted parents, the lad educated at the Sunday school, the man who has always had a seat in God's House, still having no hope and without God in the world. Think of that! Be not deceived—the Gospel will harden such people as you are! Speaking after the manner of men, (for with God, all things are possible, and a Sovereign God does as He wills), it does seem less and less probable that you ever should be called by Grace after you have sat and listened to the Word so long. The voice that once startled you now soothes you! The manner that once attracted the eyes, and sometimes seemed to touch the heart, fails to do either! And the very Truths of God that once went over your heads like a crash of thunder has so little force in them now that you even sleep under the sound of them! Think of that, you who are like a silly dove without heart!

Remember, too, that *some of the vilest sinners that have ever lived have been manufactured out of this raw material.* Some of the worst men were once, apparently, meek-hearted hearers of the Word, but they sat under the preaching of the Gospel till they grew ripe enough to deny God

and curse Him. The unsanctified hearing of the Gospel has sometimes produced more gigantic specimens of sin than the deaf ear of the adder. Beware, my Hearer! I know that you will say with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yes, there is dog and devil enough in you unless you have been changed by Grace, to do that thing and 20 other things that you have never dreamt of yet! Think what multitudes of souls in Hell there are like you—silly doves without hearts! Many of the population of that place of wailing once heard the Gospel, heard it with gladness and appeared to receive it for a time—but they had no root, and so the impression withered away. They never had been called effectually by Grace and never had been renewed in heart, although they had all the outward semblance of holiness1 They are gone! Even now, your soul may listen to their groans and moans, the lesson of all which would be, "Make your calling and election sure, and be not satisfied with the name to live while you are dead."

May the Spirit of the living God stir you up to this, for, if not, I have one more consideration to urge upon you. *Remember how soon you may be in Hell.* And they who go there, if they have been such as you are, go there with a vengeance. To go from under the shadow of the pulpit to the Pit is terrible. To go from the Communion Cup, to drink the cup of devils—from the song of saints to the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth of lost souls—from all the hallowed joys of God's Sabbath, of God's House and of His Word, down to the unutterable infamy of spirits that have no love of God, but curse Him day and night—my Hearers, that may be your lot within an hour, a week, a year! It matters not what the period may be, for if it ever is your lot, the time past shall seem to have been but the twinkling of an eye for its joy, though it may appear to you to have been ages for the awful responsibility which the day of mercy will have entailed upon you. Repent and be baptized, everyone of you!" As Peter said, so say I! If you have not as yet received Christ, lay hold on eternal life and oh, that the Spirit of the living God, while I preach the Word generally, may apply it particularly, finding out His own chosen and gathering them out of the ruins of the Fall, that they may be jewels in the crown of the Redeemer! The Lord make us doves, but God forbid that we should be "silly doves without heart."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 88:10-61; 1 PETER 4:1-13.

The story of how the children of Israel behaved themselves towards their gracious God.

Psalm 88:10-16. *They kept not the Covenant of God and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them. Marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and He made the waters to stand as a heap. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the Rock, and caused waters to run*

down like rivers. In such a scene of miracles, surrounded by such prodigies of goodness, what did they do?

17. *And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.* What a fierce fire must sin be that it is even fed by the rivers of God's goodness and burns by means of that which ought to have quenched every spark of it! Yet there is such a fire as that raging in our hearts and even God's mercies will make us more sinful unless His abounding Grace comes with them to teach us how to use them rightly.

18. *And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.* Not for their needs, but "for their lust." It is a dreadful thing when prayer, itself, is prostituted and the Mercy Seat becomes a place for the expression of sinful desires which ought never to have been in our hearts. It was so, however, with these children of Israel.

19. *Yes, they spoke against God.* As you read that "they spoke against God," you naturally suppose that they uttered some blasphemy, or some denial of His Deity. Listen and learn!

19. *They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness*? That is speaking against Him—to speak unbelievingly—to speak in a questioning way concerning His power. I am afraid that there are very few of us who can plead innocence on this score.

20. *Behold, He smote the Rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people*? These things, which they lusted after, they also turned into subjects for unbelief. And they even misused the miracle which they dared not deny.

21, 22. *Therefore the LORD heard this, and was angry: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation.* This was the provoking sin. The Lord would not endure such wanton and wicked unbelief as this. After He had turned the rocks into rivers, could He not turn the stones into bread, and the dust of the desert into flesh if He chose to do so?

23-32. *Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven. Man did eat angels' food: He sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the Heaven: and by His power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they still sinned.* Mercy failed to move them, and judgment failed too. The right hand of God's gifts and the left hand of His chastisement were equally ignored.

32-34. *And believed not for His wondrous works. Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God.*

Perhaps some of them fought Him even while they were dying and the remnant that survived trembled and, "returned and inquired early after God."

35, 36. *And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues.* Oh, this is terrible! One would have thought that they would have been sincere when they were broken down with sorrow, but it was not so. And I fear that the kind of religion which has to be whipped into us is never good for much. It must have in it the element of spontaneity if it is to be sincere. It was not so with these people.

37-41. *For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His Covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How often did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.* In their unbelieving imagination, they circumscribed His power. They thought that He could do something, but not everything. They believed Him one day and doubted Him the next.

42-45. *They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy. How He had worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.* All these judgments fell upon their enemies, but they failed to remember them.

46-56. *He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up the cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence, and smote all the first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: but made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies.* Oh, these terrible "yets"! Though God was faithful to the end and kept His Covenant, and brought them into the land which He swore to their fathers that He would give them, yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies."

57-61. *But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven*

images. When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand.

1 Peter 4:1. *Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.* Brethren, we have a Savior who suffered for us. As the Head was, such must the members expect to be. Let us, then, be resolutely determined that, suffer as we may, we will never turn aside from our Lord, for, inasmuch as we suffered in Him, yes, and died in Him, we ought to reckon that we are henceforth dead to sin and that we have ceased from it, and can no longer be drawn into it. "He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."

2. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.* The doctrine of Substitution is the strongest possible argument for holiness. You lived in sin once, but Christ died for your sin, so you must reckon that, in Him, you died to sin, seeing that He died in your place. And the argument is that, henceforth, your life is to be a life in Him, a life of holiness, to the praise and glory of God.

3. *For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles.* Suffice? O Brothers and Sisters, let it do much more than that! Let it make us cry, "Would God that we had never worked the will of the Gentiles at all!" Some young people foolishly say that they must have a little space in which they can "see life." Ah, those of you who have been converted in later years regret that you ever saw what men call, "life," which is but the alias for corruption and death! "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles."

3, 4. *When we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excesses of wine, revellings, banquets and abominable idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.* What a strange world this world is! It speaks evil of men because they will not do evil! Yet it has always been so. The men, "of whom the world was not worthy," have been the very people of whom worldlings have said, "Away with such fellows from the earth! It is not fit that they should live." The world's verdict concerning Christians is of little value.

5, 6. *Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.* This is a very difficult passage to expound, but I suppose the meaning is that the Gospel was preached to those departed saints who had been called to die for Christ's sake and that it was preached to them for this very reason, that while they were judged by wicked men, and were by them condemned to die, they still live a far more glorious life than they lived here, because they were thus enabled, by their martyr death, to consummate their consecration to God.

7, 8. *But the end of all things is at hand; be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* It covers them sometimes by not seeing them, for, where there is much love, we are blind to many faults which, otherwise we might see. We do not exercise the sharpness of criticism which malice would be sure to exercise. Besides that, when love applies herself to prayer, and when, in addition to prayer, she kindly gives admonition to a beloved friend, it often happens that true Christian love does really prevent a multitude of sins. The Apostle does not mean that by loving another person I shall cover my own sin; nor does he mean that the exercise of charity, in the common acceptation of that word, can cover my sin! But if I have much love to others, I may be the instrument, in the hand of God, for covering many of their sins in one or other of the senses I have mentioned.

9, 10. *Use hospitality, one to another, without grudging. As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.* Whatever "the gift" is, whether it be money, or talent, or Divine Grace, "even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God." God gives much to you that you may give it to others—it is only meant to run through you as through a pipe. You are a steward and if a steward should receive his lord's goods, and keep them for himself, he would be an unfaithful steward. Child of God, see to it that you faithfully discharge your responsibility as one of the "good stewards of the manifold Grace of God."

11-13. *If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad, also, with exceeding joy.* If you do not share in Christ's humiliation, how can you expect to share in His exaltation? But if worldlings begin to rebuke and reproach you, take it for granted that they can discern something of Christ in you. Dogs do not usually bark at those who live in the same village with them—it is only at strangers that they bark. And when ribald tongues are lifted up against you, you have reason to hope that you are a stranger and a foreigner to the citizens of this world, for they love their own, as our Savior reminded His disciples, "If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you"

—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.

MESSAGES TO SINNERS AND SAINTS
NO. 2985

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1906.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1875.

"For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. But you would not."
Isaiah 30:15.

THIS message related to the invasion of the land of Judah by Sennacherib. The approach of the enormous hosts of the Assyrian king put almost the whole nation into a state of great alarm. They wanted to make an immediate alliance with the king of Egypt and to ask that mighty monarch to send his forces to drive back the army of Sennacherib. But Isaiah the Prophet was sent to warn them of the folly and sin of such an alliance and to tell them that their strength was to sit still. They were to confide alone in the Most High and not to look for any other helper, but to cast themselves upon the faithfulness of the God who had never failed them. If they did so, they would suffer no harm—but just in proportion as they turned away from the unseen Jehovah and began to rely upon an army of flesh—they would be sure to find trouble.

We might have supposed that these people would have gladly accepted the very cheering message. Surely it was a good thing for them not to have to go to war with the Assyrians and not to need to despoil themselves and their Temple in order to send gold to the king of Egypt, but simply to rest in God who had promised to be a wall of fire round about them and the Glory in the midst of them. But, Brothers and Sisters, faith is an exotic in any heart where it is made to flourish—it does not grow there by nature—it must be planted by Grace. We are, all of us, idolaters by nature. We need something to look at in our worship even though God has forbidden it to us in the strongest terms. And as to our life, we are always pining for the arm of flesh, needing to rely upon something tangible and visible. We cannot, except as God's Grace enables us to do so, cast ourselves absolutely upon the unseen and trust ourselves to a God whose way we cannot trace! Yet, when His gracious Spirit teaches us this sacred art, it is well with us. The soul is elevated above gross materialism, above selfishness and self-confidence, above fear, alarm and trepidation—and brought into a condition of strength, power and peace. This is what the text tells us—that in returning and rest we shall be saved, and in quietness and confidence shall be our strength! As it was with God's ancient people in the days of Sennacherib,

so is it with us. This principle holds good all along—the faith that relies upon God will bring to us both salvation and strength.

I purpose to take my text out of its context and to address two different classes of hearers, using one of the sentences of my text *as a message concerning the salvation of sinners.* And using another sentence *as a message concerning the strength of saints*.

I. First, then, here is A MESSAGE CONCERNING THE SALVATION OF SINNERS—"In returning and rest shall you be saved."

Dealing, first, with the matter of *returning to God*, let me ask you a few questions. Have you played the prodigal? Have you got far away from your father's house. Have your joyous days all ended? Is your money all spent? Is your strength all but gone? Have your so-called "friends" forsaken you? Are you brought very low? Is there a mighty famine in the land and have you begun to be in need? There is but one thing for you to do—and that is to return. There is nothing more required of you than that you should return to God and rest in Him. Returning, however, is your first business. I would that you would say, as the prodigal in his hunger said, "I will arise and go to my father." You will never get right till you get back to God. You cannot do without the God who made you. You may try to do so as much as you will, but a creature apart from the Creator is nothing but vanity, a man apart from his Maker is in utter misery! You never will rest—it is impossible that you should do so—till you rest on the Rock of Ages, you will be continually tossed about and disquieted until you come there.

Possibly you say to me, "But how am I to return? How can I come back to God?" There is a way made for you. He has filled up the valleys and cut down the mountains! Christ is the way of approach to the Father and the only way, for no man comes to the Father but by Him. And along that way innumerable pilgrims have traveled and they have reached God through Jesus Christ. Behold before you the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream—the foot rests just where you are, but its top reaches to the Covenant God in Heaven! It is by the way of the Person, work and merits of the Incarnate Son of God that you must climb into His Father's bosom! By the way of His shameful Cross, by the way of His death and burial, and Resurrection, you must come back to God. Again I remind you that this is the only way! There is no other entrance to Heaven and to the heart of God!

"I know that," says one, "yet I still feel as if I could not return." Why not? "My sin lies heavy upon me. I would that I could shake it off and *then* return." Ah, my Friend, that is not the way to return to God! If you were to come back to God having somehow got rid of your sin by your own efforts, you would come self-righteously and boastfully—but the right way to get back to Him is the way the prodigal took when the first words he uttered were these, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your slight, and am no more worthy to be called your son." Come back to God with a full confession of your sin! Whisper into His august but condescending ear the sad story of the many transgressions of the days

that are past—sins against His Law, sins against His Gospel, sins against the Light of God, sins of ignorance, sins against Him, against His Son and sins against His Spirit. Come back to God, laden with guilt, full of woe and confess all before Him, through Jesus Christ, His Son—and forgiveness shall be yours, for it is written in His Word, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy."

"Yes," says one, "but that is my difficulty, for I observe that I am to forsake my sin as well as to confess it." It is truly so, my Hearer. If you will come back to God through Jesus Christ, who is the only way to the Father, He will enable you to forsake your sin. Before our Savior's birth, the angel said to Joseph, "You shall call His name, Jesus: for He shall save His people *from* their sins." The salvation which Jesus gives is salvation from unbelief, salvation from a seared conscience, salvation from pride, from lust, from malice, from envy, from evil of every kind! Which of your sins do you wish to keep? Is there one so fair that you have the desire to spare it? Come, Brother, let us take these sins of yours, one by one, and let us ask the Lord to lend us the sword of Divine Justice that we may slay them and hang them up before the Lord, for they are accursed things! Be not tender of heart concerning any one of them, even though, like another Agag, it comes to you delicately and says, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." Put the sword to the throat of every sin! Though each one should be like a prince, yet slay it and hang it up upon the Cross. There stands the gallows whereon they hanged your Lord, so hang up the traitor sins there and let them all die. I think I hear you say, with good Dr. Watts—

"'Twas for my sins my dearest
Lord hung on the cursed tree,
And groaned away a dying life
For thee, my Soul, for thee!
Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God!
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die—
My heart has so decreed!
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Savior bleed."

Remember that if you do not kill them, they will kill you! Returning to God includes turning from sin. Do you think that the prodigal, when he came back to his father, brought his dice in one hand and some other implement of sin in the other? He may come foul with the filth of the wine. He may come wretched through hunger and famine. But he must leave his riotous living, his wine-cup, his debauchery in the far country—these cannot be tolerated in his father's house! Neither can he receive the kiss of forgiveness till he has said, "Father, I have sinned." And the fact that he stands before his father, separated from his former sins, proves that he has forsaken them!

"Well," says one, "I have yet another difficulty. I have confessed my sin to God and I have resolved, by His Grace, to forsake it. But how can I get rid of the guilt of my past sin?" I will tell that directly, but, for the present, my text says, "Return." In returning to God you shall be saved and you may return to Him, now, by simply trusting Him. Come, Man, the cause of all your sin is that you do not trust Him! If you did trust Him, you would obey Him and you would prove that happiness comes through obedience to Him! You did not believe that this was true and, therefore, you have gone away into disobedience under the mistaken notion that you could find greater happiness. But even now, if you will believe, all things are possible unto you if you will do God the bare justice of believing that in this quarrel between you and Him, He is right and you are wrong! If you will capitulate to Him, yielding up your weapons of rebellion and say, "'Tis all ended, good Lord. I do believe that You are just, and true, and gracious. I know not how You can be just and yet pardon me, but, anyhow, I come to You and I rest myself upon You—I dare not be Your adversary any longer. Should You give me Heaven, itself, I could not be content with it unless I were reconciled to You, my God, my Creator, my Preserver, my Father, my All-in-All. My heart longs to come to You. I cannot rest till I am with You. I seek You with my whole soul." There lies the way of salvation! No, dear Heart, if what I have been saying for you is really true, your salvation is already assured, for he who longs after God is no more God's adversary! God's Grace has already been operating upon you and it is even now drawing you to Him—or else those ardent pangs of strong desire would never possess your soul.

Now turning to the second half of this portion of my text, let me speak of *resting in the Lord*, as well as returning to Him, for His declaration is, "In returning and rest shall you be saved." What you need, in returning to God, is to rest in Him. Here is the answer to the question which we asked just now concerning your sin. "Listen," says God, "do not let your past sin keep you back from Me, for I laid My sin upon the shoulders of My Son. I allowed Him to be scourged as though He had been the guilty one. I gave Him up to the executioners as though He had been a malefactor. I even drew My own sword from its scabbard and smote My well-beloved Son with it. While He was bearing your sin, I left Him alone till He cried, in His anguish, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' I gave Him up to endure the bitter pangs of death that He might bear the wrath that was due to you. Now, then, as He has borne the punishment for all your sin, come unto Me and rest in Me.

My dear Hearers, I shall be very unhappy if while I am preaching to you, some of you are not following me and doing just what I am urging you to do. I am hoping that while I am speaking many of you are returning to your God, drawn by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. If you are returning to Him and are still troubled by the remembrance of your past sin, rest in what He has done on behalf of just such sinners as you are! He has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for sin. Therefore,

rest in Him. Say, however timidly you may utter the words, "I do trust alone to the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus, and for all my guilt I rest my soul on Him." This is how you will be saved—not by your works, not by your weeping, not even by your praying, but by thus resting on the Lord! It is true that you *will* work and you *will* weep. And you will pray and holy deeds will, I trust, be abundant in your life. But, in order to be saved you have simply to come to Jesus and to rest on Him! Can you not do that? If you cannot, I will tell you why. It is not because you are too weak, but because you are too strong! It is strength that keeps a man from resting! It is weariness that makes him recline. The more faint and feeble he is, the more readily does he lean upon another. It is your strength that will destroy you—it is your supposed goodness that will ruin you—it is your own works that will be your destruction! Come now, and lean wholly and alone upon that almighty Savior whose heart was pierced for you, and then it shall be well with you! After you are saved, you will labor for the Lord with a mighty God-given force, but just now, return to the Lord and rest in Him, for "in returning and rest shall you be saved."

"Yes, but my present state is so bad," says one, "I am not so much troubled over my past sin, because I believe that God has forgiven it—but I grieve over my present hardness of heart and distance from God." Come along, my Brother, come speak to the Lord, for your heart will never get any softer through staying away from Him! How many hundreds of times have I said from the pulpit that if you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come to Him *for* a broken heart! If you cannot come as you should, come anyway that you can, in order that you may be taught to come as you ought! It is quite true that your condition is bad, but then Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Those open sores and bleeding wounds of yours only prove that you need the care and skill of a wise physician. Do not stay away from Him till you are cured, but come to Him *to be cured*, and come to Him now! And when you do come to Jesus, just leave your case—past, present and future—in His hands. Rest on Him! Say, "I believe that as He is able to forgive my past sin, so is He able to remove my present hardness of heart—to take away the heart of stone out of my flesh and to give me a heart of flesh."

"It is the *future* that troubles me," says another. "I am anxious to return to the Lord and to rest in Him, but I am afraid that I shall sin in days to come. I cannot feel sure that I shall not go back to my old life, even if I try to leave it." It is a good thing, my Friend, when you realize that you can no longer trust in yourself—and that is the very reason why you should put your trust in One who can never fail you! Therefore, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in Him concerning the future, as well as the past and the present. Did you never hear those words that Paul wrote to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day?" This is what you have to do, then—commit yourself to Christ for all

the future, with all its temptation and its trials, its sorrows and its sins—and rest there.

Here is salvation for the past, the present and the future! Here is complete salvation, and the way to get it is to return to God and rest in Him! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would graciously lead many of you to do this! I feel that I must keep on preaching the Gospel to you very simply. God forbid that I should ever try to bring before you any other theme, or even seek for goodly words in which to tell forth that theme! No, I feel that I must keep on telling you—

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

After this morning's service, I looked upon the corpse of a beloved friend who was with us a little while ago, who died yesterday afternoon. As I knelt by his bed, with his mourning wife and brother, I could not help feeling that there was a loud call to me, from those silent lips, to keep on preaching Christ and nothing else but Christ as long as I live! My friend, who has been thus suddenly called Home, was in the very prime of life and his death has quite stunned me. As I gazed at him, I could hardly believe that his lips were really silent and that his eyes would never be opened any more in this world. If this summons had come for any of you who have not believed in Jesus, it would have been a still more bitter sorrow for us to know that you were dead in trespasses and sins when you were taken from us—and so must perish forever and ever. Now, Soul, will you have Christ as your Savior, or will you not have Him? If this were a thing which required hard tugging and toiling, it would be well worth the effort. But when the Gospel message is simply, "Believe and live," and when Christ is willing, if you will only trust Him, to give you a force with which you shall be able to shape a new and nobler life—a Divine Power by which you shall rise superior to sin and be, in His good time, made like unto Himself, will you refuse these great blessings? Will you despise the heavenly banquet and stay outside and starve? Then, if so, your blood will be upon your own head! But may God, in His Infinite mercy, prevent you from that which would be spiritual suicide and save you, by His Grace—and He shall have the praise for it world without end.

I have read of a great man who was once taken around the French galleys. He was an ambassador from a foreign country and the French king wished to do him honor, so he told him that when he went to the galleys, he might set free any one of the convicts whom he pleased. So the ambassador took the following method of finding out to whom he would give this free pardon. He began by asking the first man, "How came you here?" The man said that he had done wrong, but that he had been entirely led into it by other people and they were to blame more than he was. So the ambassador went on to another man, who said that he was perfectly innocent. He had never committed any crime at all, but he had been condemned through perjured witnesses and so on. The ambassador found quite a number of "innocent" men of that sort, but, at last, he came to a man who frankly confessed that he deserved to be

there. What had he done? Well, he had committed such crimes that he was ashamed to mention them. But, in answer to many questions, he did mention them and he said, "I very richly deserve all that I have to suffer here, and I think myself happy that I was not condemned to die, for I well deserved it." "Well," said the ambassador, "you are evidently too bad a fellow to be here with all these 'innocent' men, so I shall give you a free pardon." He had the right to give it to whomever he pleased and he made his choice in that way. And when the Lord, who has the right to give pardon to whom He pleases, gives it to anybody, if there is any choice, it generally is given to the man who feels that he does not deserve it, but admits that he deserves the wrath of God. "Ah," says the Lord, "you are the man who shall receive the free pardon which you admit that you do not deserve."

II. Now I want, for a little while, to speak to God's people and to give them THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." O Beloved, what a blessed message is this!

This is true concerning all the trials and troubles of this mortal life—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength! I will suppose that you are passing through some business trouble. There are many tremors in the commercial world just now. Perhaps they are causing some of you to shake and tremble. But if so, be not too easily carried away by secondary matters—be not either excited or depressed by them. Sit loosely by all worldly things, but take a firm grip of the unseen God! You will get no good by fretting, worrying and hurrying. Be calm and quiet, for all will yet be well with you if you are the Lord's children! Perhaps your trial takes the form of personal sickness. If so, nothing can be better for you than quietness and confidence. The doctor will tell you that you will make a good patient if he can keep your mind quiet and restful. All the worrying in the world will not make you well, though worrying will help to keep you ill. You will be ill just as long as God appoints, but if anything could help to heal you, it would be quietness and confidence of heart. Have you lost a friend? Is there a great sorrow at home? Have you, in the cemetery, some loved one lying in a newly-made grave? Well, my Brother, or my Sister, you cannot bring the dear one back and you ought not to wish to do so! It is wise to submit to the inevitable. It is gracious to bow to the will of your ever-gracious God. You cannot do anything that will be so helpful to your own sorrowing spirit as to exercise quietness and confidence. It will, indeed, be your strength.

Have you what I think is a sorrow fully equal to that of bereavement? Have you a loved one who daily suffers? Have you one who seems, week after week, to be lying upon the brink of the grave? Is that the kind of living cross that you have to carry? Well, Brother, it is no use fretting over it and it can do you no good to rebel against it. Let us not only submit to the will of the Lord, but let us ask Him to grant us Grace to acquiesce in it, for in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength.

We often want to do too much and we often really *do* too much—and so we spoil everything! We fret and we worry, but nothing good ever comes of all our fretting and worrying. But if we would learn to wait upon the Lord, we would renew our strength—we would mount up with wings as eagles! We would run and not be weary! We would walk and not faint. I am addressing God's tried children just now and whatever their condition may be, I press the message of the text upon their most earnest consideration.

Fretting is weakening. Whoever gathered an atom of strength by fretting and fuming, plotting and planning, or doing this and that in haste and confusion? You must have noticed, in reading the Book of Genesis, what a great descent there was from Abraham to Jacob. What a grand man Abraham was! He was every inch a king—no, kings were but dwarfs in comparison with the Patriarch who was so great because He believed God! But look at Jacob—a pettifogging, bargaining man, constantly cheating or being cheated! Jacob might be regarded by some people as by far the better man of business—such a keen, shrewd man. Yes, he was a cunning man and very crafty, but Abraham had that kind of wisdom which is better than craft and cunning! He was so trustful that he never thought of chaffering and bargaining with his God as Jacob did. Quiet majesty is the characteristic of the man of faith, just as unquiet weakness is the characteristic of the unbeliever. May God make you strong, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by taking from you the fret and the worry in which you have too long indulged—and by giving to you the quietness and confidence which shall be your strength for the future!

Moreover, fretting and worrying distract us, but quietness and confidence help us in many an emergency. I have known a merchant who was losing money, feel very agitated and restless. The perspiration was upon his brow and if he had gone on much longer in that fashion, he would have lost a great deal more money. But I have known that same man pull up in an instant, slip aside into some quiet corner, breathe a brief, earnest prayer to God and then go back to his post feeling "I am ready for any of you"—cool, calm, quiet. While he was forgetting his God, he was distracted, and all about him were his masters, but when he had told the Lord about his troubles, he came back, not self-reliant, but God-reliant, which is a very different thing and a much better thing! There he was, cool, calm, with all his wits about him, ready to meet those who, a little while before, would have been more than a match for him. Trust in God, Beloved, for faith in Him will keep your vision clear and your judgment sound. Trust in God and then, in the day of stern conflict, there shall be no man's arms that shall be as strong as yours. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Besides, this quietness and confidence often prevent us from wasting our strength in efforts which might end in failure. Oh, the fussy efforts many of us have made! I know that I have and I will make the confession. I have had various matters to put right and I have tried, and tried, and tried, but all my trying has only made them get worse and worse. They

are like our good Sister's thread that was in a tangle, the other day, and she was in such haste to get it disentangled that she got it into a mass of knots that nobody in this world could untie! But another time when there was a tangle, she just took it calmly and quietly—and slipped this thread through here—and that thread through there and it was all unsnarled very speedily! Her quietness helped her to see the way out of the difficulty! But we are often in such a hurry to get things done that it takes us three times as long to undo the mischief that we worked in our haste as it would have taken us if we had, in the first place, asked God to help us to do the thing properly!

I know that the Grace of God is needed to bring us into this state of quietness and confidence, but, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when you are brought into it, I pray you to keep in it and to walk so close to God as never to lose the consciousness of it. I always admire the spirit which is characteristic of the Society of Friends. As a general rule, the spirit of the Quaker is calm, quiet, deliberate. That kind of spirit is not absolutely perfect. I can see something that is lacking from it. Still, that sort of spirit is a long way ahead of that which is manifested by some of my friends whom I might easily name. I wish that we all had more of that spirit—calm, quiet, self-possessed or, rather, *God-possessed*. I believe that is the best spirit for preachers to have. We can do most by way of moving others when we ourselves are firmly fixed upon a solid base. You need not fluster yourself, young man, in the way that you often do. You will not save souls by stamping your foot, thumping your Bible and shouting at the top of your voice. From the very bottom of your heart, in an earnest Spirit, tell your hearers something that is worth their hearing and pray God to put His blessing upon it! You will find, even in preaching, that in confidence and quietness shall be your strength. Thunder is not lightning and you may make a great noise and yet not do much good. But if you calmly, yet earnestly, proclaim the Truth of God, and with sober sense press it upon men's consciences, you may reasonably hope that God will send a blessing upon your message.

I believe that the rule laid down in our text applies not only to the trials and troubles of life, but that it holds good with regard to many other matters. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" *when you are involved in discussion and meet with opposition*. Some of us are often obliged to bring forth arguments in favor of what we believe to be the Truth of God—and there is one thing at which I always aim when I take part in a discussion—and that is to never let my opponent cause me to lose my temper. I know that in proportion as I get excited and angry, I am losing strength. I must seek to overcome my adversary by the power of the Truth of God, but, let him say what he will, I must not let him make me feel annoyed. For if he does, then to that extent he has conquered me. You may make this a rule in all your conversations with the ungodly. If you are a Christian woman and your husband is unconverted, when he speaks to you in angry tones, do not answer him

in the same style, but remember that "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." If sometimes his words seem to stagger you and you fear that you will fall, clutch at this precious Truth—lay hold of Christ, rely upon the almighty Grace of God—but do not reply. Be quiet. You know the old proverb about "a still tongue." I will turn it around, for I am not sure that "a still tongue makes a wise head," but I am quite sure that a wise head makes a still tongue, especially in family masters! You Christian wives and Christian husbands may do a heap of mischief if, as you think, you get angry for Christ's sake. It will be far better if, for Christ's sake, you bear quietly and calmly all that you have to endure! You should also do this for the sake of the one who vexes you, for how do you know, O wife, but that you may be the means of saving your unbelieving husband, and that you, O husband, may be the means of bringing to Christ your unbelieving wife by Christian quietness like that which Christ Himself manifested when He was upon the earth?

There is a woman here—I do not know just where she is, but she is here—and her husband has complained to me that she not only comes here twice on the Sabbath, but that she is also here at all the weeknight services, neglecting her husband and family and home duties as no Christian woman ought to do. "Oh," says someone, "I wonder who that woman is?" Well, there may be more than one to whom that description applies, and if the cap fits you, I hope you will wear it. But I beg you not to let your Christianity become a needless cause of offense to others. Do try to so adapt your mode of life to those who are around you that no unconverted person shall be able to truly say, "My life is made utterly miserable because my wife is a Christian," or, "because my husband is a Christian." Try to make your husband twice as happy as he would be with an unconverted partner and then, after a while, he will be obliged to say, "My wife is a strange woman to be so fond of going to listen to preaching, but, bless her, she does make our home a happy one! Nobody else would ever look after the children as she does." If you are a Christian husband, you may win your wife. If you are a Christian father, you may win your child. Or if you are a Christian child, you may win your father by that quietness and consistency of behavior which shall tell in the long run. "In quietness and in confidence"—not by bitterness of speech, not by "nagging" and wrangling—but "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Lastly, in all Christian labor, and in all Christian conflict, quietness and confidence will be our strength. When we go forth seeking to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, let us not go as if we were poachers creeping on the sly on somebody else's ground to steal his game. No, my Friends, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and when God calls us to go anywhere for Him, let us not go as if we were trespassers, for every part of the earth belongs to Christ! When you go to that lodging house to preach or speak to the residents, do not go as if you had to ask leave to live, but deliver your message courageously, as becomes a man who is sent to be an ambassador for Christ! As for that ungodly man whom you

heard swear the other day, speak to him when a notable opportunity presents itself—not intrusively, but modestly, yet not slavishly as though you begged his pardon for talking to him in God's name. We must take high ground here—we who love the Lord and whom He sends forth on His missions of mercy—as He does send forth everyone of us who has heard the Gospel call, for He has said, "Let Him that hears say, Come." Go then, and say to the people, "Come to Jesus" and, being sent to them by Christ, who is Lord of All, do not approach them on bended knee!

Many years ago, the Emperor of China insisted that all ambassadors who approached his majesty should crouch on the ground before him. One of our admirers happened to have a little business with him which would require a few gunboats in order to settle it. And when he had an interview with the Emperor, he told him that an Englishman would not crouch down before him. So, when you go into the world—you young men, especially—do not go sneaking into the shop as though you were ashamed of your religion. If anybody has cause to be ashamed, it is the man who has not any religion! Make him feel that it is so, or, at any rate, do not let him make you feel that you have any reason to be ashamed that you are a Christian! If you were the son of a lord, I do not suppose that you would be anxious to conceal your pedigree and afraid to have it known. So, if you are a child of God, do not wish to conceal that blessed fact. You need not be ostentatious in displaying your religion, but, at the same time, do not be slavishly afraid to confess that Christ is your Lord and Savior! Speak out for God with a holy boldness, yet with due humility of spirit giving to Him all the glory for the Grace which He has bestowed upon you!

Life's labor will soon be over and life's warfare, too. In due season we shall die unless our Lord shall first return. The appointed hour for each of us is drawing near—what shall we do then? Why, then, Beloved, trusting in Jesus, quietness and confidence will *still* be our strength! We shall not send our friends running to fetch a "priest" to perform some mysterious ceremony over us. Christ is all we need and as we have Him, we can die any day with perfect serenity! I love to see a Christian die a calm serene death. The idea of Bengel, the expositor, the author of "*The Gnomon*," concerning death, always strikes me as being very beautiful. He said, "I do not think there ought to be any scare-making about death. We ought to so live and to so die daily, that when death comes, it will be only a part of life—not a flourish of trumpets at the finish, but just a natural closing of the whole scene." He also said, "I should like to die just as I might retire from this room when, being engaged with company, a message is brought to me saying that I am needed and I go out quietly and say nothing about it—and my friends presently discover that I have gone." That was precisely how he died. Finishing the proof sheets of the last page that he wrote of his exposition, he was suddenly gone from earth and present with the Lord whom he loved. Oh, blessed way of dying!

I have often told you what my dear old grandfather said, not long before he died. My uncle James began quoting to him that hymn by Dr. Watts—

"Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust."

"Ah, James!" he said, "that verse won't do for me now, for the earth is not firm at all! I find it slipping away from beneath my feet. And now that I am about to depart and to meet my God, I need something firmer than the earth to rest upon. Yes, James," he added, "I like the good old doctor better when he says—

"Firm as His Throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour."

"That is it, James," he said, "there you have Divine Sovereignty and Sovereign Grace! That kind of doctrine will do to rest your soul upon, my son, both in life and in death." Calmly uttering such words as those, full of restful confidence in the faithful, Immutable God he had so long served, he closed his eyes and went Home, like a laboring man does when his day's work is done—just as you and I, Beloved, will soon go home. I do not know how long we may remain here—some of you may go very soon, and so may I—it does not much matter when we do go so long as we are ready. When I said, the other day, "So-and-So has gone Home," a dear old friend said to me, "Where could he go better?" Ah, just so! Where could he go better than go Home to his father and his God? Well, I trust that in those last days we shall neither fret, nor worry, nor trouble, nor question, nor doubt, nor fear—but in quietness and confidence shall be our strength! The Lord grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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ONE ASPECT OF CHRIST'S DEATH
NO. 2986

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 3, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 14, 1875.

"Greater love has no man than this, that
a man lay down his life for his friends."
John 15:13.

I FELT, today, after a very weary and, in some respects, a very sorrowful week, as if I could not preach tonight—or that if I did stand up to speak, it must be upon some very easy and simple theme and, at the same time, it must be some great subject which would give me plenty of sea-room. I think the text I have read to you fulfills both these conditions. And, although I shall not attempt to sail across it, or to fathom it, for that would be impossible, yet, at any rate, there will be no fear that I shall run aground, or need to exercise great skill in threading my way through a tortuous channel, where, perhaps, one might be on the rock or the sandbank before he was aware of his danger. If there is anything about which Christians are sure—and concerning which they can speak with confidence, surely it is the love of Christ! And though that is one of the simplest things in the world, yet it is also the very sweetest. Whenever you spread the table for any meal, you are pretty sure to put bread and salt upon it. And whenever we preach, if we preach as we should, we are sure to have something of the savor of the love of Christ in our preaching. I have heard that in a certain country, the way in which a stranger is welcomed is by giving him just bread and salt—nothing more. That is what I am about to do. We will have bread and salt on the table—the essential things, the common things—but, blessed be God, with a fullness of nourishment and a savor of tastefulness in them which those who are taught of God will be able to relish!

The death of Jesus Christ may be viewed in many aspects, but we, Brothers and Sisters, have learned to see very clearly the substitutionary character of it. It is our delight to believe that Christ laid down His life for the sake of His friends, thereby rendering complete satisfaction to offended Justice, presenting Himself as a vicarious Sacrifice in their place, that they might be reconciled to God and might be "accepted in the Beloved." We are quite sure about this Truth of God. We do not gather it from this particular verse which I have selected for my text, but from the whole run and tenor of Scripture, but especially from such a passage as

this, "Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

This Doctrine of Redemption tallies with the types of the old Jewish dispensation and corresponds with the prophetic descriptions of the promised Messiah, especially those wonderful chapters in Isaiah and Ezekiel in which His Character is so accurately foretold. This view of Christ dying as the great substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners cannot be dispensed with for a single moment—it seems to us to be the very essence of the Gospel. Cloudiness with regard to this great central Truth of God involves mistiness concerning everything else. And the poet was quite right when he wrote—

"You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him."

If you have any question about that great Truth, you will have your brain more or less muddled concerning every other Doctrine in the Word of God. And I would take this Doctrine just as I would the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, as being the test of a standing or falling church, and of a God-sent ministry!

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, there are other aspects of the death of Christ beside the one I have mentioned and a Christian's eyes should see both the greater objects and also the smaller ones. I am always glad that a painter does not merely give us the foreground of his picture, but gives us the background, too—and even when his painting is a portrait and he desires to have all our attention fixed upon the portrait—yet he does not neglect the little accessories of the picture. They may be unimportant, but if they are properly painted, they will not distract attention from the main subject of the picture, but will rather help to point to it. Now, the death of Christ was the greatest possible display of the love of God to men. Never forget that it was not merely Infinite Justice that blazed forth from the Cross, but also Infinite Affection! Indeed, the Cross displayed all the attributes of God and they can still be plainly perceived by those whose eyes have been Divinely opened. God revealed Himself there, through the dying Savior, in a very wonderful way. If I may use such an image—and I think I may—through the smoked glass of the humanity of Christ, the Deity of God in all its fullness can be better seen by us than if we could, with our naked eyes, gaze upon the excessive brightness of that Glory. Indeed, blindness would follow upon a vision of absolute Deity—if such a vision were even possible. To dwell long upon the Doctrine of the Trinity, and to vex your mind with the various theories of that mysterious subject which men have imagined, is the sure road to Socinianism or some other heresy! But, to see God veiled in human flesh and especially to see Him revealed in the Person of the dying Mediator, is to see God in the only way in which He *can* to seen by mortal men! We

do, not, therefore, for a moment forget that Christ's death was the greatest possible display of God's love to men.

It was, doubtless, also necessary to complete the perfect example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He would have set before us a grand example of self-denial and disinterested love, even if He had not died for us, for it was no little thing that He should make Himself of no reputation and take upon Himself the form of a Servant and be made in the likeness of men and humble Himself as He did. Still, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," was the crown of His life. It was because He endured the Cross, despising the shame, that Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." We also may remember that we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," but Christ has done this and more than this! He knows what it is to be made perfect through sufferings. I have no doubt that they speak the truth who say that the death of Christ was the climax of His example, but I am going to call your attention to another aspect of His death, namely, as a display of His own love to His own people—"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is, I believe, what Christ meant—that His love to His friends was to be most clearly made manifest by His dying for them!

There is no need, with such a subject as this, for the use of grand periods and eloquent language, even if I ever indulged in that kind of thing. But I shall just give utterance to a few simple Truths of God which you already know, trying to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And, first, *let us contemplate the love of Christ resplendent in the act of death,* laying down His life for His friends. Secondly, *let us see that love enhanced by a consideration of the friends for whom He laid down His life.* And then, thirdly, *let us see the love of Christ reflected and reproduced by His friends*. This, however, will have to be done outside this place—I can only make the rough outline of the picture which is to be drawn by all of you who are the friends of Christ. My text reminds us of one of the strongest reasons why we should love one another even as Christ has loved us—"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

I. Let us, then, first SEE CHRIST'S LOVE RESPLENDENT IN THE LAYING DOWN OF HIS LIFE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

When He says, "Greater love has no man than this," He seems to me to imply that there are manifestations of His love which are not as great as this. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people is always great. I may truly say that it is always greater than any other love. I might even say that it is always in the superlative degree—the greatest love there ever was, or is, or can be! Yet there are displays of that love which can be rightly described as great, greater, greatest. Our Lord had already

displayed His love to His people in the great and the greater forms of it—now He was about to display it in the highest and greatest of all ways.

It was great love that made Him come to this earth and be Incarnate here. Have you ever thought of the greatness of the love of Christ in being a Child, a Youth, a Man and of His love in being willing to live in obscurity and retirement as the Son of Mary for 30 years? Wondrous love was there in that arrangement by which He was able, from His own experience, to sympathize with retiring Christians and with young Believers whose duties do not cause them to be conspicuous in the world. The thought of God in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth is to me very wonderful. As Moses took off his shoes at the sight of God in the burning bush, we may well manifest our awe and reverence as we see the Son of God, the express image of His Father's Person, in the midst of the implements used by the village carpenter! That was truly great love.

Then, when the time arrived for Him to come forth from His obscurity, *He showed great love to His friends in calling them to Him one by one*. His mind was altogether unique. He had the tenderness of a woman, yet He was to the highest degree, manly. Indeed, all the attributes of a perfect man and a perfect woman appear to have been blessedly blessed in His perfect Humanity. We might have supposed that He would have looked for companions somewhat like Himself, though I know not where He could have found them, but He seems to me to have looked for those whom, in a wondrous way, He could make to be like Himself rather than for those who were already like Himself! So He finds some fishermen—very rough fellows to be associated with the gentle Jesus! He finds a tax-gatherer—commercial, grasping—a strange companion for Him who cared not one farthing for gold or silver! The Apostles, as a whole, were a motley crew. Speaking after the manner of men, one could almost account for Jesus choosing John and there are some points in Peter that are very lovable, yet, as a band of men called to such exceptional service, they were rough and coarse! We might have thought that Christ would have looked for more refinement in those who were to be His daily companions for three years—and had He been thinking only of Himself, He might have sought others than He did seek. Certainly, Brothers and Sisters, in my own case, I have often felt that I could adopt the language of Faber, which we sang just now—

"How many hearts You might have had
More innocent than mine!
How many souls more worthy far
Of that pure touch of Thine!
Ah, Grace! Into unlikeliest heart
It is your boast to come—
The glory of your light to find
In darkest spots a home."

So Jesus Christ showed His love to His friends in the very act of calling them to be His friends. And *He also showed His love in fitting*

them for the position to which He had called them. He laid Himself out to teach them, to train them, to build up their characters upon a firm foundation and to infuse into their minds right principles and noble sentiments so that they could be fully qualified to be the servants of the churches and the glory of Christ—vessels to be used no longer for merely worldly purposes, but to be meet for the Master's use! With what singular wisdom He trained them! With what patience He bore with them! Had they had any other master, they would, many a time, have been liable to be discharged for their stupidity, but He simply said, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?"

This was a proof of great love on His part, yet He seems to me to have shown even greater love when, towards the end of His life, *He bade these friends of His sit and eat and drink with Him at His Table* and expressed His desire that His friends should continue, in all later ages, thus to remember Him. Then, after the Supper, He rose from the table, laid aside His outer garment, took a towel and girded Himself—poured water into a basin and washed His disciples' feet! Oh, this was great love indeed!

Still, our text talks about a greater display of Christ's love than this, so we conclude that while to choose and call, to instruct and edify, to entertain and refresh was proof of very great love on Christ's part—*to die for His friends was evidence of still greater love*. There are, in this world, many persons who will lay themselves out to help their fellow creatures to resist temptation and to struggle out of the ways of vice into the path of virtue and who would, with heroic self-denial, bring themselves well-near to the grave's mouth to accomplish these ends—but they will not lay down their lives for their fellows. If they did, it would be the greatest thing they could possibly do for them, for the text is true, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

But *our Lord was willing to die for His friends*. Some people might lay down their lives for their friends, but it would be quite unwillingly that they would do so. They might make the supreme sacrifice under the force of some strong compelling passion, yet they would escape if they could. But look at our blessed Lord and Master! When the time came for Him to go out of this world unto His Father, He did not make the slightest effort to escape from death. Judas knew the place where He was in the habit of going for private meditation and prayer—and to that very place our Master went, as He had often gone before, although He knew that He would meet the traitor there. When the officers and men from the chief priests and Pharisees came there with lanterns and torches and weapons, a word from Him made them fall to the ground! He could, therefore, in an instant, have driven them all out of the garden and have escaped from them. But He did not do so. He could never have been delivered up to be put to death, either by Jews or by Romans, if He had not been perfectly willing to die! From the time when they took Him to

Annas to the moment when they nailed Him to the Cross, one solitary wish on His part would have scattered all His foes and He could have gone wherever He pleased—but He would not express such a wish, or even cherish it. Admire the wonderful reticence of Christ! That He did not speak in His own defense, was marvelous, but, that He did not even wish to escape, or think of escaping, is still more amazing, for a thought would have been sufficient to have procured His release! How wonderfully Omnipotence held in check Omnipotence! How majestic does that almighty attribute appear when it proved its power over itself by not using the power which it manifestly possesses!

More than that, remember that *our Lord Jesus Christ was under no sort of necessity to die*. When a man lays down his life for his friend—and how seldom has that been done—he only anticipates the debt of Nature which, in any case, he has to pay before long. If you were to die for me, or I were to die for you, tomorrow, we would, both of us, only do a little earlier what we must both ultimately do! Death will, before long, claim everyone of us, and to the sepulcher we must all descend unless our Lord should speedily come. But He possessed inherent immortality! No sentence of death was written across His brow—He could live on forever even when He was in the grave—corruption could have no dominion over Him. He could say, with an emphasis that the Psalmist could not use, "You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer your Holy One to see corruption." So Jesus Christ's laying down of His life for His friends was beyond anything that could ever happen in any other man's life, a voluntary act and, consequently, a more wonderful display of love than could ever be given in any other case. "Greater love has no man than this."

We must also remember that *our Lord Jesus Christ had been accustomed, for many years, to contemplate the laying low of His life before He actually did so*. No, I must not speak of *years*—doubtless from *eternity* He had foreseen that terrible time when He would have to do battle on His people's behalf, with all the powers of Darkness. He had looked forward to that hour with the strong glance of the eyes that could weep for sorrow, but could not grow dim with fear. And, often, when He was here below, He seemed to long for the time when He could make the master-sacrifice of His life. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" His face was set, not merely once, but in very deed always, steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem, knowing well all that would befall Him there. Now, what man is there who could look death in the face, for the sake of his friend, year after year, and even contemplate it with ardent desire? We might, in an outburst of strong affection, in a moment of unusual excitement, be willing to leap into the gulf of death in order to rescue a sinking friend, but as for the quiet resolution that could calmly think it all over and weigh every circumstance—and ponder over every detail and then

deliberately give oneself up to death—where could you find such a spirit as that? It is only to be seen in Him who has given the grandest display of love that was ever manifested on earth or even in Heaven—and whose death was the grandest manifestation of that love!

Let me also further remind you that *our Lord Jesus Christ did actually die for His friends*. He was not merely willing to do so and long contemplated dying, but He *did* really die and He died under circumstances that rendered the laying down of His life for His friends the more remarkable! He died for them, yet they had all forsaken Him in the hour of His greatest need, after having fallen asleep and left Him to endure in utter loneliness the agony of bloody sweat. When He was arraigned before His enemies, Peter, the boldest man in His little band of disciples, was so cowed with fear that he denied, with oaths and curses, that he even *knew* Him! These "friends" of His were quite unworthy of His love, yet He died for them. Do men generally die for such "friends" as they proved themselves to be? No, but they have often cried with Job, "Miserable comforters are you all." Yet Christ died for His friends though they forsook Him when He most needed their sympathy and support.

And *He had to die for them under a criminal charge*. I believe that there are many of us who would not be nearly as much startled by death as by a criminal accusation. When I have seen some good man whom I have highly esteemed, charged falsely, as I think, with high misdemeanors, I have felt that I would sooner die than be guilty of the crime of which he has been accused. But here is our gracious Lord and Master willingly giving Himself up to death although He is innocent of the crime's laid to His charge—sedition against the State and blasphemy against God. It is a felon's death that He must die—not merely a death *like that* of a felon, but the death *of a felon*, for the verdict of one tribunal after another is that He is worthy of death—and the popular voice applauds the verdict, and cries, "Let Him be crucified!" O You blessed Son of God, were You thus numbered with the transgressors? Yes, He was. And this was the greatest manifestation of His love.

Let us not forget, too, that *Christ's death was attended by cruelties of the grossest sort*. I will not harrow up your feelings with any description of that terrible flagellation which He received at the hands of the Roman lictors. Yes, Christ did suffer intensely in many ways, as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold that He would—"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." All the sufferings of Christ's—physical, mental, and spiritual—which were attendant upon His death, are to be regarded by us with awestruck and grateful emotions, for they help to make up the perfection of His wondrous work of laying down His life for His friends!

Remember, too, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as I have already reminded you, that *Christ, although He was absolutely innocent, did die as the Substitute for sinners*. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For He (that is, God) has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And to the Galatians He wrote, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." To a pure mind, contact with sin in any form is truly horrible. I can imagine the Savior being willing to suffer and even being willing to die—but His holy Nature must have revolted at the thought that He must stand in the sinner's place, that He must be reckoned as the sinner, that against Him the sword of Divine Justice must be drawn and that in His heart it must find a sheath! The great terror of Christ's death upon the Cross must have been that it was the penalty for *sin*—the execution of the righteous judgment of God against unrighteousness and iniquity! None of us can even guess—perhaps the lost souls in Hell cannot tell—what it must have been for Christ to have come thus under the wrath of God because of the sins of His people. When we have been deeply convinced of sin, we may have had some slight conception of what it was, but our most vivid imagination must have been dim and feeble compared with the terrible reality!

Above all else, let us remember that *our Savior died forsaken of His God*. Even the martyrs were not obliged to do that. They stood at the stake and clapped their hands—they even sang songs of triumph amidst the fury of the flames! But Jesus had to cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That is the pitiful wail of a broken heart and a sinking spirit. It does not surprise us that "the earth did quake and the rocks split"—it would have been a greater wonder if they had not been stirred at the sound of such grief as His! O Beloved, greater love has no man than this, that he will even dare to die forsaken of his God! I thank God that *we* are not asked to do this! But Jesus did it for us, His friends. Oh, what amazing love is His! There is much more that might be said upon this stupendous theme, but I must ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the mystery of those unknown deeps of suffering by which Christ manifested His love to His friends.

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that THE LOVE OF CHRIST, IN LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE, WAS GREATLY ENHANCED BY THE CHARACTER OF THOSE FOR WHOM HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE, namely, "His friends."

Let it never be forgotten by us that this sacred title is one which our Lord Himself gave to His disciples—"I have called you friends." If we are His disciples, we are also His friends. Our original title would have been enemies, for that is what we were—but He has transformed us into His friends, for, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." The text would not be true if you were to put the

emphasis in the wrong place. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*," for Christ manifested greater love than that in laying down His life for His *enemies.* It is indeed surprising that He should have laid down His life for those who were His enemies and who are only His friends because He has made them so. You scorned Him, you despised Him, you crucified Him, your sins were the nails and the spear that pierced His hands, feet and side—yet He died for you! He was the sandalwood tree, and yours was the hand that held the axe that wounded Him, yet He perfumed the axe, and also the hand that wielded it—and healed that hand of all its leprosies—yes, healed your whole being of whatever disease it had. Thank God for love like that!

Then, putting aside the fact that we were once His enemies, think of the *greatness of His love is laying down His life for such insignificant people as we are*. I have heard the argument used by unbelievers that it is not feasible—considering the immense size of the universe and the inconceivable number of starry worlds in it, that this little inconsiderable speck of a globe, which, in proportion to the rest of the universe, is as a single atom of dust to the entire chain of the Alps—to think that Christ should come to redeem the inhabitants of such a poor little world as this is and that if He came to the earth at all, many of the poorest and meanest of the people would be the peculiar objects of His choice! Well, it *is* marvelous! It is a marvelous instance of the condescension of Christ—and while it may stagger the faith of some, it certainly inflames the love of others! We feel that if He condescends to choose us, our love shall rise to the utmost heights that it can reach—and we will bless and magnify the name of the Lord in that, while He took not up angels, He took up the seed of Abraham! While He left the fallen angels to perish without hope, He has come to save us, the fallen sons of Adam, and has laid down His life for us!

There is, however, a Truth of God that is even more significant and instructive than that. It is not merely true that we were once Christ's enemies and that we were also utterly insignificant and unworthy of His notice, but *it is amazing that He should lay down His life for such unworthy friends, even as friends, as we are*. There are some professing Christians who can speak of themselves in terms of admiration, but, from my inmost heart I loathe such speeches more and more every day that I live. Those who talk in such boastful fashion must be constituted very differently from me. While they are congratulating themselves upon all the good things that they find within themselves, I have to lie humbly at the foot of Christ's Cross and marvel that I am saved at all, for I know that I am saved. I have to wonder that I do not believe Christ more and equally wonder that I am privileged to believe in Him at all—to wonder that I do not love Him more, and equally to wonder that I love Him at all—to wonder that I am not holier and equally to wonder that I have any

desire to be holy at all considering what a polluted, debased, depraved nature I find still within my soul notwithstanding all that Divine Grace has done in me! If God were ever to allow the fountains of the great deeps of depravity to break up in the best man that lives, he would make as bad a devil as Satan, himself, is. I care nothing for what these boasters say concerning their own perfections—I feel sure that they do not know themselves, or they could not talk as they often do! There is tinder enough in the saint who is nearest to Heaven to kindle another Hell if God should but permit a spark to fall upon it. In the very best of men, there is an infernal and well-near infinite depth of depravity! Some Christians never seem to find this out. I almost wish that they might not do so, for it is a painful discovery for anyone to make—but it has the beneficial effect of making us cease from trusting in ourselves and causing us to glory only in the Lord.

Why should Christ ever have loved *us*? Why should He ever have loved us? When at His Table, we often have wandering thoughts. Even in our faith we often find a mixture of unbelief. Even when we love Him, we grieve that we do not love Him more. Even when we are closest to Him in communion, we have to smite our breast and mourn that we do not enjoy the nearness we might have, and ought to have, for, after being so greatly loved by Christ, we ought to be sinless! Under such obligations to Christ as we have, we ought to be wholly sanctified—spirit, soul, and body—and never have a wandering thought or an unholy desire. But that we are not what we ought to be is very clear. And the wonder is that Jesus Christ should ever have laid down His life for such miserable "friends" as we have proven ourselves to be! Beauty, you know, will often win affection against a man's better judgment, for there is something about it which is so attractive that it overcomes him. But Christ's love to us was not won by any beauty that He saw in us. When He says to us as the Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon says to His bride, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." And when He says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you," I think He must see Himself mirrored in us and that this is why He loves us, for certainly there is nothing lovable in us but what He has bestowed upon us by His Grace! I do not know what you, Beloved, say concerning this theme upon which I have been speaking, but I think you will agree with me when I say that, to me, the superlative point of the love of Christ is that He laid down His life for *me*, unworthy as I have been even since I have been His friend!

III. I must speak very briefly upon the last point which is that THIS GREAT LOVE OF CHRIST IS TO BE REFLECTED AND REPRODUCED BY HIS FRIENDS.

Christ is the sun in our heavens and His Church is the moon. Why does the sun shine upon the moon? For the moon's sake? Yes, in part, but also for the sake of the earth, which would be dark at night if the moon did not reflect the light it receives from the sun. Brother, Sister,

the light of Christ's love has fallen upon you, not only that it may benefit you, but also that you may reflect it.

First, *reflect it upon Christ*. He has loved you, so love Him in return! It is a blessed thing, sometimes, to do nothing but love Christ for a while. It is well, at least now and then, for us not to think so much of what we are going to do for Christ as of what He did for us and what He is to us. If I ever try to secure a quiet half-hour's meditation upon His love to me, somebody is pretty sure to come and knock at the door. But if I can keep the door-knocker still, and get alone with my Lord and only think about His love to me—not trying to elaborate any theories, or to understand any doctrines, but just sitting down with the view of loving Him who gave Himself for me—I tell you, Sirs, that this thought is positively inebriating to the soul! It not merely refreshes, quickens, consoles, but it absolutely overcomes us with intense delight till we feel as though we could only fall upon our face and worship the Lamb who was slain for us! At such times we have to make our expressive silence mean His praise, for our soul is so full of His love that we cannot possibly express it. That is the first thing for Christians to do—as Christ is shining upon you with His love—shine back upon Him with your love!

Then, next, He said to His disciples, "This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I loved you." *As you have received the light of Christ's love, pass it on to your fellow Christians*. Do you want to know where to find Christ? He is dwelling in His people and especially in His poor people, in His suffering people, in His tried people! So, when your heart is full of love to your Lord, let some of the light of it shine upon them. Perhaps this is a dark time with them and a kind word from you, or a kind action, will be like the light of the moon to them in the middle of the night, and will cause them great gladness. The moon cannot shine as brightly as the sun does, and you cannot love as much as Christ does—but you can be like the moon and shine with borrowed light—you can reflect upon others the light of the love which Christ has shed upon your own soul.

And when you have done that, remember that *your light will be even more needed in the dark world of the ungodly*. "Christ died for the ungodly," and that is what you were once! O Beloved, I pray you, love the sons of men! Somebody has asked, "How are we to convert sinners?" That is not our work. It is only the Spirit of God who can do that. But what we can do is this, we can *love* sinners to Christ. That is the way in which God says that He worked—"I drew them with words of a man, with bands of love." I will give you this message as a text for you to preach upon practically all your life—*Love sinners to Christ*! Love the enmity out of them if they hate the Gospel. Love the prejudice out of them if they cannot bear to hear it preached. Love them out of their vices! Love them up from their degradation, for love is of God, and God is Love and God

dwells in love. That which is in Him and comes from Him, is the best thing in the world to draw people to Him! So use no other cords but the cords of a man, and no bands but the bands of love. When you really love souls, it is amazing how wise you will be in dealing with them.

I have never heard that anybody has opened a school for teaching young mothers how to manage their first babies, but, somehow or other, when love is in the mother's heart, she finds out the proper way to care for her baby. And better than any College training for the home or the foreign field of service for the Savior is it to get your heart full of love to your Lord. Then you will know how to do His work—it will come to you by a sort of sacred instinct. You will know when you are to tell them of the terrors of the Law, and when to speak of the loveliness of Christ, and just how to deal with them under all manner of circumstances. The love of Christ will teach you how to do this if it is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you.

Oh, that all men knew, by happy personal experience, what the love of Jesus is! I have not said much to you unconverted people who are present, but I have often thought that when we are preaching about Christ, even if we do not say much directly to you, the subject itself speaks to you. It is like spreading a dinner where there are hungry people near. You have only to say to such persons, "You are welcome to all there is on the table," and there is no need of a sermon, or any eloquence. Their mouths begin to water while you are laying the cloth and the sight of the provisions makes them begin to eat as soon as you say, "Come along." What big slices they take! Well, poor starving souls, here is the great Gospel feast—may your mouths water for a taste of it! All I have to say is—

"Come and welcome, sinner, come."

Come and taste the great love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May His gracious Spirit bring you, 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.

THE "BEAU IDEAL" OF LIFE
NO. 2987

A SERMON
ESPECIALLY TO YOUNG MEN,
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17, 1875.

"O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."
Psalm 90:14.

MOSES saw, with deep regret, that the great host which came out of Egypt would have to die in the wilderness. Every day there were many funerals, for a vast multitude of men, women and children had to be buried in the wilderness. And tears of sorrow and sympathy must continually have stood in the eyes of the great leader of the children of Israel. After speaking about their days being passed away in God's wrath, Moses offered a prayer which, under the circumstances, was most natural and most wise. It was in substance this—"Lord, if we must die in this desert. If this whole generation (except Caleb and Joshua) must pass away in the wilderness, then, at any rate, give us the fullness of Your favor now, that we may spend all our remaining days—whether they are to be few or many—in gladness and rejoicing." Now, seeing that we, also, are all passing away and that whether young or old, we, too, must be carried to the grave unless the Lord should first return, this seems to me to be a very wise prayer for us to put up—"Lord, satisfy us with Your mercy now, that we may waste no more of our life in sinful dissatisfaction, but that from this hour to the last moment of our life, we may be filled with Your favor, and may rejoice and be glad all our days.

I. Just for a minute or two, I want, in the first place, to show you that Moses has here set before us THE "BEAU IDEAL" OF LIFE.

If one could have just such a life as he desired, could he desire anything better than to be satisfied early with God's favor? Would it not be a very delightful thing if the whole of his life could be spent exactly as it ought to be and could be spent in the enjoyment of the highest degree of happiness of which we are capable? "O satisfy us," is the prayer of the text—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy." If the young man—instead of seeking after something which he will still continue to seek after if he is spared to reach the prime of life—and will still seek after even when he grows gray, could get that which would content him at once. If he could get something which would immediately fill his soul and make it run over with thankfulness and joy—would it not be a great blessing to him, especially if he could get it, as Moses says, "early"—soon—in the very beginning of his life? Many men, even good men, have wasted the early

morning of their days. And some have had the painful experience of looking back, in the afternoon of life, upon the best part of their day and even the noontide, all gone—and there has been for them only the evening and, sometimes, only a very short evening to spend in complete satisfaction and real joy. It is a pity that so many Christian's lives should, for all practical purposes, be influential at the end of their stay on earth—that as far as their influence upon others is concerned, they should be merely like the candle-ends that we put upon the save-alls—but the whole candle has never been consumed in giving light in the sanctuary of God. It is a thing to be desired beyond measure that from the first to the last of life, God's blessing should rest upon us and that we should enjoy peace and happiness without any intermingling of the distress which is caused by sin. This, as I have said, seems to me to be the *beau ideal* of life—and I think that all Christians, at least, will agree with me.

It is a poor way of building a house to have a flaw in the foundation, for, however carefully we may build the superstructure, we can never make a satisfactory building because of the flaw down below. It is poor weaving on the part of the man at the loom, when he has a flaw at the beginning of his work—however carefully he may weave the latter portion of it, he will always know that he cannot get that old flaw out—that the piece of cloth will never be perfect. In contrast to this kind of building and weaving, it would be a blessed thing to have such Grace and such wisdom given that the very first course of the foundation of the house of life should be well and truly laid, and that the whole building should be to the praise and glory of God! And it would be equally blessed that the very first throws of the shuttle of the web of life should be in accordance with the right rules for weaving, so that the whole piece of cloth might be pronounced perfect after its kind. I think this is the meaning of the prayer of the text, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

II. Secondly, as we judge this satisfaction to be the beau ideal of life, let us consider HOW SOME PEOPLE HAVE SOUGHT TO ATTAIN IT.

I do not hesitate to say that the first part of the text is the cry of all men—

"O satisfy us, satisfy us, satisfy us!"

But there is a kind of horse-leech in every man's soul that is not easily satisfied. It is like death, the grave and the sea. Whatever may be cast into the mouth of death, it is as hungry as it was before! And the sepulcher is never satisfied and, throw what you will into the sea, it is always ready to receive more. So is it with the hearts of men. "O satisfy us," is the world's cry as the heathens shout to their idol gods and as the priests of Baal cried to their lifeless image. "O satisfy us," is the world's cry today, for man's hunger is insatiable, though he disdains the only food which would satisfy his cravings. "O satisfy us," is the cry which is heard in every quarter of the globe—alas, not ascending to Heaven, as it should, but going out to the things of time and sense! Still do men seek satisfaction in that which Solomon calls "vanity of vanities."

Wise young men pray, in the words of the text, "O satisfy us *early*." They want to get that which is to be the source of their joy, not when they can no longer enjoy it, but *now*, so they cry, "satisfy us early." They do not ask for God's mercy merely as a sort of pension for their old age, but they want to have it now. At any rate, I know that I did, for I wished to obtain whatever of gladness and joy could be had even in my youthful days. There is nothing wrong in desiring to be happy. There is nothing wrong in offering the prayer, "O satisfy us early," so long as that prayer is completed in the way in which my text completes it—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy."

Many have tried to satisfy themselves by gaining money. This is a pursuit in which a man may lawfully engage if it is not the chief objective of his life, as so many make it. They believed that they would be satisfied when they had acquired a certain amount, but they were not. I might confidently ask every man of wealth, now in this world, whether he was satisfied when he reached the amount which he had himself fixed as the limit of his desire? Did he not then feel that he must have more than that amount? Of course he did! So he set before him another sum and he said that when he had accumulated *that* amount, he would be content. But was he? Is not the desire for wealth a thing which grows with that it feeds upon, so that the more a man has, the more he wants? There never did live and there never could live, a man whose entire nature could be satisfied with his worldly possessions. You know that we call the man who delights in hoarding up riches—a miser. Why do we call him by that name unless it is because he is truly miserable? The very name for the man who is engrossed with avarice signifies unhappiness—and when you need to describe somebody who is both aged and wretched, you say, "He is like an old miser." Yes, so he is. Men may amass as much wealth as they will, but if, with the money, they have not acquired something better than the best metal that ever came from the mint or the mine, they will still go on crying, "O satisfy us! O satisfy us!" The Indians of South America believed that the Spaniards' god was made of gold and well they might when they saw the strangers' devotion to their idol! They once poured molten gold down a Spaniard's throat, saying, "You have thirsted for it, now you shall have enough of it." But if a man could eat gold, drink gold, sleep with gold, walk with gold and be robed in gold, yet, still, what is there in that metal which could satisfy the cravings of the highest part of man's nature—that mysterious spiritual thing which is called the soul? No, there is no solid satisfaction for the soul in all the wealth in the world!

Others have despised this gross pursuit and *they have said that satisfaction is to be found in fame*. We, all of us, like respect, esteem, honor. It is false for any man to say that he does not like praise, for he does. And if anyone is pleased at being told that he does not like flattery, he is there being more highly flattered than at any other time of his life—and he is enjoying the sensation! Some men, to gain honors and distinction in various ways, have made complete slaves of themselves.

They have supposed that if they could but get the honors—perhaps the honor of a degree at the university, or the honor of a certain rank in the profession of the law, or even in the church, they would be satisfied. But no man was ever yet satisfied with honors. They are but as a puff of wind which can never fill an immortal soul. If you read the histories of those statesman who have risen to the greatest heights of fame, you will, as a rule, find that the most famous man in the kingdom is generally the greatest slave. He has, from the very weight of his honors, the heavier burden of responsibility to bear. As "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," so, in its degree, uneasy lies the head that wears the laurel or the crown. There is no contentment to be found in fame, as those have proved who have won the most of it. There was a time when the flattery of two or three poor people in a village would have satisfied them, but now the plaudits of a whole nation seem as nothing to them—and when the whole world is ringing with their renown, they sit down in despondency, wring their hands in misery, and cry, with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

Others have said, "*But surely there is something solid and satisfying in learning*." Well, there is more to be said for this than for either of the other two things that I have mentioned and, as far as I am concerned, I would sooner seek satisfaction in my library than in the marble halls of the wealthy or in the courts of kings! To study, to read, to make discoveries, to furnish the brain, to enrich the mind—there is something worth doing in all this, yet Solomon, who carried out this idea as far as it could be carried out in his day, recorded his very emphatic verdict concerning it, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh." "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is very apt to also be your utterance with regard to study, for you always have the dreary thought that even if you could know more than all other men in the world, when your turn came to sleep in the grave, there would be no difference between you and the peasant of whom Wordsworth wrote—

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

If the peasant rises no higher than that, however learned any of us may be, we have only risen a little above him for a time—and in the common dust we, too, shall sleep with him! If there were no eternal futures, what would all the joys of earthly knowledge be worth to us?

Others seek satisfaction in pleasure. I may be addressing some young man who says, "I do not care for wealth. I shall never trouble myself to hoard it. On the contrary, I love to *spend* it! I do not want to use a rake—give me a shovel and I will soon scatter all my father's substance!" There are some men who are very proficient in scattering what others have gathered with great diligence. These people say concerning study, "Let us get out of these crowded rooms into the pure, fresh air! We mean to go in for pleasure and to enjoy ourselves while we can." This looks, at first sight, as if it were a prudent thing to do and, certainly, there is a deal more sense in enjoying ourselves in a rational fashion than there can be

in pinching and starving ourselves in order to hoard up money for heirs who will ridicule if they do not actually curse those who have provided so bountifully for them! Remember what Solomon says about others who seek what they call pleasure—"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine." There is no satisfaction there! The merriest man who ever lived—the man who drained the wine-cup of mirth even to its dregs—has dashed it to the ground in his fierce indignation and cursed the day in which he tried to find satisfaction there! Look at those who have gone to the house of the strange woman and see what comes of their sinful sojourning there—even if it is only for a little while. Does not dissipation bring disease and decay upon nature sooner than necessary? There is no satisfaction there, young man! So, if you want to really enjoy yourself, there is a nobler and a surer way of doing so. The way of so-called "pleasure" is a delusion and a snare, and the end thereof is sorrow, suffering and woe! Alas, that so many should continue to walk in a way which has such a sad end!

When a man plays the fool, let him do it for something that is worth having. Some time ago, when we were looking for a place for Messrs. Moody and Sankey to preach and sing, two of our Brothers went to see whether a certain building could be rented and, while they were waiting there, a man came up to them and presented his card—"Mr. So-and-So, clown." He thought our Brothers had gone to engage the place for some amusements! They told him that they had come to engage it for religious services and one of them said to him, "What a pity it is that you should play the fool for money!" I think the clown made a very sensible remark in reply, for he said, "You had better go and talk to those who play the fool and make nothing by it, for there *is* some sense in playing the fool for money." To play the fool and make nothing by it, is a very mild description of the folly of which I have been speaking! But how many *play the fool and lose money by it?* What is it that clothes so many people in rags? What is it that makes so many have red eyes, trembling limbs and even *delirium tremens*? What is that but playing the fool and losing by it? And what will it be when such a man comes to die—a man who has lived without God, without Christ and who will be without hope in his death? That will be playing the fool with a vengeance! And the Truth of God will come home to him that the eternal ruin of his soul is the cost of his folly!

If you were to realize what this kind of "pleasure" means, you would have nothing to do with it! When Mount Vesuvius suddenly began pouring forth its lava upon Pompeii, most of the inhabitants were assembled in the amphitheatre. I have seen the ruins of the place where they were gathered. I do not know what spectacle was on at the time, but however interesting it may have been, there was not a man, or woman, or child who did not run as fast as they could to wherever they hoped they might find a place of refuge! A few persons remained in their habitations,

or were unable to escape—and there they are to this day. Some of their bodies have been lately discovered in the very positions in which they were overtaken by the eruption. If men were wise, the merriest play that ever was acted upon the face of the earth, the richest golden gains that ever lay before a merchant, the choicest pleasures that ever tempted the human heart would never induce them to tarry till they were forever lost—but they would be up and away and never rest till they had escaped from the wrath to come!

Some seem to have no real objective in life. I think I hear someone say, "Well, I have cared for none of those things that you have mentioned." Where then, my Friend, have you tried to find satisfaction? "Oh, I have not troubled my head about that! I just plod along from day to day, working hard to earn my daily bread. I do not know that I have any ambition in this world except to pay my way, have enough to eat and to drink, and clothes to put on, and bring up my children as well as I can." Rest assured, my Friend, that I do not despise you for having such desires. At the same time, I do think that it is a pity for an immortal soul not to have some aim and objective higher and brighter than that, for it is pretty nearly the objective of a mill-horse that goes round and round in its daily course and never aims at anything higher. Your objective is very much like that of a swallow, or a sparrow which builds its nest, and lays its eggs and hatches them, and sees its young flying off on their own account. Your ambition might be suitable for a dog, or a horse, or a cat, but it is not worthy of you—a being of a higher order! When I look at you and remember that you were made in the image of God, I think that, surely, there must be *something* worth living for—*something* nobler than this poor ambition of yours! I ask you honestly to say whether you have found satisfaction there—and I am fully persuaded that you have not.

There are some who argue that the Gospel cannot bless them. I frequently hear this kind of talk from poor working people. One says, "Well, Sir, if I were well-to-do, then I think I ought to be a Christian, but religion is not for the poor." That is in direct opposition to the declaration of Christ, Himself, that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." And to the Inspired question, "Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" Yet many people will have it that the Gospel is not for them because they are so poor!

I have also heard some say that they are so ignorant that they cannot be saved. One says, "I cannot read," and another says, "I can read, but I cannot understand what I read in the Bible. And when I go to hear a sermon, I cannot make out what is meant by it." They make out that they are almost idiots with regard to spiritual matters, yet, on any other subject, they would stick up for themselves and try to prove that they are almost philosophers! Yet their plea that ignorance prevents them from being saved is directly contrary to Scripture, for the Apostle Paul, Inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote to the Corinthians, "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the foolish

things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence."

Then, again, others say that they are too busy to be saved! At least that is the practical meaning of their excuse. One says, "Now, do not bother me about religion, for I really have not time to think about such things as that. See, I have to be up early in the morning and to work hard till late at night." Another says, "My business cares are so numerous that I cannot get away from the counting-house to go to a Prayer Meeting." Ah, dear Friends, but how many people who have not been able to find time to pray, have had to find time to die? And how very frequently do we see that the very people who say that they have not had time to think about the things of God, have found plenty of time for indulgence in vice and sinful pleasures! That excuse, like the others I have mentioned, will not avail any of those who make it. There is time enough for the most hard-worked man to lift his eyes to Heaven and to cry, "O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, accept me, for I come to You trusting in His atoning Sacrifice!" With many, the excuse is only an excuse, for they do not want Christ and they do not believe that there is anything for them in Christ and, therefore, they make these vain excuses.

I have known some even to say that they are too sinful to come to Christ—other people may be saved, but they could never be—they have gone too far into sin and they are too much involved in sin. They are so old and they have so many friends and connections on the side of evil. Perhaps they are in a business that is not honest and they are so interlaced with bad men that they cannot get out of it. So they say—and they will say anything so as to hide that which is really at the bottom of their hearts—which is that they do not want Jesus Christ to save them. They would rather that He should leave them alone to go quietly on their own way, even though that way will inevitably lead them to everlasting destruction!

III. Now, in closing my discourse, I want to tell you WHERE REAL SATISFACTION CAN BE FOUND. It came in answer to the prayer of the text. "O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Let me try and teach you, as plainly as I can, the way to find solid satisfaction. Friend, you are young and life is before you. You would gladly make it a whole life, altogether happy. Begin, then, by realizing that there is need for you to seek satisfaction from *God*. If you were an animal, you could be easily satisfied. Sheep and oxen are perfectly satisfied if you turn them into a field where there is plenty of grass. *They* never stand and cry, "O satisfy us," but they eat as much as they need and then they are perfectly content. But you, though placed in a world of wondrous beauty and though, as a man, you are made capable of great happiness, have not obtained it! So *you may as well begin your search for*

it by the confession that you are a fallen creature. You have lost the peerless jewel of innocence. Your first father, Adam, lost it as your representative and you have also lost it on your own account. If you had not lost it, you would not need to pray to God, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy," for you would already be satisfied! Adam was satisfied as long as he kept from sinning against God—and you, also, would be satisfied if there were no sin in you. Let this confession be made by each one of you, "Lord, I am unsatisfied because I am unholy. I have not attained to satisfaction because I have not attained to perfection."

Then, remember that *if you are ever to get satisfaction, you will have to get it from God*—and it must come from Him as the gift of His mercy. The text says, "O satisfy us early with Your mercy." God has so made us that we cannot get on without Him. It is both a blessing and a curse that it is so—it is a blessing that we cannot be satisfied without God, for that necessity helps to draw us to Him—but it is a curse if we continue to try to be satisfied without Him. As the planet needs the sun, so man needs his God. As the eye is nothing without light, so your spirit is nothing without God. You must have God! Yet, up till now, some of you have not even thought of Him. Getting what you needed here below has occupied all your attention! But as for God, perhaps you have not thought of Him, or if you have thought of Him, you have only done so to wish that there were no God. The thought of God has been a troublesome subject to you—you wish you could dismiss it altogether from your mind. But, my Friend, if you are ever to get satisfaction, this state of things must be altered! You must recognize that, as a creature, you must be at peace with your Creator. I do not ask you to take my word for this assertion, but I do urge you to search the Scriptures to see whether it is not so. There you will learn that until the quarrel between you and God is ended—until you submit to God and are at peace with Him—your soul cannot find rest any more than Noah's dove could find rest as she flew over the wild waste of waters and discovered no place for the sole of her feet to rest.

Do not forget that you cannot come back to God unless God shall display His mercy to you! If you appeal to Divine Justice, you will find that it must punish you, for, young as you are, you have broken God's holy Law. You have committed sins which have provoked the Lord to anger and jealousy—and before you can be reconciled to Him and have His love shed abroad in your heart, these sins of yours must be forgiven. They can be forgiven, for God delights in mercy! They can be forgiven *now*, for He waits to be gracious. They can be forgiven without money and without price, for He freely pardons all those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, His Son!

But suppose your past sins were all forgiven? You could not, even then, get satisfaction because *there would still be in you a natural tendency to sin*. You can, all of you, sin without being taught to do it. There is no need to found an institution for the purpose of teaching the practice of vice, or to employ agents to excite men to commit crime—he natural bias of the human heart is in that direction! Now, as long as you

love sin and your heart has a bias towards evil, God and you cannot walk together. Thousands of years ago He asked the question, "Can two walk together except they are agreed?" It is necessary, therefore, that there should be a complete change in your nature, for it can never be content as it is. Whatever God might give it, even if He were to give it Heaven, itself—your nature would never be satisfied while it remained as it now is. Your nature is diseased and must be healed—otherwise it will be with you as it would be with a sick man if you piled up his room with gold, or heaped up learned volumes all around him and bade him study them! They would not take away his pains—it is the *disease*, itself, that needs to be cured.

So is it with the malady of your spirit. You must be make right with God or, as Christ Himself put it, *you must be born-again*. Now, if you could be made a new creature with a will perfectly conformed to God's will, with a heart that loved what God loved and hated what God hated, with a spirit within you as pure as God, Himself, is, with a mind which sought only after purity and abhorred everything that was evil, and if, in addition to that, all your past sins could be forgiven, would not that be a grand and a blessed thing? There is many a man who has lived a life of crime and shame, who, when he sees a little curly-headed boy kneel down to say his prayers at his mother's knees, remembers when he did the same and wishes that he could be put into a mill and be ground young again. That is the kind of thing that would give you satisfaction—and that is just what Jesus Christ came to do for those who believe in Him, for He has come into the world to "save His people from their sins." That is, not merely to save them from being punished for sin, but to deliver them from the sin itself! He can give you, my Friends, a new heart and a right spirit. He says, "Behold, I make all things new," and those who believe in Him are made new creatures in Christ Jesus!

"Oh," says one, "I wish I were a new creature in Christ." Why should you not be? He that believes in Jesus has the witness of the Spirit within his heart and this is a sure sign that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus, for the first result of regeneration is true saving faith! So, if you trust in Jesus, that is a positive proof that you are born-again. Then see what will come of this great change. You will begin your new life with a new nature, a nature that loves God and hates evil—a nature that longs for conformity with the will of God! You will begin your new career "accepted in the Beloved," with a life within you that can never die and with a pardon granted to you that can never be reversed! You shall be so completely saved that you shall never return to the old follies and sins in which you formerly lived because you will not be saved because somebody has persuaded you to live in a different fashion, but because you have been made altogether a new creature!

"What?" asks someone, "Shall I be perfect when this change comes?" No, there is a nature in you which will still remain and with which you will have to fight and wrestle. But the new life, which Christ will give you, will enable you to overcome it. "Well," says one, "I do not see how that is

to bring me satisfaction." But it will! This is a great mystery, but it is a great Truth of God. Possibly you are dissatisfied because you cannot bring the contents of your pocket up to the height of your wishes. But if you bring your wishes down to the level of the contents of your pocket, you will be satisfied with what you now have! You cannot get all that you want, but suppose that your wants are reduced to your actual needs? How will it be, then? You cannot, at present, expect to have all that your heart desires, but suppose your heart is renewed by Grace so that you do not desire what God does not see fit to give you—will not that be the way for you to obtain satisfaction? If the mountain cannot come to Mahomet, Mahomet had better go to the mountain! And if we cannot change our outward circumstances, we had better be content with such things as we have.

We have been born into a world where there is much sin and much sorrow, where no man can have all that he wishes—and it is a grand thing when our wishes get changed, our desires get altered and we become altogether different from what we used to be! This is the path that leads to satisfaction! Some people seem to think that if they had what I have, they would be perfectly content. But I am quite certain that if they had it, they would be utterly dissatisfied with my portion! Yet I am perfectly satisfied with it—not perfectly satisfied with *myself*, for that I never shall be while I am down here—but I am perfectly satisfied with what God does for me and with me. That satisfaction is what every Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has a right to enjoy! And when he lives as a Believer should live, he *does* enjoy it, and he can sing with good Mr. Watts—

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

The garden of such a man as I am just now describing is a very little one, but he walks in his rich neighbor's park and he thanks God that it does not belong to him, for he has not the trouble and expense of keeping it in order, yet he can probably enjoy it quite as much as its owner can! He goes to the top of a hill and he knows that all he can see is in a certain king's dominions, but he is glad that he is not the king, for he does not want the trouble of ruling a kingdom! He thanks God for the beauties of Nature which are all his—he knows that the mountains and the valleys, the sea and the sky are all his because they are his Father's, so he may enjoy them to the fullest. He thanks God that he does not need to put the sun into his pocket, nor to keep the moon in a cupboard all to himself—all things in the world are his as much as he needs them, but he rejoices to know that his fellow creatures may also enjoy them as much as he does.

He is brought, by the Grace of God, into such a state of mind that the joy of others is his joy, and that the sorrow of others is his sorrow. And he would not wish to forego this enlargement and expansion of his mind. The Grace of God has put him into such a condition of heart and soul that, on the land or on the sea, on a bed of sickness or walking about

with the elasticity of health, he says, "It is all right, for my Father has ordained it all. He gives or He takes away. He kills or He makes alive and as He does it, all is well and I am perfectly satisfied with it—and as long as I live, I will bless His holy name." Now, that is the truly happy man and this is the only way to be really happy! Trust in Jesus, rest wholly upon Him and He will renew your spirit and change your heart—and with that change of heart He will give you capacities for happiness which you never can have in any other way!

My dear young Friends, I want to speak these last few words especially to you. If my older friends here are not yet converted, I pray that they may soon be saved and I thank God that we have seen many such saved. No old man or old woman has any need or reason to despair! I have seen people of 70 and 80 years of age—and more than that—converted to Christ. He does not limit His Grace to any age. If you were 5,000 years old, I would be bound to preach the same Gospel to you as if you were a little child—whatever your age, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! But, at the same time, we cannot make you old people begin life again. We cannot take you back to the years of youth. Possibly you wish that we could! But as for you young people, we long for you to be satisfied early with God's mercy, that you may rejoice and be glad all your days! Are you fifteen, or 16 years of age? There was a time, I daresay, when you thought your brother was wonderfully old because he had got into his teens—but you do not feel very old, do you? But you think you will have reached a great age when you get to be forty! Perhaps, then, you will think that it is the people of sixty, or seventy, or eighty, or 90 years of age who are getting old, and not you! But let me assure you that now, *now*, NOW is your time!

I would not, God knows, deceive you about this matter for all the wealth there is in the world. I have known the Lord, blessed be His name, since I was 15 years of age, and there has never been a moment since then, in which I have regretted putting my trust in Him. A great many times I have mourned that I did not trust Him sooner and that I have not trusted Him better—but never once have I wished to go back to my former condition and leave my dear Lord and Master! You know that we sometimes hear servants speak well of their master before other people's faces—when they think their master will hear of it. But when they get together, a lot of them around the fire, no telling what they say about their master, then! But when you gather around the fire, or when you meet with any of my particular friends, ask them whether they ever heard me say a word, in public or in private, against my Master! On the contrary, I love to tell everybody how kind and good He has been to me—and to my most intimate friends I delight to relate all that I know about Him. I can tell you one thing, if a man serves a master who treats him badly, he will not be likely to bring his boy to that place of business—but it is my greatest delight to see my two boys serving my dear Lord and Master! If He had been a bad Master to me, I would have said to them, "Now, boys, do not, either of you, make the mistake that I have made in

serving the Lord Jesus Christ as I have done." Oh, no, they have never heard me talk like that! They know how I rejoiced when I found them believing in Jesus Christ and afterwards beginning to do what they could in His service! Young people, your godly mothers and fathers would not be anxious to make you miserable. You have no idea that they want you to be wretched and sad, have you? No, but it is because they have found such supreme delight in the service of God that they want you to find your delight in it, too! I have gone up and down this country and traveled a good deal in other countries, too, and I think I may say, without exaggeration, that I have talked with many thousands of Christians and I have heard some strange things from some of them—but, up to this moment, I have never met with any Christians who have said to me, "We are all mistaken, after all. There is no solid satisfaction to be found in Jesus Christ."

I have seen some of these Christians at the time when men's hearts speak out, if ever they do! I have seen them die. I have visited the dear consumptive girl in her last hours and I have been with the gray-headed saint who has passed his fourscore years, when the time came for him to die! It has been my lot to stand by many death beds and I can honestly say that if I wanted to enjoy the most intense pleasure that is possible on earth, I would seek out some dying saint that I might witness his rapturous joy and hear his gladsome and cheering testimony to his Lord and Savior! A man usually speaks the truth when he comes face to face with death and eternity is opening before him. Most men put off their masquerading, then, and appear in their true colors. And it is then that Christians speak best concerning Christ! And often the loudest songs and the sweetest praise that they have ever given to Him, they lay at His feet, then, just before they go away from earth to go to be with Him forever!

Dear young Friends, the way of the highest happiness is the way of absolute trust in Jesus, giving yourself up to the renewing of the Holy Spirit that you may become new creatures in Christ Jesus! May God, in His Infinite mercy, grant that this great work of Grace may be worked in every unsaved soul in this assembly before you leave this building! And it will be if you simply rely upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will then take you by the hand and make all things new to you. God grant it, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

GREAT PARDON FOR GREAT SIN
NO. 2988

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 17, 1906.

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IN THE YEAR 1862.

"For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great."
Psalm 25:11.

THIS striking prayer is hemmed in, as it were, between two promises. It looks like a fossil embedded in a mass of stone! What is the meaning of it being here? Why is it put in such a peculiar position? The Psalmist is both praising and preaching—how is it that he turns to praying? Beloved, I think it was to teach us that prayer is never out of place. When the Apostle Paul was writing the most doctrinal of his Epistles, he sometimes paused in the midst of them to offer a supplication, as when he said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When engaged in any holy duties, you may even refrain from praise for a moment in order to present a prayer to God. Nor would it be amiss for us, sometimes, to break the thread of a sermon, that the people might pause and join with the preacher in asking God's blessing upon the message of mercy and upon all who hear it. Certainly, my dear Friends, you will never find any time inopportune for prayer if your heart is true and your faith in full force.

The Mohammedans have their fixed hours for prayer and when they hear the signal from the minaret of the mosque, wherever they may be—in the street or in the market place—they bow their heads to Allah and repeat their form of prayer. Without *their* boastful showiness, you may "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." We need not be confined to special seasons when a summons is given, but, at all times and in every place, we may "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." When your hands are measuring out your goods, when they are pushing the plane, or driving the nail—when you are driving the plow, or threshing the corn—if you are speeding along the iron way, or walking among the cornfields, your heart may have fellowship with Him—

"Who is within no walls confined,
But habits the humble mind"—

who counts all places holy where men are holy, and all spots suitable places for prayer when the heart is in a prayerful frame! My Soul, wait upon God in your daily calling and think not that you can ever approach Him at an unseasonable hour, or lift up your cry to Him when He is otherwise engaged, so that He cannot attend to your petition!

Were it necessary to my present purpose to explain the connection of this prayer with the scope of the Psalm, it would not be difficult. The

promise that the Psalmist had just recited is, "unto such as keep His Covenant." It was the besetting sin of Israel to break the Covenant. Do you not see that the condition here mentioned would shut the door of hope to many? The greatness of the promise often stirs up our deepest anxieties, lest any of us should seem to come short of it. Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer for pardon which is never unfitting at any time, can never be more fitting than when our hearts are lifted up with the loftiest apprehension of God's Covenant!

My principal aim tonight, however, is to bring my Hearers and myself, all of us, to feel with David that our iniquity is great. When I have done this, I shall very briefly try to show how the very greatness of our iniquity may become a plea with God—"Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." And I shall close with some earnest entreaties to those who have never sought pardon for sin, to seek it now.

I. Well then, first, DAVID DECLARED THAT HIS INIQUITY WAS GREAT.

The word used in the original conveys the idea of quantity as well as of quality. Not simply was his sin great in its atrocity, but there was very much of it! Any one sin was great, but it was not merely one, but ten thousand times ten thousand in multitude! His sin was as great in its bulk as it was black in its heinousness. Now, I do not know, although David had one very terrible fall, that any humble-minded person here would consider himself to be superior to David. He was a man after God's own heart and, notwithstanding the great blot upon this sun, we would not hesitate to say he is a sun for all that. For David presents a character so admirable, so all but matchless in the harmony of the different Graces that we think he certainly approaches very near to his great Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, if David felt his iniquity to be great, it would be very foul presumption in any of us to think ours to be little! At any rate, we must come out, one by one, and say, "I reckon myself to be a better man than David was," or else we ought to subscribe heartily with our hand to the Truth of God that if David's was great, our iniquity must be great, too!

But leaving David out of the question—not comparing ourselves with others—we will draw some few pictures by which the greatness of our iniquity may be seen. Our sin is great *when we consider against Whom it is committed*. In an army, if a soldier strikes his comrade, it is, of course, a misdemeanor. But if he should strike some petty officer, it is considered to be a more grievous offense. And if he should strike the commander-in-chief, it would become so great a crime that I know not what penalty short of death might be awarded to it! Now, in the world of morals, as God sees it, there is much difference in sin when we consider the difference in the person against whom it is committed. You and I think the worst sin is the one that hurts *us* the most!

We have heard, I daresay, the story of the lawyer who was waited upon by a farmer, who asked him what would be the penalty for a man whose horse was always going into his neighbor's field and eating his corn. He had warned him several times and told him it was the result of his broken fence which he ought to have mended. The lawyer said, "Of

course, there would be a considerable fine, no doubt." "Well, Sir," the farmer said, "it is *your* horse that has done this." "Oh," said our friend the solicitor, "that is quite a different question. I did not know it was *my* horse before I gave my opinion." So it is, generally, with regard to anything that is done amiss—if it hurts you, or if it hurts me—we feel very indignant about it. But if it only offends the Majesty of Heaven, we make light of it! What fools we are! If it shall offend such puny, insignificant creatures as we are, there is something seriously wrong in it—but if the Divine Majesty is insulted, we pass it by as though it were a mere trifle!

There really is a difference in the sin according to the person against whom it is committed. I will put it thus. A man has just now been striking another—striking him with an intent to do him harm. "That is bad," you say. "Yes, but it was his own father that he struck." "Yes," *now* you say, "that is far worse for him to have injured the man whom he ought to have loved and honored."

So, since God is our Creator, any attack that is made upon His government, any willful violation of His Law is aggravated by the fact that we owe Him such unfounded allegiance! "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves! We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Sinners, did you ever think of this? You have offended Him who made you, in whose hands your breath is and under whose control are all your ways. When you have used profane words, it has been against the High and Lofty One, against Jehovah, who rides upon the sky and launches abroad His thunderbolts and shakes Heaven and earth with His terrible voice! Against Him, before whom the holy angels veil their faces, and humbly bow themselves, unworthy to lick the dust of His feet—it is against God that you have offended! Sinner, you think this is a little matter, but I tell you that it is the fact that makes your iniquity great!

Yet further, sin derives some degree of its sinfulness *from the fact that it is at once against a most just and equitable Law.* We sometimes read in the newspapers that persons are severely punished for offenses against the game laws of our country. Well, I suppose it is a very wicked thing to shoot another person's hares and pheasants and partridges. Were I a preserver of game, I daresay I would consider the offense of the tenant farmer who shot a bird that was feeding on his corn, to be very aggravated. As I am not, I do not particularly see its flagrant character. No doubt it is wrong, though it looks to me more like a misdemeanor than a felony. When a law is proved to be harsh and severe, there will always be some mitigation in our judgment of the culpability of breaking it. If we consider such-and-such a law hard and tyrannical, not suited to the times and out of keeping with the age, then we say, when a person breaks it, "Well, he had better not have done it—it is an offense against statute law and he ought not to have committed it." Still, we do not think it to be so black as when the offense is against a just, equitable, proper and righteous law which harmonizes with strict, unvarying equity. Now, such is the Law of God.

What can be more fitting than the law of the Ten Commandments? Infidelity itself has burned pale before those Ten Commandments. We have heard of men who have attempted to improve the Law of God by a new commandment and have found themselves unable to do it, for they perceived it to be so complete that it embraced all forms of criminality. Those who have abhorred other parts of Scripture have said, as they read the ten precepts, "These are just and righteous." They are, indeed, the fundamental stones of natural morality! They are such as even Nature, itself, would approve to be right and proper for the government of the world. Well then, Sirs, if you have broken these good commandments. If you have run your head against these holy, just, and righteous precepts, your iniquity is great! If you could turn to any Law of God, and say, "This is harsh, this is tyrannical," there might be some excuse for you—but those commandments were made for your good! If you keep them, they will bring you their own reward. If you break them, they will bring their own penalty into your body, mind and heart. Why, then, have you been so foolish as to violate them? Assuredly, in so doing, your iniquity has become heavy as a millstone and if it is about your neck when you come to die, it will sink you in the floods forever!

But, dear Friends, we ought, each of us, to remember that *our sin is all the greater because it has been committed by us,* for sometimes an offense is all the worse because of the person who has committed it. When the noble Caesar saw Brutus stab him, he said, "And you, Brutus!" There was force in his dying words, for Brutus had been his dear friend, one who owed no little to him and, surely, the Lord might say to us, when we sin, "And you, too. And you! You whom I have fed day by day. You who are clothed by My charity and nourished by My bounty! You, living in this fair province of the universe which is called the world, this beautiful fair round green earth! You—partakers of such innumerable favors—you sin against Me?" Ah, Christians, you who are Heaven's favorites, you who are allowed to enter into the Lord's cabinet councils and to understand the secrets of His Covenant, you who are Christ's own spouse, the bride of the Prince of Heaven—your sin is all the blacker because of that light of His Countenance in which it has been your privilege to walk!

But to hurry on, as I throw off these hints to be worked out in your own minds rather than to be dwelt upon in my discourse, let me remind you again that *our sin is certainly very great because of the amount of it.* Innumerable times have we transgressed. It is not as though we had done wrong *once* and then washed our hands of it. Who can count his errors? What man can tell the number of the small dust of his transgressions? As for the drops of dew twinkling in the morning light, as for the drops of the ocean making that vast flood, as for the stars of Heaven and the sand of the seashore—the incalculable number of all these sinks into insignificance when compared with the infinite host of our transgressions against You, O God of Heaven and earth! This very day, have there not been more sins than moments, more transgressions than heartbeats, more offenses than pulses? God only knows the total of the sins of man! Only His Infinite mind can reckon the iniquity that

crops forth from the polluted soil and wells up from the deep spring of depravity that is hidden in the very core of our corrupt nature! Count your sins if you can, O you children of God, and then fall on your knees, bow your heads, cover your faces and say, "Our iniquity is indeed great."

Nor is this all. We ought also to remember that *we have sinned and offended without any provocation*. When a poor wretch, pinched with hunger, snatches a loaf from a bake shop and eats it ravenously in the street, what magistrate could forbear to treat him leniently? But when a rascal does a wanton mischief without cause, or commits a willful robbery without conscience, what defense can he set up? With such utter defiance of law and order, we have patience and we say, "Let the full punishment fall upon his guilty head." And that is what you and I have done—we have sinned for sinning's sake. When we spent our money in sin, it was for that which is not bread, and our labor of iniquity was for that which did not profit us. You and I have not been gainers by all that we have done amiss. There may have been times when you had the excuse of getting something by sin, but not always. For instance, what excuse is there for swearing? Lust may plead a pleasure, wine may ease a pain, avarice has an eye to gain, but the cheap swearer, from his open sluice, lets his soul run out in sorry curses, losing all the patience he possesses for the mere sake of venting forth black and ugly words that have no meaning. This is infamous! What if I say it is infernal to sin for the mere sake of sinning? We heard of one, the other day, who said, when reproved for cursing, that he would continue to swear—yes, if he had an angel on each shoulder, he would still go on cursing! There seem to be some of this sort who, for the mere sake of dabbling in the mire, will do it and, in truth, we have all, in our time, sinned in open defiance of the Almighty and, therefore, our iniquity is heavy.

Sons of men, I put it to you, as one of yourselves and, therefore, willing to be your advocate—but I must rather take up the cause of Him against whom we have offended—what has He ever done to us that we should hate Him? He has made us, fed us, clothed us—for which of these good works do we forget Him? He has sent His Son to redeem His people—is this a cause why we should despise Him? He follows us day after day with invitations of mercy, stirs up our consciences, hedges up the road to Hell as though He would not let us perish—for which of these things do we requite Him with evil? What has the Most High done to provoke you? Has He ever done you a displeasure? In what respect has He thwarted you except for your good? What pleasure that is a real pleasure has He denied you? Is His yoke heavy? Is His burden intolerable? Are His Commandments like the whips of Solomon, or His Laws like the scorpion of Rehoboam? Has He made His little finger thicker than the wires of human law? Do you not know that men, in superstition, will make laws ten times harder than God's Laws ever were—and will keep them? It cannot, therefore, be that God has thus offended you. O why then, sons of men, do we despise our God? What can there be so good in sin that we will have it *and* God's anger with it? What can there be so sweet in Hell that we choose it and despise the

glories of Heaven? Verily, in this arrant folly, this flagrant malice, this frantic madness, our iniquity is indeed great!

Yet further, what if I should say that *we have gone on in sin after we have, some of us, known and felt the evil of it*? I speak advisedly when I appeal to almost all of you now present and ask—must not your iniquity be great because it was not done in ignorance? Many here were nursed in the lap of godliness. Your sins, therefore, are 10 times heavier than other men's! The lamp of the sanctuary lit some of us to our cradles. The hush of lullaby had the name of Jesus mingled with it. Perhaps the first song we learned to sing was concerning the children's best Friend. The first book that we began to read contained His sweet name and many were the times when we were pressed by godly ones to think of Jesus and to give our young hearts to Him. But we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness—and knowing the good from the evil, we did willfully choose to do that which is wrong. Ah, for this thing, when we have sinned against light and knowledge, does not our transgression become greater than that of the people of Tyre and Sidon who perished in their sin?

And then, when we had learned by experience, as well as by education, that sin was bitter, we still went on in it. There is a young man yonder who went astray once and smarted for it—and he thought he would never be such a fool again. But it has happened to him according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Some men seem only to get out of one ditch to roll into another! There are plenty of persons who, when they put their fingers in the fire and burn them, run and get them bound up and healed, only to go to the next fire and thrust in, not their finger, this time, but their arms up to their elbows! Take care that one of these days, Man, you do not have your body and soul consumed in that fire which can never be quenched! How foolish some are who have been in the spendthrift line! After they have emptied their pockets and found themselves beggars, they have gone to their friends who used to take a glass with them—such jolly companions, such dear friends as they used to be—but they do not know them now. "Oh, no!" they say, and give them the cold shoulder, now that their clothes begin to look a little out at elbows. I have seen these people get employment again and throw themselves out of it by their ill character. I have seen them get a respectable situation perhaps two or three times and then go and ruin themselves all over again—and still expect their friends to set them up once more—set them up on purpose that they may have the pleasure of tumbling down! When men do this so many times, certainly their iniquity becomes heavy.

I have put the case strongly concerning one or two delinquents. They are, however, only representatives of us all, for when we have smarted for an offense, we have committed it again. Burnt children are afraid of the fire, but burnt sinners are not—they will go to the fire again, like the moth which gets to the candle, singes her wings and flies off a little—but she must go again and if you lift her out of the melted grease around the light, she will fly back again the first opportunity she gets, as if she

thought it her ambition and her life's best glory to be consumed in the fire! Iniquity is indeed great when it is committed against experience! Men deliberately run upon the pikes of damnation—they destroy their own souls by a sort of spiritual suicide!

At times, men's offenses to their fellow men lose some of their guiltiness by an apology. Why, sometimes, when we have been aggrieved by some little offense and a proper apology has been promptly made, we could have wished we had never taken notice of it, for we did not like to see the good man so sorry about it. We freely forgave him, and felt as if we did not need him even to feel that he had done wrong because he took it too much to heart, so we passed over the offense because of the repentance. But how great is the guilt of that man who, having sinned, refuses to repent? And is not this exactly the case of many here present—sinning from your cradles, but never repenting? Repentance is hidden from your eyes—you go on from bad to worse, from dark to deeper stains. The Ethiopian has not changed his skin, nor the leopard his spots. You have sought no physician for your healing. You have let the deadly gangrene grow yet more putrid, until the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. Careless Sinner, I would that I could play the part of Mr. John Bunyan's Captain Boanerges and his ensign, Mr. Thunder, and run up the black colors before your eyes, bearing as the escutcheon the flaming thunderbolts of God's Justice! You who will not repent must incur the fierce wrath of God. Lo, He has bent His bow and made it ready! He has fitted His arrow to the string—He takes aim at you tonight! The arrow shall soon fly and reach your heart! Oh, that you had Grace given you to repent! O Spirit of God, break the man's heart! Take hold of Your great hammer with which You do cleave mountains and dash that heart in pieces, that the sinner may cry out, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great."

With some men, their iniquity becomes all the greater because *they have sinned against promises which they have made, vows which have been registered in Heaven and covenants which they have signed with the Most High.* You know who I mean. You were ill with the fever some few years ago—you were given up! You turned your face to the wall and you remember how, in the bitterness of your soul, you cried, "O God, if you will but spare me, mine shall be another and a better life for the future!" You were spared, but your life has been worse, rather than better. You remember, too, when the cholera was abroad and there were many falling on the right hand and on the left—you were terrified and alarmed—and you sought God after a sort and told Him that if He would but spare your life, that life would be spent in His service. What have you been doing since then? It is true that you sometimes go to the House of God, but it is only in the evening when you have made your money in the morning! You do not mind giving God the tail end of Sunday! The first two or three weeks after you got better, the shutters were up, there was no rioting, no swearing, no loose conversation. Your neighbors said, "What has come over the fellow? He is quite a different man." Yes, you had *another* heart for the time, but not a *new* heart—and now you are as reckless as ever.

Do you think God has forgotten your promises? Do you think that registered covenant of yours has been blotted out? No, Sinner, no! It stands fast against you to make your guilt more infamous and your transgressions more heavy. Take heed! Take heed! Take heed! When God shall hold it up against you, at the last tremendous day, you will read your doom in that broken promise—in that lie which has been uttered against the God of Grace and goodness!

Most of us, at some time or other, have sinned thus against resolutions and promises and, consequently, our iniquities are heavy. O dear Friends, I have a task too hard for me in such a subject as this! When I talk of the glories of the love of Christ, I feel at home. When I speak of the matchless Grace of the Everlasting Covenant, my heart is well at ease. But to prove man's sin heavy is a task too hard for me! Not that it is hard in itself. The evidence is clear, but to procure a conviction is the difficulty. The jury is not impartial. Your conscience is like an unjust judge. Oh, how hard it is to make any man believe himself to be so bad as the Word of God says he is! None but the Spirit of God can make a man call himself a sinner and mean it. Nothing but the Irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit can ever bring a man as low as the Word of God would have him lie. If you can feel, in your soul, tonight, that your iniquity is great, that it deserves God's wrath, displeasure and punishment—if you can pray from your very heart, "O Lord, pardon You my iniquity, for it is great"—I shall have hope of you that the first sparks of the Divine Light have fallen into your soul, never to be quenched, but to blaze out in the brightness of salvation forever!

II. I shall now turn, very briefly, to the second part of my subject—to show how THERE IS A PLEA IN THE VERY GREATNESS OF OUR SIN.

Is not this a very strange text? Look at it again. One needs to read it over 20 times. Is it really so written, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great!" Can you believe your own eyes? Imagine a prisoner at the Old Bailey pleading with the judge that he would kindly let him off because he was such a great offender! We would think that it would be a very legitimate reason why he should *not* be pardoned. The pith, however, of the whole text lies in those words which we sometimes forget to quote, "For Your name's sake." That alters it. It is now an argument—it was not before. "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great."

Let me show you that there is a plea here. If salvation were by merit, then, supposing all men to have fallen and none of them to have any merit, yet it would be a rule that the man who was the least offender should have the first turn at being saved. If the choice of God depended in any way upon *man's* condition, we would naturally expect that the man who had the least sin would be forgiven first, for, putting all on an equal basis in all other respects, the choice, if made at all, with reference to the man, would naturally be the choice of the man who had committed the least iniquity. But, dear Friends, please remember that in the Covenant of Christ and the way of salvation, the choice is made upon reverse principles—not according to man's merit, but according to God's Glory. The aim, end, and objective of God in salvation is to glorify His own Character! Therefore, if His choice may be said to be guided by any

principles which we can at all understand, that choice would be guided to select those who would the most magnify His Grace and glorify His own name. Well now, if God would do that great work of pardoning sin in such a way as to glorify His own name, the most fitting persons to be saved are the biggest sinners!

Let me put it thus. Here is a number of persons and they are all sick. And here is a physician who intends to get a name for himself. He is full of benevolence and kindness, but, at the same time, one part of his objective is to get a name. Now, you will perceive that in the selection of his patients, he will not pick out a man who has a sore finger, for it will never tell very much to his credit that he healed a man who had a sore finger. But there will be, perhaps, a few cases among the sick of a very extraordinary sort. Some of them will have an affliction, a disease quite unknown to the faculty. Medicines have been tried, but their cases have been so stubborn that the best doctors have given them up as hopeless. Now, the physician says, "These are the cases that I will select." Granting that he is able to cure whomever he wills, you can see that if the objective is his own glory, he would rather take those in which there is the most room for the display of the healing art than those who have the least sickness and might be the most readily cured.

Yet again. Suppose a man means to have a character for generosity. There are a number of debtors assembled and he is determined to discharge their liabilities. There is a man who owes sixpence and another who owes a pound. Well now, if he pays their debts, he will never have much credit for liberality there! But another man comes in who is head over heels in debt. What is the sum he owes? Fifty thousand pounds? Let us say a hundred thousand pounds! Let us say half a million! Well, now, here is the opportunity for the liberal man to display his liberality because here there is room for it! So is it in Divine Grace. You, proud Pharisee, come to God and say, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men." And He replies, "Then there is no room in you for My Grace to work." But yonder poor publican dares not lift so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smites upon his breast and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" "There is a case for Me," says Sovereign Mercy—and the pardon comes to the poor sinful publican!

Mark, when I speak of sinners, I do not mean merely those who have been great sinners, or those who have been, in comparison with others, little sinners, but I mean those who *feel themselves* to be great sinners. I say the more we feel our guilt, the more fit we are for mercy. The more broken down we are with hopelessness on account of our own lost estate, the more room there is for the triumphs of Christ's Grace. Now, there is many a moral man here tonight who never offended against the laws of his land, or the laws of outward propriety, yet he feels himself to be as black as Hell. Well then, there is room in him for Grace to glorify itself! We have noticed that men of the worst character are often the most self-righteous. There is many a Pharisee whose morals would not pass muster though he vaunts his piety as a harlot flaunts her broidery and many a scamp who would be a disgrace to the meanest society if his

character were known, brazens it out as though he never had offended against a single Law of God. Again, I say you who *feel* that you are the very chief of sinners! You who groan and mourn on account of sin, be not silenced at the Mercy Seat because of the greatness of your guilt! But rather, with the inimitable skill of the Syrophenician woman, turn the very desperateness of your case into a reason why the Lord should save you!

Now tonight, upon your knees, wrestle with the God of Mercy, and say, "Pardon me, for my transgression is great. And my Hell will be great. But if You will save me, Your honor will be great! If You will redeem me, the power of Your blood will be great! If You will give me a new heart, the transforming power of Your Spirit will be great! O God, save me! God be merciful to me, a sinner!" This is, as Luther says, to cut off the devil's head with his own sword. When the devil says to you, "You are a sinner," say to him, "I am, and Christ died to save sinners." And when he says, "But you are a big sinner, you are a Jerusalem sinner, a bigger sinner than any other," say to him, "Yes, that is true, but Jesus said 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'"

I have tried, and I am trying, to preach a wide Gospel. I do not like to have a net with such big meshes that the fish get through. I think I may catch you all if the Lord wills. If the vilest are not shut out, then you are not shut out, Friends. And if you believe in Christ with all your heart, you shall be saved! But oh, what if you should say, "I care not for forgiveness. I do not want pardon, I will not seek it! I will not have it—I love my sins—I love myself"? O Sinner, then, by that deathbed of yours where you shall see your dreadful sins in another light. By that resurrection of yours where you shall see eternity to be no trifle. By that doom of yours. By the last dread thunders. By the awful sentence, "Depart, you cursed," of the Judge, I beseech you, do me but this one favor! Acknowledge that you had an invitation tonight and that it was affectionately pressed upon you. I have told you, in God's name, that your sin is not a trifle with God—that it is not a matter to be laughed at or to be whistled over. I have told you that the greatness of your sin need not shut you out. What is needed is that the Spirit of God should teach you these things in your heart. But do remember, if your ears refuse these Truths of God, and if you reject them, we are a sweet savor unto Christ as well in them that perish as in them that are saved! But woe unto you—woe unto you, who, with the Gospel ringing in your ears, go down to Hell!" Verily, verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than for you! May God save you, for Jesus' sake! Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 10:1-15.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* Let this be our "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel." Sorrows upon sorrows have come to the Lord's ancient people

even down to this day—and they have been scattered and peeled, and rent and torn in almost every land. Who does not pity their griefs and woes? Let it be our heart's desire and daily prayer for Israel that they may be saved through faith in the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge*. In Paul's day, they were most diligent in the observance of every form of outward devotion—and many of them sincerely desired to be right with God. But they did not know how to attain the desired end.

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*. Perhaps I am addressing some who are very anxious to be right with God. They are by no means hypocrites, but are really awakened to a sense of their danger, yet they cannot get peace of mind. And the reason is that, like the Israelites, they are "going about to establish their own righteousness." "Going about"—that is to say, struggling, striving, searching, worrying themselves to get a righteousness of their own which they will never obtain—and being ignorant of "the righteousness of God" which is completed in Christ and which is freely bestowed upon all who believe in Him. Alas, they "have not submitted themselves unto this righteousness of God" and there is a kind of hidden meaning in the Apostle's expression. They are so proud that they will not submit to be saved by the righteousness of another, even though that other is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. Yet this is the main point—the submission of our proud will to the righteousness of God.

4. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes*. Christ is the ultimatum of the Law of God and when we go to the Law, accepted and protected by Him, we present to the Law all that it can possibly demand of us. Christ has fulfilled the Law on behalf of all who believe in Him, so that its curse is abolished for all of us who approach it through Christ.

5-9. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man which does those things shall live by them. 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 does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved*. "The righteousness which is of faith" is quite another thing from the righteousness which is of the Law of God. It is not a thing of *doing*, and living by doing, but of *trusting*, and living forever by trusting. What are you doing—you who would gladly clamber up to the stars, or you who would plunge into the abyss? There is nothing for you to do! There is nothing for you to feel! There is nothing for you to be in order that God

may accept you! But, just as you are, if you will receive Christ into your heart and confess Him with your mouth, you shall be saved! Oh, this glorious way of the salvation of sinners—so simple, yet so safe—so plain, yet so sublime—for me to lay aside my own righteousness and just take the righteousness of Christ and be covered with it from head to foot! I may well be willing to lay aside *my* own righteousness, for it is a mass of filthy rags, fit only to be burned!

10-14. *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. How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* How can there be true prayer where there is no faith? How shall I truly pray to God if I do not really believe in Him? "For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

14. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard*? We must know what it is that we are to believe—and knowing it we shall be helped by the Holy Spirit to believe it.

14. *And how shall they hear without a preacher*? If the Word of the Lord does not get to a man either by the living voice, or by the printing press, which often takes the preacher's place, how is he to believe it? You see here what I have often called "the whole machinery of salvation." First comes the preacher proclaiming the Gospel. Then comes the sinner listening to it. Then comes the hearer *believing* it and, in consequence, calling upon the name of the Lord as one who is saved with His everlasting salvation!

15. *And how shall they preach, except they are sent*? Here is the great engine at the back of all the machinery—God sending the preacher—God blessing the Word—God working faith in the heart of them that hear it!

15. *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*!

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NEAR THE KINGDOM, OR IN IT?
NO. 2989

A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24, 1875.

"You are not far from the Kingdom of God."
Mark 12:34.

IN certain respects, all men are alike—alike fallen and alike needing the Savior. Hence we have not 20 gospels, but only one—and we have not the Gospel graduated to scale to suit different classes of society, or different conditions of morality. We have the same Christ to set before sinners of every sort as their only hope—and the same message to proclaim to everyone of them, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

At the same time, we would make a very great mistake if we dealt with everybody in precisely the same way, for all human beings are not exactly alike and our Savior, Himself, drew distinctions concerning those who came to Him while He was upon the earth. He uttered very strong language to some of the scribes, but He used a very different tone in addressing the particular scribe to whom He said, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."

There is no doubt that there are some sinners who are very far from the Kingdom of God—by their wicked works, they have gone away even further than they were by nature. They have added to the original sin which was theirs by birth, all the corruptions which have come of evil habits and, with their backs to the Light of God, they have gone further and further into the darkness of the night of sin. There are others, who through the restraining Grace of God, have never done this. They are fallen creatures, it is true, but still, there are many beautiful points in their character. Indeed, they are so amiable that even Jesus, when looking upon one such young man, loved him, though He had to say even to him—"One thing you lack." The lack of that one thing was fatal! Still, Christ recognized the good that there was in him and I feel sure that He would have His ministers and all who try to bring souls to Him, act in the same way. Besides, a point is gained with a man if you frankly recognize whatever there is about him that is satisfactory—and he will be the more likely to listen to you when you point out his defects and show him wherein his character still falls short of what it ought to be. Fully believing that I have many in this congregation who are "not far from the Kingdom of God," I shall speak especially to them, or, rather, I pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to them through me, for it is HE who speaks with power to the heart and conscience!

I shall first *describe the condition in which this man was.* Then, secondly, *point out its dangers.* And, thirdly, *note its encouragements.*

I. First, then, let me DESCRIBE THE CONDITION IN WHICH THIS MAN WAS. "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."

Christ spoke thus to him and, as He was able to read the man's heart, he could tell, with absolute accuracy, the condition in which the man was. And He is able to read all our hearts at this moment. Looking down from the Throne of Glory, He knows, dear Friend, exactly what your position is in relation to His Kingdom—how far you have come and how far short you still fall. Trusting in His unerring knowledge, I pray Him to send His Spirit, that the Word of God spoken may meet your particular case, and so come home to you that you may perceive that God, Himself, is speaking to you and calling you to come into the Kingdom towards which you have come so near.

Let us first look at this scribe's case and see why it was that he was so near to the Kingdom. I think the first hopeful sign about him was that *he had evidently been and was a man of candid spirit.* He was not so prejudiced as most of the other scribes were. His mind and heart were open to conviction. When he read the ancient Scriptures, he did not read them with his eyes shut, or gazing through colored Rabbinical spectacles as so many of the scribes read them. He went to them desiring to know the Truth of God that was in them and, when he saw the Truth, he did not rebel against it, but yielded himself to it. It is evident that he had been a candid student of the Law of God, for he had arrived at the conclusion that its greatest commandment was love to God and to one's neighbor, whereas I have no doubt that many of his fellow scribes had given the first place to matters that were purely ceremonial—something to do with circumcision, perhaps, or with the eating of unleavened bread—matters that were important enough in their proper sphere, yet not to be regarded as the weightiest things in the Law. But this man had read with an evident determination to know the Truth and so far, he had found it out.

He showed his candor, not only by his diligent search for the Truth, but also by being a candid controversialist. He had heard the questions which had been put to Christ and he had noted how wisely Christ had answered them. And he had also noticed that not one of the questioners had had the courtesy to say that Christ had answered them well. They were so ashamed of themselves for putting the questions to Him, that they had evidently retired into the background. But this man, as soon as he received the answer to his enquiry, seemed to recognize the wisdom of the great Teacher and he expressed the opinion that Christ had answered him wisely. I do not know how he could have put it better than he did when he said, "Well, Master, you have said the truth." You know that when men are arguing, and their blood is hot, it very often happens that the one disputant will not admit that the other has spoken the truth. Though he is quite sure that it is so, he will not acknowledge it—and it is an evidence of a really candid spirit when, in the midst of a debate, a man confesses that his opponent has got the better of him. It shows that he is not merely fighting for the victory, but is seeking the truth. And there is always something hopeful about a man of that sort. My dear Friend, I do not know where you are, nor what your particular opinions may be, but if you are firmly resolved to follow truth wherever

she may lead you, I think I may say to you, as Christ said to this scribe, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." Do not be self-confident, nor rely too much upon your own judgment, but let your mind lie open to conviction. Above all, let it be open to the heavenly Light of God! And if you do, I shall have hope concerning you, notwithstanding a thousand mistakes that you may make. An honest seeker after the Truth of God will not be long before Truth finds him and he finds Truth!

Another favorable point in this scribe's character was that *he evidently had some degree of spiritual perception*—not much, perhaps, but still, as things went, a good deal for that time. He had found out, through reading the Law of God, that God attached more importance to matters of moral practice than to mere matters of ceremony, and much more importance to that which concerned the heart than so many outward actions. "To love the Lord with all one's heart, and soul, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as one's self," said this scribe, "is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." He had advanced further than many a Romanist has, for the Romanist would hardly say as much as he did. "The outward ceremonies of the church are so exceedingly important," he would say, "that, I could not put anything else before them." But this man had been taught to feel that real heart-work and true love to God were more important than all the ceremonies of the Law, *even though they were ordained by God, Himself*. He had advanced further than some of our very doctrinal friends, to whom orthodoxy seems to be both the first thing and the last thing, though, as you very well know, what they call orthodoxy is simply their own doxy! But if people only hold that doxy, that is about all they care for—all the rest is a very secondary matter to them. This scribe, however, had advanced further than that and he would, doubtless, have said that to love God with the whole of one's heart was more important than believing all the dogmas that were ever formulated by all the doctors of divinity in the world!

This scribe had also advanced further than the mere moralist, who teaches that if you do what *you* think is right, that is all you need trouble yourselves about. But this scribe expressly spoke of loving the Lord "with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength." He could see that the entire man must be given up to love God, for, if he were not, all the outward profession of living according to the letter of the Law would not suffice. Now, dear Friend, if you have been enabled to break through your former attachment to mere external ceremonies—if you have fully comprehended that true religion is not a matter of mere externals—you are "not far from the Kingdom of God." You are one of those who are learning that "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." I hope He is seeking you and that, before long, you will not only be *near* the Kingdom, but actually in it! It is a grand thing when a man is brought so far as to be able, from deep inward conviction, to say with Dr. Watts—

"Not all the outward forms of earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,

Can raise a soul to Heaven."

If we are to be saved there must be the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit within the soul to make it spiritual and capable of spiritual worship! And he who really knows this is "not far from the Kingdom of God."

Another admirable point in this scribe's character was that *he evidently had a considerable knowledge of the Law*. To know the Law of the Lord is the next thing to knowing the Gospel. It is not everybody who understands this Truth of God, but it really is so. Old Robby Flockhart, an evangelist who used to preach in the streets of Edinburgh, sometimes said to his hearers, "I will preach the Law of God to you tonight, and nothing but the Law of God, for it is the sharp needle without which I cannot get the silken thread of the Gospel into your hearts." And he spoke the truth. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." When the Law condemns a man, he flies to Christ to seek forgiveness—but until he has received the sentence of the Law in his own soul, he will never fly to Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice to be set free from sin. If the Law is rightly used, it drives the sinner to the Savior—and there was hope concerning this scribe because he evidently knew the requirements of the Law of God. He did not sum that up in a mere outward morality, but he knew that the Law was spiritual and that it made demands upon man of a spiritual character. It would not have taken anyone long, I should think, to convince that man that he had fallen short of those demands. And when he had been thus convinced, he was well on the way to seeing the preciousness of the Atonement that could meet the demands of that broken Law of God—so that his knowledge of the requirements of the Law helped him to be "not far from the Kingdom of God."

Once again, *this scribe was evidently teachable.* He was in such a frame of mind that he was willing to hear what the great Teacher had to say. I do not think he came to Christ as a quibbler. He probably came to test Christ, but not to quibble with Him after he had tested Him and, having tested Him, he was willing to learn more of Him. It is a hopeful sign when we are willing to sit on the children's seat, remembering our Lord's words to His disciples, "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Some people are much too big to go through Heaven's gate. They are so wise, in their own estimation, that they are not willing to be taught even by Infinite Wisdom. Their judgment is so accurate, their intelligence is so clear, that they will not submit to be instructed by Him who is the very Wisdom of God. They think that they have within themselves the power to draw an Infallible distinction between right and wrong, between the Truth of God and error—and they will not allow even the Almighty to dictate to them, and to be the Arbiter of their lives. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a sad state for anyone to be in! But it is a hopeful sign when we are teachable. If you are so, you are "not far from the Kingdom of God."

Now I will leave this scribe, in order that I may take notice of some others who are "not far from the Kingdom of God." There are many persons who, from their youth up, have always had a great horror of that

which is wrong. And they have felt—not to perfection, but to a considerable extent—a delight in that which is true and good. They do not feel themselves to be true or good, but they wish they were. Their first associations in life were with godly people and they have always loved godly things. They do not find family prayer to be irksome or, if they do, they realize how wrong they are for being in such a state of mind. They would be very sorry if the ordinances of religion were neglected in the place where they live. The Sabbath is a delight to them and they love to go up to God's House. They hardly know why they feel thus, for they are afraid they have no part nor lot in the matter, but still, they like to go there—if there is anything good to be heard, they wish to have a share in it. If anybody speaks against good things, or good men, they are very grieved. Horror takes hold of them if they ever hear God's name blasphemed. They have had, from their very childhood, a bias in the direction of that which is right—but it is natural rather than spiritual. They are not, as yet, distinctly out and out for Christ—they have not believed in Him as their Savior, they have not yielded themselves up completely to Him. I am persuaded that we have large numbers of young people who are very accurately described by that expression, "not far from the Kingdom." Of course, I am speaking of their best side and I am well aware that there is another side to their character—but there is still much about them that is hopeful.

I know some who are even nearer to the Kingdom than those whom I have been describing, for they are under a very deep sense of their sinfulness. Not one of them would ever be so foolish and so wicked as to say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." Often, while they are sitting here listening to a sermon that is full of comfort, they feel that they are not entitled to have it for themselves. Oh, how they wish they could believe and that they were really saved! One thing they do realize—that is, they are lost, and ruined, and undone. This fact has caused them much sorrow of heart, but they are not yet sufficiently awake to make the desperate effort which decides the matter. Realizing that they are condemned, they cannot feel at ease and, sometimes, floods of tears flow down from their eyes because of their transgressions. Ah, my dear Friend, if that is your condition, you are, truly, "not far from the Kingdom of God."

There are others who are in this further hopeful condition, that they are very attentive hearers of the Word. They come to the House of Prayer on purpose that they may hear the Gospel and, after a fashion, they pray that the Gospel may be a blessing to them. I like preaching to people of that sort! One might wish to preach all day and all night if one could only have throngs of such hearers—everyone of whom would be praying, "O my God, bless me! O my God, save me!" I remember that when I was in this condition, I used to pray all through a sermon, "O Lord, meet with me, meet with me tonight!" And, my dear Friend, you are "not far from the Kingdom" if that is how you are now praying.

I know some who have advanced still further, for they have kept on praying wherever they have been, though they themselves hardly know whether they have been praying rightly. You know, dear Friend, that you went home last Sabbath and fell on your knees, and cried, "Lord, save

me!" And, during the past week, you have got away alone as often as you could that you might have a little time of prayer. Even when you have been at work—you do not know whether others have noticed it or not—there has been the heaving of a sigh or the upward glancing of the eyes. Sometimes you have almost wished that you had never been born, for you have had the dreadful fear that you might never find the Savior! At other times, you have had a little hope that perhaps you might and, at any rate, you are a true seeker—and I believe you are "not far from the Kingdom."

Besides that, I should not wonder if you read the Scriptures very earnestly to try to find out how you can obtain eternal life. And you also study good books with the same view—those very books which you once thought so dull and even horrible! You read them now at every spare moment that you can get. You would rather read them than the most fascinating romantic novel that was ever written, for you are earnestly seeking eternal life. You certainly are "not far from the Kingdom of God."

II. Now, secondly, I want you to NOTICE THE PECULIAR DANGER OF YOUR CONDITION if you are "not far from the Kingdom."

The great danger of it is that *though you are not far from the Kingdom, you are not in it.* A man was in a sinking ship. He almost leaped into the lifeboat, but just missed it and was drowned. The manslayer was fighting for his life and the avenger of blood was close behind him. He had almost reached the City of Refuge, but he was overtaken by his adversary just outside the gate—and so was slain. Almost saved is altogether lost! There are many in Hell who once were almost saved, but who are now altogether damned. Think of that, you who are not far from the Kingdom. It is being in the Kingdom that saves the soul, not being *near* the Kingdom. If you are just upon the border, yet if you have not actually entered, you are not secure. Those five foolish virgins were almost in the banqueting hall—there was only the thickness of a door between them and the wedding feast—but they only heard the awful sentence, "Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now." Your great danger is that you will get to be content with being *near* the Kingdom, although not actually in it. I have known some people remain in that perilous position for months and years till, at last, it got to be their chronic condition and they made no effort to take the decisive step. They appeared to be in a very hopeful state, yet I fear that, by-and-by, we shall have to give them up as utterly hopeless. Oh, these hopelessly hopeful people—what can we do with them? They are, for a time, hopeful, yet never more than hopeful and, at last, we have to admit that their apparent goodness is only superficial and that all the hopes they raised within us are delusive. They mock us and we also fear that they mock God!

We are also very much afraid that you who are "not far from the Kingdom," *may get into your heads the notion that there is something good in you* and that there being something good in you, it will help to save you. If so, you will be really further away from the Kingdom than if you were liberally far off! I know of nothing that will more effectually keep you out of the Kingdom of God than the notion that you are good enough to stay out—the idea that, surely, God will not condemn such excellent persons as you are! And, besides, you are so near that you can slip in

any day. If you get that notion into your head, I am afraid you will never slip in, but that you will perish in your present lost condition. Oh, may God graciously deliver all of you from such fatal self-righteousness!

I should like to point out to you one thing and that is this—*how very terrible it would be if you should be lost after having been so near to the Kingdom of God*! The manslayer is overtaken by the avenger of blood and falls a mangled corpse upon the very threshold of the City of Refuge—does not that seem truly dreadful? One step more and he would have been safe! But he could not make that step, so he was slain. I always feel mortified if I got to a railway station just as the train, which I want to catch, moves from the station. If it had gone ten minutes earlier, I would not have minded missing it so much—but to be so near as to see it go seems to aggravate my disappointment and, certainly, it will be the greatest aggravation of all to you if you are lost after having been so very near to the Kingdom of God! I can almost imagine other souls that are lost speaking to you in that tone of tension which Isaiah applied to the king of Babylon, "Hell from beneath is moved for you to meet you at my coming…They shall go and say unto you, Have you also become weak as we? Have you become like us? How are you fallen!" What horror must have seized the guilty tyrant when he came into the midst of those whom he had oppressed and crushed! And if some of you who have been so near to the Kingdom, are lost, I can imagine the swearer in Hell saying to you, "Ah, you rebuked me for my oaths, but where are you now?" And another will say, "You used to help reclaim drunks, but where are you now? You were one of those who used to sit in the Tabernacle and listen to sermons. I never went there, but you did—and how much the better are you for going?"

And some of them will say, "Oh, if we had only had your opportunities, if we had but heard the Gospel as you heard it! If we had been placed under the holy, hallowed influences which surrounded you, surely we would not have acted so foolishly as you have done!" I need not draw any fancy pictures of what may happen, for you know what our Lord Jesus Christ said to those who heard Him and yet repented not—"I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you." If you have heard the Gospel and the Kingdom of God has come near unto you, and you have come near unto it, and yet, through lack of the decided act of faith in Jesus Christ, you perish in your sin, your doom will be more terrible even than that of Tyre and Sidon, or Sodom and Gomorrah—

"So near to the Kingdom! Yet what do you lack?
So near to the Kingdom! What keeps you back?
Denounce every idol, though dear it may be,
And come to the Savior now pleading with thee!
So near, that you hear the songs that resound
From those who believing, a pardon have found!
So near, yet unwilling to give up your sin
When Jesus is waiting to welcome you in!
To die with no hope! Have you counted the cost?—
To die out of Christ and your soul to be lost?
So near to the Kingdom! Oh come, we implore!
While Jesus is pleading, come enter the door!"

III. I will not say more upon that sad part of my subject. I feel far more at home in trying to speak, for only a minute or two, on the last point, namely, THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD. May God, in His Infinite mercy, grant that you may enter the Kingdom this very night! May He not allow another morning's sun to rise from the East and look upon you as unconverted men or women!

For, first, *think how much God has already done for you.* You might have been born in one of the back slums of London, or you might even have been born as Hottentots or a cannibal islander! Perhaps upon that matter of your birth depends the fact that you are sitting in this House of Prayer and are not in the gin palace, the prison, or in Hell itself! It may be simply the dispensation of Divine Providence that has made this difference between you and the very worst of men. Be very thankful to God for what He has already done for you—for this vantage ground on which His Providence and the kind instructions of Christian parents and friends have placed you.

And, next, *as He has done so much for you, should not this encourage you to ask Him for still more*? If He has, by His Grace, brought you so near to the Kingdom, would it not be wise for you to say to Him, "My God, You have done much for me. Will You not now give me that which will make all this end in my salvation? Will You not give me a new heart and a right spirit? Will You not give me the new birth which will enable me to believe in Jesus Christ this very night, so that I may pass from death unto life?" Do you not think that the message of the Gospel should very much commend itself to you? You are a candid hearer, if I understand you rightly, and you have some love to good things. Now, was there ever a more Divine message than this? God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. He took upon Himself the sin of guilty man. He suffered in the place of the guilty and He bids us now proclaim this Gospel of free, Sovereign Grace, that "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ has endured the full penalty of sin. Jesus has bowed His back to carry the intolerable burden of human guilt and He *has* carried it and cast it into the depths of the sea, where it shall never be found, to be again laid by the charge of any soul that believes in Him. You are not asked to do anything, you are not even asked to *feel* anything—you are simply asked to trust yourself in the hands of the Incarnate God. Was anything ever simpler, more full of Grace, more full of compassion to your lost and helpless condition? It is all put into this simple message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." This is the message from Christ in the highest heavens! "Look, look, look," is all He bids you do—simply look unto Him, Trust in Him, depend upon Him! Surely you cannot desire anything that is more worthy of God than this Gospel of His Grace which we proclaim unto you in His name!

Well, my dear Friend, you have come near to the Kingdom, *but is it not very clear to you that you need something more than you can find in yourself?* You have come as far as you can, yet, as far as that is compared with where others are, how little it really is! I said that you had begun to pray, but what sort of prayer is yours? I said that you were an

attentive hearer of the Word—so you are—yet how small a thing will take you off from the pursuit of the blessed realities of Grace! You know that although you are somewhat softened, your heart is still hard. There is still much unbelief in your soul, though there is a gleam of what looks like faith now and then. In fact, to put the matter very plainly, you are in such a condition that you will be in Hell unless the mercy of God shall prevent it, for you are certainly not yet saved! Do you know that it is so? Do you really feel this? Then, can you not, (may God help you to do it), by one desperate effort of faith, throw yourself at the feet of Jesus and say to Him, "Never will I go from You, O You blessed Savior, till You pronounce me clean! I now put out the tip of my finger, feeble and weak as my faith is, and I touch You. If You can save a sinner, Jesus, save me! I trust You to do so!" Friend, you are saved! That simple touch of the finger has brought virtue out of Christ unto you and He has bid you go in peace!

I remember how it seemed to me, when I was under conviction of sin—as though Christ stood before me with a sharp sword in each of His hands! And I felt, "I can but be lost. I will fling myself into His arms notwithstanding those swords." And so I did, by a desperate plunge. I felt, "I have done with all attempts at self-salvation! Christ is my only Savior. I see that He finished my salvation on the accursed tree. I depend upon Him, I lean on Him with all my weight and all my might. Guilty and black and vile—and foul as I am by nature—I wash in the fountain filled with His precious blood and am clean every whit, even in the sight of the Most High God!" Oh, that you, dear Friend, would do the same! I believe that you are doing it, that God is helping you to do it. I feel sure that He is and that you are letting go all your foolish confidence, all trust in your own prayer, or even in your own faith, or your own anything! And you are going to trust yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, whether you sink or swim!

Faith is very much like learning to swim. I have often thought that I could easily swim, but I never could induce myself to take the last toe off the ground—and there is no swimming till one does that. You must trust yourself wholly to the water. So must you trust yourself to Jesus. But you are afraid to take that last toe off the ground—you cannot give up just a little confidence in yourself. Oh, for the glorious plunge of faith! You fear that you will drown, but you will not, for you will swim. The everlasting love of Jesus will buoy up the biggest sinner out of Hell if he will but rest himself upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for the sins of man! Only trust Him and He will save you! May God give you the Grace to trust Him, and He shall have all the glory. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 12:12-44.

Verse 12. *And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way.* Christ's enemies could not injure Him, then, partly because the people heard Him gladly, and were ready to protect

Him, but still more because the appointed time for His suffering and death had not fully come.

13, 14. *And they sent unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words. And when they were come, they said unto Him, Master, we know that You are true, and care for no man: for You regard not the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth.* They meant "to catch Him in His words," if they could, so they baited their trap with flattery. Whenever a man begins to flatter you, be on your guard against him. If he tries to commence a conversation with you by uttering words of excessive admiration, depend upon it that he admires something that you have got more than he admires you! And, therefore, be on the watch against him. Our Savior must, in His heart, have utterly despised men who were so foolish as to imagine that they could entrap Him by their flattering words. After that preface, they asked the questions which they thought would impale Him upon the horns of a dilemma—

14, 15. *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give*? They knew very well that if Christ said, "Do not give tribute to Caesar," the Romans would have taken him up and imprisoned him for preaching sedition, but, on the other hand, if He said, "Pay tribute to Caesar," the Jews would have said that He was their enemy, and not a true patriot, or else He would not have admitted that the chosen people were bound to pay taxes to their Roman conquerors.

15-17. *But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt you Me? Bring Me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at Him.* He had answered them with matchless wisdom without committing Himself in either way!

18-23. *Then came unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection, and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother dies and leaves his wife behind him, and leaves no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brothers and the first took a wife, and dying, left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them, for the seven had her to wife.* No doubt they thought that they had completely entangled Him that time! How could He answer such a difficult question as that? But, you see, they had based their enquiry upon the erroneous supposition that things are to be in another state as they are here—so Jesus was able at once to answer them as effectively as He had just answered the Pharisees and Herodians.

24-27. *And Jesus, answering said unto them, Do you not therefore, err, because you know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in Heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have you not read in the book of Moses, how in the*

bush God spoke unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; you therefore do greatly err. His answer carried the war into the enemies' camp! They professed to believe in Moses, yet they denied the existence of spirits and the fact of the resurrection. But Jesus Christ proved to a demonstration that God cannot be the God of the dead! If, therefore, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive! And if He is your God, and my God, dear Friends, we need not fear extinction—we will live, and we will live forever!

28-34. *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered Him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, You have said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, You are not far from the Kingdom of God. And no man after that dared asked Him any question.* He had so decidedly put all His questioners to the rout that no other man had the audacity to court defeat at His hands! The Infallible Wisdom of Christ had put all His accusers and tempters to flight.

35, 36. *And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the Temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit.*

In Psalm 110:1—

36, 37. *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. David therefore himself calls Him Lord; and from where is He then his son*? They could not answer that riddle, but we can. We know that Jesus is both David's son and David's Lord—a man like ourselves, of the great human race, yet, "very God of very God," blessed be His holy name!

37-40. *And the common people heard Him gladly. And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplace, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a presence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.* We often hear foolish people say "You must always preach in love and not say anything against anybody! Jesus did not denounce anybody." Oh, dear! Then what about this denunciation of the scribes? Were Jesus here today, He would not be the soft-shelled creature that some people want us to be! He had a backbone and a conscience—and a very heavy right hand—and He brought that hand down like a sledgehammer upon cant and hypocrisy and error! And if we would be like Christ, we must be manly, bold and outspoken! They tell us this in

order that we may easily glide through the world and that all men may speak well of us. But so did their fathers to the false prophets—and do you suppose that we who preach God's Word are going to keep back any part of our testimony because it will bring us into ill repute with the ungodly? God forbid! We live for something higher and nobler than being fed upon the breath of evil men! If there is error in high places, if there is vice *anywhere*, it is the duty of the minister of Christ, in His Master's name, to attack it with all his might! Here we find our Lord and Master plainly declaring that the scribes, the great masters of the Law of God, were a set of pretentious hypocrites who robbed even the widow and the fatherless and who would, in due time, "receive greater damnation." Even so must the Truth of God still be spoken, whoever may be offended by it!

41, 42. *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow.* Doubly poor, because she was not only a widow, but in poverty—"a certain poor widow."

42-44. *And she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow has cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance.* Christ measures what we really give by what we have left—by the proportion which what we give bears to what we possess—"For all they did cast in of their abundance."

44. *But she of her need did cast in all that she had, even all her living.* So she gave more than any or all the others did!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"——645, 658.

—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 BELIEVER NOT AN ORPHAN
NO. 2990

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1906.

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

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."
John 14:18.

You will notice that the margin reads, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." In the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples were like children deprived of their parents. During the three years in which He had been with them, He had solved all their difficulties, borne all their burdens and supplied all their needs. Whenever a case was too hard or too heavy for them, they took it to Him. When their enemies well near overcame them, Jesus came to the rescue and turned the tide of battle. They were all happy and safe enough while the Master was with them. He walked in their midst like a father amid a large family of children, making all the household glad. But now He was about to be taken from them by an ignominious death and they might well feel that they would be like little children deprived of their natural and beloved Protector. Our Savior knew the fear that was in their hearts and before they could express it, He removed it by saying "You shall not be left alone in this wild and desert world. Though I must be absent from you in the flesh, yet I will be present with you in a more efficacious manner. I will come to you spiritually and you shall derive from My spiritual Presence even more good than you could have had from My bodily Presence, had I still continued in your midst."

I. First, here is AN EVIL AVERTED.

Without their Lord, Believers would, apart from the Holy Spirit, be like other orphans—unhappy and desolate. Give them what you might, their loss could not have been recompensed. No number of lamps can make up for the sun's absence—blaze as they may, it is still night. No circle of friends can supply to a bereaved woman the loss of her husband—without him she is still a widow. Even thus, without Jesus, it is inevitable that the saints should be as orphans. But Jesus has promised in the text that we shall not be so— He declares the only thing that can remove the trial shall be ours—"I will come to you."

Now remember that *an orphan is one whose parents are dead*. This, in itself, is a great sorrow, if there were no other. The dear father, so well-beloved, was suddenly smitten down with sickness. They watched him with anxiety. They nursed him with sedulous care, but he expired. The loving eyes are closed in darkness for them. Those active hands will no longer toil for the family. That heart and brain will no longer feel and think for them. Beneath the green grass the father sleeps. And every time the child surveys that hallowed hillock, his heart swells with grief.

Beloved, we are not orphans in that sense, for our Lord Jesus is not dead! It is true that He died, for one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came out blood and water—a sure evidence that the pericardium had been pierced and that the fountain of life had been broken up. He died, that is certain, but He now is not dead! Go not to the grave to seek Him. Angel voices say, "He is not here, for He is risen." He could not be held by the bands of death. We do not worship a dead Christ, nor do we even think of Him now as a corpse. That picture on the wall which the Romanists paint and worship, represents Christ as dead, but oh, it is so good to think of Christ as living, remaining in an existence real and true, none the less living because He died, but all the more truly full of life because He has passed through the portals of the grave and is now reigning forever! See then, dear Friends, the bitter root of the orphan's sorrow is gone from us, for our Jesus is not dead! No mausoleum enshrines His ashes, no pyramid embalms His body, no monument records the place of His permanent sepulcher!

The orphan has a sharp sorrow springing out of the death of his parents, namely, that *he is left alone*. He cannot now make appeals to the wisdom of the parent who could direct him. He cannot run, as once he did, when he was weary, to climb the parental knee. He cannot lean his aching head upon the parental bosom. "Father," he may say, but no voice gives an answer. "Mother," he may cry, but that fond title which would awaken the mother if she slept, cannot awaken her from the bed of death! The child is alone, alone as to those two hearts which were its best companions. The parent and lover are gone! The little ones know what it is to be deserted and forsaken. But we are not so—we are not orphans. It is true that Jesus is not here in body, but His spiritual Presence is quite as blessed as His bodily Presence would have been. No, it is *better*, for supposing Jesus Christ to be here in Person, you could not all come and touch the hem of His garment—not all at once, at any rate. There might be thousands waiting all the world over to speak with Him, but how could they all reach Him if He were merely here in body? You might all be wanting to tell Him something, but, in the body He could only receive some one or two of you at a time.

But in spirit, there is no need for you to stir from the pew, no need to say a word—Jesus hears your thoughts talk and attends to all your needs at the same moment! There is no need for us to press to get at Him because the throng is great, for He is as near to me as He is to you, and as near to you as to saints in America, or the islands of the Southern Sea. He is everywhere present and all His beloved may talk with Him! You can tell Him, at this moment, the sorrows which you dare not open up to anyone else. You will feel that in declaring them to Him, you have not breathed them to the air, but that a real Person has heard you. One as real as though you could grip His hand and could see the loving flash of His eyes and mark the sympathetic change of His Countenance.

Is it not so with you, you children of a living Savior? You know it is! You have a Friend that sticks closer than a brother! You have a near and dear One who, in the dead of the night is in the chamber, and in the heat and burden of the day is in the field of labor. You are not orphans—the "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The

Prince of Peace" is with you—your Lord is here and, as one whom his mother comforts, so Jesus comforts you!

The orphan, too, *has lost the kind hands which always took care that food and raiment should be provided, that the table should be well stored, and that the house should be kept in comfort.* Poor feeble one, who will provide for his needs? His father is dead, his mother is gone—who will take care of the little wanderer now! But it is not so with us! Jesus has not left us orphans. His care for His people is no less, now, than it was when He sat at the table with Mary, and Martha and Lazarus, whom "Jesus loved." Instead of the provisions being less, they are even greater, for since the Holy Spirit has been given to us, we have richer fare and are more indulged with spiritual comforts than Believers were before the bodily Presence of the Master had departed! Do your souls hunger tonight? Jesus gives you the bread of Heaven! Do you thirst tonight!? The waters from the Rock cease not to flow—

"Come, make your needs, your burdens known."

You have but to make known your needs to have them all supplied! Christ waits to be gracious in the midst of this assembly. He is here with His golden hands, opening those hands to supply the needs of every living soul. "Oh," says one, "I am poor and needy." Go on with the quotation. "Yet the Lord thinks upon me." "Ah," says another, "I have besought the Lord thrice to tear away a thorn in the flesh from me." Remember what He said to Paul? "My Grace is sufficient for you." You are not left without the strength you need. The Lord is still your Shepherd. He will provide for you till He leads you through death's dark valley and brings you to the shining pastures upon the hilltops of Glory! You are not destitute? You need not beg an asylum from an ungodly world by bowing to its demands, or trusting its vain promises—for Jesus will never leave you, nor forsake you!

The orphan, too, is *left without the instruction which is most suitable for a child.* We may say what we will, but there is none so fit to form a child's character as the parent. It is a very sad loss for a child to have lost either father or mother in its early days, for the most skillful preceptor, though he may do much—by the blessing of God, very much—is but a stop-gap, and but half makes up for the original ordinance of Providence that the parent's love should fashion the child's mind. But, dear Friends, we are not orphans! We who believe in Jesus are not left without an education. Jesus is not here, Himself, it is true. I daresay some of you wish you could come on Lord's-Days and listen to Him! Would it not be sweet to look up to this pulpit and see the Crucified One, and to hear Him preach? Ah, so you think, but the Apostle says, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

It is most for your profit that you should receive the Spirit of Truth, not through the golden vessel of Christ in His actual Presence here, but through the poor earthen vessels of humble servants of God like ourselves. At any rate, whether we speak, or an angel from Heaven, the speaker matters not—it is the Spirit of God, alone, that is the power of the Word and makes that Word become vital and quickening to you. You

now have the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is so given that there is not a Truth of God which you may not understand. You may be led into the deepest mystery by His teaching. You may be made to know and to comprehend those knotty points in the Word of God which have hitherto puzzled you. You have but humbly to look up to Jesus and His Spirit will still teach you. I tell you, though you are poor and ignorant, and perhaps can scarcely read a word in the Bible—for all that, you may be better instructed in the things of God than doctors of divinity if you go to the Holy Spirit and are taught of Him! Those who go only to books and to the letter and are taught of men, may be fools in the sight of God, but those who go to Jesus and sit at His feet, and ask to be taught of His Spirit, shall be wise unto salvation! Blessed be God, there are not a few among us of this sort. We are not left orphans—we still have an Instructor with us!

There is one point in which the orphan is often sorrowfully reminded of his orphanhood, namely, *in lacking a defender*. It is so natural in a little child, when some big boys bully him, to cry, "I'll tell my father!" How often did we use to say so, and how often have we heard from the little ones since, "I'll tell Mother!" Sometimes, the not being able to do this is a much severer loss than we can guess. Unkind and cruel men have snatched away from orphans the little which a father's love had left behind and, in the court of law, there has been no defender to protect the orphan's goods. Had the father been there, the child would have had its rights, scarcely would any have dared to infringe them. But, in the absence of the father, the orphan is eaten up like bread and the wicked of the earth devour his estate. In this sense, the saints are not orphans. The devil would rob us of our heritage if he could, but there is an Advocate with the Father who pleads for us. Satan would snatch from us every promise and tear from us all the comforts of the Covenant, but we are not orphans. And when he brings a suit-at-law against us and thinks that we are the only defendants in the case, he is mistaken, for we have an Advocate on high! Christ comes in and pleads, as the sinner's Friend, for us—and when He pleads at the Bar of Justice, there is no fear but that His plea will be of effect, and our inheritance shall be safe! He has not left us orphans.

Now I want, without saying many words, to get you who love the Master to feel what a very precious thought this is, that you are not alone in this world—that if you have no earthly friends, if you have none to whom you can take your cares, if you are quite lonely so far as outward friends are concerned—yet Jesus is with you, is *really with you*, practically with you, able to help you and ready to do so! You have a good and kind Protector close at hand at this present moment, for Christ has said it, "I will not leave you orphans."

II. Secondly, there is A CONSOLATION PROVIDED. The remedy by which the evil is averted is this—our Lord Jesus said, "I will come to you."

What does this mean? Does it not mean, from the context, "*I will come to you by My Spirit*?" Beloved, we must not confuse the Persons of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is not the Son of God. Jesus, the Son of God, is not the Holy Spirit. They are two distinct Persons of the one Godhead.

But there is such a wonderful unity and the blessed Spirit acts so marvelously as the Vicar of Christ, that it is quite correct to say that when the Spirit comes, Jesus comes, too. And, "I will come to you," means—"I, by My Spirit, who shall take My place and represent Me, I will come to be with you." See then, Christian, you have the Holy Spirit in you and with you to be the Representative of Christ! Christ is with you now, not in Person, but by His Representative—an efficient, almighty, Divine, everlasting Representative who stands for Christ and is as Christ to you in His Presence in your souls.

Because you thus have Christ by His Spirit, you cannot be orphans, for the Spirit of God is always with you! It is a delightful Truth of God that the Spirit of God always dwells in Believers—not sometimes, but always. He is not always active in Believers and He may be grieved until His sensible Presence is altogether withdrawn, but His secret Presence is always there. At no single moment is the Spirit of God wholly gone from a Believer. The Believer would die spiritually if this could happen, but that cannot be, for Jesus has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." Even when the Believer sins, the Holy Spirit does not utterly depart from him, but is still in him to make him smart for the sin into which he has fallen. The Believer's prayers prove that the Holy Spirit is still within him. "Take not your Holy Spirit from me," was the prayer of a saint who had fallen very foully, but in whom the Spirit of God still kept His residence, notwithstanding all the foulness of David's guilt and sin!

But, Beloved, in addition to this, Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, *makes visits to His people of a peculiar kind*. The Holy Spirit becomes wonderfully active and potent at certain times of refreshing. We are then especially and joyfully sensible of His Divine Power. His influence streams through every chamber of our nature and floods our dark soul with His glorious rays as the sun shining in its strength. Oh, how delightful this is! Sometimes we have felt this at the Lord's Table. My soul pants to sit with you at that Table because I remember many a happy time when the emblems of bread and wine have assisted my faith and kindled the passions of my soul into a heavenly flame! I am equally sure that at the Prayer Meeting, under the preaching of the Word, in private meditation and in searching the Scriptures, we can say that Jesus Christ has come to us. What? Have you no hill Mizar to remember—

"No Tabor-visits to recount
When with Him in the holy mount?"

Oh, yes! Some of these blessed seasons have left their impression upon our memories so that the remembrance of those blessed seasons when Jesus Christ manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world will mingle among our dying thoughts! Oh, to be wrapped in that crimson vest, closely pressed to His open side! Oh, to put our finger into the print of the nails and to thrust our hand into His side! We know what this means by past experience.

And now, gathering up the few thoughts I have uttered, let me remind you, dear Friends, that *every word of the text is instructive*—"I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." Observe the, "I," there twice over.

"I will not leave you orphans—father and mother may, but I will not. Friends once beloved may turn stony-hearted, but I will not. Judas may play the traitor and Ahithophel may betray his David, but I will not leave you comfortless. You have had many disappointments, great heart-breaking sorrows, but I have never caused you any. I—the faithful and true Witness, the Immutable, the unchangeable Jesus, the same yesterday, today and forever—I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Catch at that word, "I," and let your souls say, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. If You had said, 'I will send an angel to you,' it would have been a great mercy, but what do You say, 'I will come unto you'? If You had bid some of my Brothers and Sisters come and speak a word of comfort to me, I would have been thankful—but You have put it thus in the first person, 'I will come unto you.' O my Lord, what shall I say, what shall I do but feel a hungering and a thirsting after You which nothing shall satisfy till You shall fulfill Your own Word, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you'?"

And then notice the persons to whom it is addressed, "I will not leave you comfortless: you, Peter, who will deny Me. *You*, Thomas, who will doubt Me: I will not leave *you* comfortless." O you who are so little in Israel that you sometimes think it is a pity that your name is in the church book at all because you feel yourselves to be so worthless, so unworthy, He will not leave you comfortless, not even you! "O Lord," you say, "if You would look after the rest of Your sheep, I would bless You for Your tenderness to them, but I—I deserve to be left! If I were forsaken of You, I could not blame You, for I have played the harlot against Your love, but yet You say, 'I will not leave you.'" Heir of Heaven, do not lose your part in this promise! I pray you say, "Lord, come unto me and though You refresh all my Brothers and Sisters, yet, Lord, refresh me with some of the droppings of Your love! O Lord, fill the cup for me! My thirsty spirit pants for it—

"'I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me.'

Now, Lord, fulfill Your word to Your unworthy handmaid, as I stand, like Hannah, in Your Presence. Come unto me, Your servant, unworthy to lift so much as my eyes toward Heaven, and only daring to say, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' Fulfill Your promise even to *me*, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.'" Take whichever of the words you will and they each one sparkle and flash after this fashion!

Observe, too, *the richness and sufficiency of the text*—"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Jesus does not promise, "I will send you sanctifying Grace, or sustaining mercy, or precious mercy," but He promises you the only thing that will prevent your being orphans, "I will come to you." Ah, Lord! Your Grace is sweet, but You are better! The vine is good, but the clusters are better! It is well enough to have a gift from Your hands, but oh, to touch the hand itself! It is well enough to hear the words of Your lips, but to kiss those lips, as the spouse did in the Song, this is still better! You know, if there is an orphan child, you cannot prevent its continuing an orphan. You may feel great kindness towards it, supply its needs and do all you possibly can for it, but it is still an

orphan. It must get its father and its mother back, or else it will still be an orphan. So, our blessed Lord, knowing this, does not say, "I will do this and that for you," but, "I will come to you."

Do you not see, dear Friends, that there is not only all you can need, but all you think you need wrapped up in a sentence, "I will come to you"? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," so that when Christ comes, in Him "all fullness" comes! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," so that when Jesus comes, the very Godhead comes to the Believer!—

"'All my capacious powers can wish
In You do they richly meet'—

and if You shall come to me, it is better than all the gifts of Your Covenant. If I get You, I get all, and more than all, at once." Observe, then, the language and the sufficiency of the promise.

But I want you to notice, further, *the continued freshness and force of the promise*. Somebody here owes another person 50 pounds, and he gives him a note of hand, "I promise to pay you 50 pounds." Very well. The man calls with that note of hand tomorrow and gets 50 pounds. And what is the good of the note of hand now? Why, it is of no further value, it is discharged! How would you like to have a note of hand which would always stand good? That would be a right royal present. "I promise to pay *evermore*, and this bond, though paid a thousand times, shall still hold good." Who would not like to have a bond of that sort? Yet this is the promise which Christ gives you! "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." The first time a sinner looks to Christ, Christ comes to him. And what then? Why, the next minute it is still, "I will come to you." But here is one who has known Christ for 50 years and he has had this promise fulfilled a thousand times a year! Is it not done with? Oh, no! There it stands, just as fresh as when Jesus first spoke it, "I will come to you." Then we will treat our Lord in His own fashion and take Him at His word! We will go to Him as often as we can, for we shall never weary Him—and when He has kept His promise most, then is it that we will go to Him and ask Him to still keep it! And after ten thousand proofs of the truth of it, we will only have a greater hungering and thirsting to get it fulfilled again! This is fit provision for life and for death, "I will come to you." In the last moment, when your pulse beats faintly and you are just about to pass the curtain and enter into the invisible world, you may have this upon your lips, and say to your Lord, "My Master, fulfill to me the word on which You have caused me to hope, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.'"

Let me remind you that the text *is at this moment valid* and for this I delight in it. "I will not leave you comfortless." That means *now*, "I will not leave you comfortless now." Are you comfortless at this hour? It is your own fault. Jesus Christ does not leave you so, nor make you so. There are rich and precious things in this promise, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you, I will come to you now." It may be a very dull time with you and you are pining to come nearer to Christ. Very well, then, plead the promise before the Lord! Plead the promise as you

sit where you are—"Lord, You have said that You will come unto me; come unto me tonight."

There are many reasons, Believer, why you should plead thus. You want Him. You need Him. You require Him. Therefore plead the promise and expect its fulfillment! And oh, when He comes, what a joy it is! He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber with his garments fragrant with aloes and cassia! How well the oil of joy will perfume your heart! How soon will your sackcloth be put away and the garments of gladness adorn you! With what joy of heart will your heavy soul begin to sing when Jesus Christ shall whisper that you are His and that He is yours! Come, my Beloved, do not tarry! Be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of separation and prove to me Your promise is true, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you."

And now, dear Friends, in conclusion, let me remind you that *there are many who have no share in the text*. What can I say to such? From my soul I pity you who do not know what the love of Christ means. Oh, if you could but tell the joy of God's people, you would not rest an hour without it! Remember that if you sincerely desire to find Christ, He is to be found in the way of faith. Trust Him and He is yours! Depend upon the merit of His Sacrifice—cast yourselves entirely upon that and you are saved—and Christ is yours!

God grant that we may all break bread in the Kingdom above, feast with Jesus and share His Glory! We are expecting His second coming. He is coming personally and gloriously. This is the brightest hope of His people. This will be the fullness of their redemption, the time of their resurrection. Anticipate it, Beloved, and may God make your souls to sing for joy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 15.

Many of you know the words of this chapter by heart. You could repeat them without a mistake. May the savor of them abide in your hearts even as the letter of them abides in your memory!

Verse 1. *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser*. We thank You, O Savior, for this blessed answer to the often-repeated question, "Which is the true Church?" Are you one with Christ? Then are you a part of the true vine. If we have a real, vital, personal, saving connection with Christ, to whatever section of the visible Church we may belong, we are part of "the true vine." And we are told, in the next sentence, who is the great Caretaker of the Church. Some of us are much occupied in Christ's service and there is a tendency with all of us to get like Martha—"cumbered" in serving for Him. We are apt to fancy that the burden of all the churches lies upon our shoulders, but, Beloved, this is a great mistake. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." He will take the utmost possible care of it, for it is very dear to Him. There is not a branch in that vine which the Father does not love with Infinite affection and, as for the majestic stem, even Jesus, He loves Him beyond measure.

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* This operation is always going on. God is continually taking away from the Church, in some way or other, non-fruit-bearers. We know that these do not truly belong to Christ, for fruit must come from vital union to Him. But it is a trial to the Church to have non-fruit-bearing branches. These are taken away, sometimes by death, sometimes by judgment, sometimes by the open discovery of their secret sin—the culmination of their backslides in overt acts of transgression. "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away." But side by side with this action another process is constantly going on.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* Is this, then, dear Friend, one reason why you are being chastened—because you are a fruit-bearing branch? If you bore no fruit, you would be left unpruned because the knife would do its sterner work upon you by taking you altogether away. If you really do bring forth fruit to God, you must expect to have trial, trouble, affliction—and that full often.

3. *Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.* That was a "word" which had sorely grieved them and cut them to the quick, so that the Savior had to say to them, more than once, "Let not your heart be troubled." (See the 1st, and the 27th , verses of the preceding chapter). They had felt the sharp edge of the pruning-knife, so Jesus said to them, "Now you are clean (purged or pruned) through the word which I have spoken unto you."

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* The main thing is not restless activity, running here and there, and doing this and that, and the other thing—it is abiding in Christ, persevering, constantly cleaving to Christ by virtue of a vital union with Him—"Abide in Me, and I in you."

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You may hurry, and flurry and worry, but you will lose by it. Keep close to Christ. Never let your heart be dissociated from intimate communion with Him. So shall you bring forth fruit, but no way else.

5, 6. *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. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* The vine is of use for nothing but fruit-bearing and if it does not bear fruit, it is good for nothing except to be burned. In the social economy of life, a man may be of some use however bad he may be, but a man who is in the nominal Church of Christ and yet does not bring forth fruit unto God, is of no use whatever! There is nothing to the done with him but to gather him up with the sere autumn leaves and the decaying stalks of vegetation, to be burned in the corner outside the wall. How trying is the smoke that comes from such a burning as that! We pastors sometimes get it into our eyes and it fills them with bitter tears. I know of nothing that is more grievous to us than this putting out of the unworthy, this casting the fruitless vine branches into the fire that they may be burned.

7. *You abide in Me, and My words abide in you.* You see that doctrinal vitality is necessary to true union to Christ. Some, in these days, talk about a spiritual attachment to the Person of Christ, while they shoot their envenomed darts against the dogmas of Christ. But that will not do. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you"—My words of doctrine, precept, or promise—"then"—

7. *You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* This is the secret of successful prayer! Christ listens to your words because you listen to His words. If you are conformed to His will, He will grant you your will. Disobedient children, when they pray, may expect to get the rod for an answer. In true kindness, God may refuse to listen to them until they are willing to listen to Him.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.* What a wonderful vine that must be whose branches glorify God! Who ever heard of such a thing? The very branches do this and they do it by bearing fruit. How this ought to excite us to desire to bear Christian Graces and to do Christian service, and to endure with resignation the Lord's will, for those are the clusters that hang upon this vine.

8. *So shall you be My disciples.* For Christ is not merely a fruit-bearer, but a bearer of much fruit. If we are to be Christ's disciples, we must not be content with doing something for Him, but we must do everything that is possible to us! And God can strengthen us till we shall get beyond our natural possibilities into a still loftier realm.

9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.* As truly as the Father loves the Son, so truly does Jesus love us. No, more than that, in the same manner as the Father loved the Son—that is, without beginning, without cessation, without change, without end, without measure—so does Jesus love us! There are many great texts in the Bible, but I have often questioned whether there is a bigger text than this—a vaster abyss of meaning than can be found in these few words, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you."

"Continue you in My love." Recognize it, enjoy it, walk in consistency with it, reflect it—"Continue you in My love."

10. *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.* I said just now that the doctrinal words of Christ were to be regarded by us. So, dearly-beloved, the precepts or commands of God must always be regarded. It is an idle tale for men to talk of a mythical visionary love to Christ which does not result in obedience to His will. We must keep His commandments, or we cannot truly say to Him, "You know all things, You know that I love You."

11. *These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* Good children are truly happy when their parents are happy in them. When they, through the good teaching and example of their parents, bring honor and joy to their parents, then they are sure to be, themselves, joyful. Oh, that we might so live that Christ's joy might abide in us—for then our joy would be full!

12. *This is My commandment, That you love one another as I have loved you.* Are you doing this, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, really loving one another? Do you ever pick holes in each other's character? Do

you ever judge a fellow Christian harshly? If you do these things, chide yourself and cease from this evil habit at once, for Your Lord says to you, "This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you."

13. *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." I lift you above the rank of servant and make you My table companions, privileged to sit at the table with Me in communion. I put you down on My list of associates and familiars with whom I take sweet counsel, and in company with whom I walk to the House of God. "You are My Friends if you do whatever I command you." This condition applies to the whole range of Christ's commands. We are not to omit any one of them, nor to make a little nick in our conscience as some do, nor to neglect what seems to be a comparatively small duty, for neglected duties, even of the lesser kind, often set upon us as little stones in a boot do upon a traveler. They lame him—they may not prevent him from travelling—but they mar his comfort on the road. Be scrupulous, Brothers and Sisters, lest, through the neglect of what some regard as scruples, you should bring upon yourselves great sorrows.

14-16. *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 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. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.* "That is where the love began—not with you, but with Me."

16. *And ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.* There are some people who are very fond of quoting the first part of this verse, they are very glad to hear a sermon upon the free, Sovereign Grace of God. They cannot too often repeat the words, "you have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," but they do not talk so much about the next clause—"and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Let us accept all God's Words as He has given them to us and keep up the due proportion of the whole. Note that Christ is not speaking here of spasmodic piety, the religion that can only be kept up by popular preaching, great meetings, much excitement and all that sort of thing—but of the religion of principle that bears its clusters to-morrow as well as today, and even months and years hence! The religion that bears its fruit every month and the leaf whereof does not wither! May we be such branches in the true vine that our fruit shall thus remain.

16. *That whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.* For, where the fruit remains, power in prayer will remain. If we are constantly living unto God, we shall find ourselves privileged to have the ear of God and when we pray to Him, He will grant us the desire of our hearts.

17. *These things I command you, that you love one another.* Our Lord repeated the command, for He knew how prone even His disciples would be to disobey it.

18. If *the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you*. It is no new thing for the ungodly to hate the godly, so let us not be surprised if that is our portion.

19, 20. *If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also*. It ought to be quite sufficient for the servant if he is treated as his Lord was—what higher honor than that could he wish to have?

21. *But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me*. They professed to know God and some of them even thought that they were rendering acceptable service to God when they rejected His Son, whom He had sent to them!

22-24. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father*. Our Lord did not mean that they would have been sinless if He had not come to them, but that His coming and their rejection of Him had enormously increased and intensified their sinfulness.

25. *But this came to pass that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause*. They fulfilled what had been written long before, even as they afterwards did when they put Christ to death.

26, 27. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning*. The witness of the Spirit of Truth still continues and Christ's disciples are still privileged to be co-witnesses, even with the Holy Spirit, Himself. Let us take care to avail ourselves of this privilege whenever we can.

—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.

WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE
NO. 2991

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1906.

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"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.

EVERY man who is engaged in a good work desires that it may be lasting. "Establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes, the work of our hands establish You it," was not only a very appropriate prayer from the mouth of Moses, who had led the children of Israel through the wilderness, but it is also a very appropriate prayer to be presented by every minister of Jesus Christ. We desire to build that which will endure the fire of the great testing day—not wood, hay and stubble, but gold, silver and precious stones.

The Apostle Paul, like all true servants of Christ, was very anxious about those who had been converted and formed into churches by him. He desired that all the professed converts should be real converts and that the members of the churches in the various countries where the Gospel had been preached might be well trained and instructed—and might know the Truth of God and be firmly rooted in it. It somewhat saddened him that the Christians at Thessalonica had been disturbed by a rumor about the speedy coming of Christ. He was grieved that they had been troubled concerning this matter and he was still more sorry that they had not men among them able to guide them at such a crisis, for they were like children carried away by novelties. The Apostle wanted them to be firmly established in the faith, to know the Truth of God and to have it abiding in their hearts so that they would be able to stand fast in the evil day, whatever error might be raging round about them.

I think, Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer of the Apostle is very suitable for this present period. We have rejoiced to see a large number of persons coming out as professed followers of Christ, but what is needed is that they should be so enlisted in the army of Christ that they will remain faithful even unto death. We do not want our work to be shallow and superficial—we want it to be like that "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is heart-breaking service to sow the good Seed of the Kingdom upon the rocky ground, for it springs up so rapidly simply because it has no depth of earth and then, when the burning heat of the sun shines upon it, it withers away because it has neither moisture nor root. It would be far better to have

half a dozen souls really brought to Jesus Christ and enduring to the end, than to have half a dozen thousand blazing away with a false profession for a time—and then returning like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Our Lord's own declaration is, "He that endures to the end shall be saved." It is that endurance, that holding out to the end, which is the point to which we would direct all our endeavors on behalf of our hearers and our converts—and the point about which we would most earnestly pray to our God.

Because these Thessalonians had been somewhat fluttered and disturbed, the Apostle was distressed concerning them and he, therefore, exhorted them to steadfastness. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle." But after exhorting them to stand fast, he did not feel that this was sufficient. So he stopped writing, laid down his pen, fell on his knees and prayed to God to make them stand fast. And when we realize how feeble our utmost exertions are, we may well join fervent prayer to them! And when we remember that the flesh is so weak and that even when men resolve to stand fast, their feet are very soon caused to slip, we may well cry to the great Holder-Up of His saints to keep them from falling, or even from stumbling. The preacher's work is only half done when he has exhorted his hearers to stand fast—he must then fall upon his knees and pray for them. And you who teach others in the Sunday school and elsewhere, must remember that whatever you exhort your scholars to do, you should always pray to God to lead them to do it. This is a blessed compound of preaching and praying—it makes a rich amalgam of Christian ministry when there is, first, the testimony of the Truth of God to men and next, the pleading with God on the behalf of men. Regard, then, our text as the Apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians, and for all of us who believe in Jesus, that we may stand tall, in this evil day, and that, having done all, we may still stand steadfast whoever and whatever may oppose.

Paul's prayer is instructive, for it directs our attention to two things. First, to *what we have already*—"Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." And then it tells us *what we are to have*, what is the natural result of what we already have—"Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, we are to consider WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE.

The Apostle mentions, first, the source of all our blessings and then the streams. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father." There is *the source of all our blessings* and, to my mind, it is exceedingly suggestive to notice that word, "our," put in twice in the early part of the text. Paul does not write, "Now *the* Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father." But it is, "*Our* Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father."

The source of our present comfort and of our future perseverance is the fact that Jesus Christ is ours. Look at Him now with the adoring eyes of your reverent contemplation, in His glorious Deity and His perfect Manhood. Look at Him in the manger. Behold Him on the Cross. Regard His perfect life and His redeeming death. Behold Him in His Resurrection, His triumphant Ascension and His perpetual intercession. And look forward to His promised return from Heaven. Beloved Believer, He is yours—all yours. In all those positions and conditions He has given Himself to you and to me, and we may together say, "*Our* Lord Jesus Christ!" Oh, how precious is this Truth of God to our soul! Being Divine, He is Omnipotent and that almighty power He wields for us! Being Divine, He is Omniscient and those sleepless eyes of His are always on the watch for us! Being Divine, He is Immutable and that eternal love of His which knows no shadow of a change, is fixed upon us! All His attributes and Himself, also, He places at our disposal—so let each one of us gratefully respond, "You are my portion, says my soul." Enlarge your thoughts concerning the Lord Jesus! Think most highly of Him! Extol Him with your heart and with your tongue! But remember that when you have reached the utmost heights that you can attain in your estimation of Him, He is yours, altogether yours, and you can say with Paul, "*Our* Lord Jesus Christ Himself"—

"Our Lord is risen from the dead
Our Jesus is gone up on high!
The powers of Hell are captives led—
Dragged to the portals of the sky.
There His triumphal chariot waits
And angels chant the solemn lay—
Lift up your heads, you heavenly gates!
You everlasting dove, give way!'"

And then the Apostle adds, "And God, *our* Father." We sometimes tremble at the thought of God our Father, as well we may. How could we ever approach Him were it not for God in human flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ? But when we have once really trusted in Christ, it is an easy matter for us to look by faith to God and to rejoice in Him! And, with the deepest reverence of soul, let us know that God—the ever-blessed God—the terrible God—the Omnipotent God who shakes both Heaven and earth with His voice, who touches the hills and they smoke—this God is *our* God! And all His attributes of power, as well as those which we usually consider to be more full of Grace, are exerted on our behalf! I do not know anything that is more comforting in times of trouble than this great Truth. I met, yesterday, a gentleman who told me that he was converted some 30 years ago, through the instrumentality of a great-uncle of mine with whom he lived as an apprentice. He said, "There was a terrible thunderstorms and the old gentleman was sitting by the fireside and we youngsters were afraid. The flashes of lightning were so vivid and the thunder pealed out so terribly, but," he added, "the old gentleman rose from the fireside, went to the window, and as he looked out, he began to sing—

'The God that rules on high

And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above.'"

The gentleman said to me, "I never forgot the impression I then received of that good man's quietude of mind, and of the evident delight which he took in that display of the Divine Omnipotence. There seemed to him a sweetness in the eloquence of his Father's voice, though it made every timber in the old house shake."

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle brings these things to our minds so that we may realize that in having "*our* Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, *our* Father," we have on our side those who will be true to us forever and, therefore, we ought to continue to be comforted in heart and established in every good word and work. If you had trusted only to a dead Savior, you might well go and weep over His tomb—if you had such gods as the heathen have, then might all consolation be withheld from you. But with an almighty Savior who always lives to make intercession for you and with an Omnipotent and Omniscient Father who always lives to watch over you as His dear children, you must not so much as think of being disquieted in spirit, nor even *dream* of being moved from the firm foundation of your faith and hope, and love!

While still thinking of this source of our consolation, it will help us if we notice, next, that the Apostle specially mentions the Person of Christ. "Our Lord Jesus Christ *Himself*." Why did he put in that word, "Himself," just there? It would have sounded all right if he had written, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ, and God, our Father, who has loved us." Ah, but he wanted to call our very particular attention to the real Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ and to make us feel that, in Him—not merely in what He does and what He bestows, but in "Himself" is the source of our comfort! "Now our Lord Jesus Christ *Himself*." O Brothers and Sisters, is there any surer source of joy to a Christian than Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God? John writes, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." And from the inspired Word I know that God has taken Humanity into union with Divinity, and that He who stands at the right hand of God, even the Father, is the Son of Mary, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! Why, there is comfort in the knowledge that He is there as the Representative Man who has taken redeemed human nature right up to the Throne of God—picked up human nature as it lay, all bruised and mangled, outside the gate of the earthly Paradise—and taken it up into the heavenly Paradise from which it can never be expelled!

There must be thoughts of love to man in the heart of God since His only-begotten and well-beloved Son is a Man! When you think of your Savior, you are not to think exclusively of Him as God, but also to think of Him as Man, for He was born into this world and lived in it. He ate and

drank, and slept and walked as we do—and He also died as we do! And in His Humanity, as well as in His Divinity, He has gone into Glory. Leaving out, for the moment, what He has done for us, we may well rejoice in what He is, Himself, as Immanuel, God With Us! Here is music in the very sound of that sweet name—and there is the very essence of music in "our Lord Jesus Christ Himself."

But look at His Person, not merely as Man, but as the God-Man who has offered a complete Atonement for His people's guilt. Up yonder, enthroned in Glory, is your Savior, not merely as Man, but as the Mediator between God and men, who has completed His great Sacrifice, accomplished all His Father's purposes and fulfilled His Father's will so that He could truly say, "It is finished." Look at Him, by faith, as the glorified Man—glorified because, having descended into the grave bearing His people's sin, He came up out of the grave without sin. He "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." And His Resurrection was the proof that He had—

"To the utmost farthing paid
Whatever His people owed."

Surely it should bring the sweetest consolation to you to think of Jesus Christ as the Representative of His people, gone up into Glory and soon to come to this earth again to reign "before His ancients gloriously," when the bodies of all His saints shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and so shall be "forever with the Lord." Brothers and Sisters, may "our Lord Jesus Christ *Himself*" manifest Himself unto you with those dear upraised hands of His, with the scars still visible! And as you gaze upon Him, may you realize that He is giving to you "everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace" and, therefore, may your hearts be comforted and may you be established in every good word and work! How can you be moved from your steadfastness so long as you can see Him? How can you ever depart from Him who has won your affection and holds your soul fast with cords of a man, and bands of love? Surely you must cling to Him forever and ever! I feel that I must say with the poet—

"A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,
Had I no love for Thee—
Rather than not my Savior love,
Oh, may I cease to be!"

The Apostle, however, does not let us forget that in union with our dear Redeemer, at one with Him in every purpose of Divine Grace, is "God, our Father, who has loved us." And he bids us think not so much of His Person which we cannot comprehend, as of His love. So, Beloved, let us try to view God our Father in the attitude of loving us. Truly, this is a boundless and unfathomable sea! We can neither fly across it, nor dive into its depths. Remember, Believer, that the Lord loved you long before the foundation of the world. You are so insignificant in the scale of being that if He had quite forgotten you, you might not have wondered. And yet, before the mountains were created, or He had kindled the morning star, in the glass of His decrees He beheld you and even then He loved you! Recollect how Jeremiah was inspired to write, "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." Dwell on that wondrous Truth of God, that God has loved you with an everlasting love. Suck the honey of consolation out of that glorious fact! Surely if your faith is at all in exercise, you will find much sacred sweetness there.

God loved us, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "even when we were dead in sins." God loved you when you resisted His Spirit. He loved you when you despised His Son. He loved you out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. He loved you into a state of Grace and so loved you into loving Him. And He has loved you ever since with a constant love though He has sometimes chastened you for your profit—for His love is wise and discriminating. He has never deserted you and His love for you has been constant and true. He has often been grieved with you when you have sinned against Him, for His love is a holy love which cannot endure iniquity—yet He has forgiven you, for His love is a gracious love! He has always loved you and is loving you at this moment. Surely this fact ought both to comfort the Believer's heart and to hold it fast! And this is what the Apostle was aiming at when he wrote our text. What can bind a Christian to his God so well as a sense of Divine Love? If it is but shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will not be tempted away from your Heavenly Father's house, neither will you be weary of your Heavenly Father's work, nor tired of your Heavenly Father's words. That which comes to us perfumed with love is always sweet and precious, so let us rejoice to remember "God, our Father, who has loved us."

And, Beloved, do not forget that having once loved you, He will always love you. When this great world has passed away and, like a dream, has vanished into nothingness, you will still live because Jesus will still live—and you will still be loved by "God, our Father," because Jesus will still be loved by Him. As you are in Him, you shall be forever in Him and forever be the object of the Father's love. These are simple matters to speak of, but they are sublime Truths of God to live upon. Bread is a common thing, but a hungry man thinks it very precious. O you hungry children of God, cut large slices from the loaf that is set before you, now, and gratefully feed upon it! Here is "our Lord Jesus Christ Himself," in His complex Person as God and Man, as a fountain of comfort to His people and He is "God, our Father," in His everlasting love to us, as the same fountain under another aspect.

Then the Apostle, having pointed out to us the Divine Source of all our blessings, bids us survey *the streams which flow from that Source*—"who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." Beloved, the consolation which God gives to us is not temporary, but eternal! Such consolation is worth having and when we get it, we may well rejoice over it.

What are the consolations which God gives to His people? I need not mention all the forms of consolation, for, to meet each separate case of distress, there is a special message of comfort—and every promise that God gives you is part of the everlasting consolation with which He has enriched all His chosen people. The potent "shalls" and "wills" of Jehovah

stand fast like His Throne and can never be changed. Has He given you a promise and shall He not fulfill it? Yes, and fulfill it again, and again, and again, as long as you shall need to have it fulfilled, for His promises are inexhaustible and full of manifold riches of blessedness to the believing soul! God's promise of consolation is based upon the "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." God has entered into a Covenant with Christ on the behalf of all His people. And from the provisions of that Covenant He will never depart, for He has "confirmed it by an oath: that by two Immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—

"His oath, His Covenant, and His blood,
Support me in the sinking flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay—
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Pardoned sin is, to my mind, one phase of the "everlasting consolation" which God has given us, for, be it known unto you that God does not forgive your sin today and then lay it to your charge again tomorrow. Little children give presents and them want to have them back again—and fickle men often play fast and loose with one another. But when God forgives, He forgives forever, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That is to say, He never changes His mind and takes back the gift which He has bestowed. Have you received absolution from the lips of your God? Then your sins shall never again rise up against you in judgment, for they have been cast into the depths of the sea! "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them, whom I reserve."

What "everlasting consolation" there is, also, in the great Doctrine of Adoption! We become the children of God when we are born-again. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." A man's child is always his child and God's child is always His child. A man cannot "unchild" his own son or daughter! And if you are a child of God, you shall be a child of God throughout eternity! The life that God has put into you is not transient! As Jesus said concerning His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." What rich consolation there is for you in this blessed Truth of God! The very life which becomes yours by your adoption into the family of God is an everlasting life—it must, therefore, yield you "everlasting consolation."

Time would fail me to remind you of all the various forms of consolation which the Spirit of God applies to the heart of the Believer—and every phase of it is everlasting! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Let us not cast away our confidence, "which has great recompense of reward." Let us not be disturbed or disquieted—let not our hearts be troubled. If we have everlasting consolation, let our joy also be perpetual.

And then the Apostle, still further to comfort our hearts and establish us in every good word and work, tells us that God has given us "good hope through Grace." You know what that good hope is—the hope that He will preserve us unto the end—the hope that we shall be raised from the dead in God's good time—the hope that we shall be accepted in the day of Christ's appearing—the hope that we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory and share it with Him forever and ever! This is a good hope because it has a good basis to rest upon. God has given this hope to all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. And as God is true, the hope is a good hope. A hope that is founded upon a lie is a vain hope, but a hope that is founded upon a promise of God is a good hope. It is a good hope because it is a hope of good things—so good, my dear Friend, that you cannot find anything to match them in the whole world. It may well be called a good hope, for it is the hope of perfection, the hope of being transformed into the image of Christ, the hope of everlasting delight. It is the best of all hopes and we cannot say more of it than that. It is a good hope because of its operation on the heart. "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as Christ is pure." For the man who has a good hope through Divine Grace longs to be purged from sin, to be waiting and watching for his Lord's appearing and to have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, since so much of what God has given to you is at present the subject of hope, do you not see how bound you are to remain in the posture of waiting and hoping—and to be neither discouraged, nor yet to turn deserters? May the Lord "comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work," because you are saved by hope and the realization of that hope is not visible at present, for, if you saw it, you would not continue to hope for it. You are expecting greater things than you have ever realized! It is better than before, for your faces are toward the rising sun. We were told, some time ago, by a philosopher, that our nation had been shooting Niagara and taking a leap in the dark. Well, that may be, or may not be, but this I know, Believers in Christ are not descending Niagara, for they are ascending! And their leap, whenever they leap, is not into the dark, but into the Light of God—a Light that is brighter, and brighter still! Our progress is away from evil up to good, from good to better, and from the better to the best of all—an infinite progression, by the Divine impulse of the Grace of God—for it is by Grace! "Good hope through Grace." We do not get this good hope through nature, or through our own free will—we get it through Divine Grace. Grace has given us what we have already received and Grace also gives us the hope of what we have not yet received. Grace lets us see the things that are ours at present and Grace enables us to realize the things that shall be ours in the future!

I hope you understand what the Apostle meant in setting all this before you. If I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could not tell you the heights, deaths, lengths and breadths of these gracious words. Let me read them to you again—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting

consolation and good hope through Grace." That is what we already have!

II. Now I want to clinch the nail by speaking of WHAT WE ARE TO HAVE as the result of what we already have.

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, first, *that the Lord would comfort their hearts* and, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may the Lord comfort *your* hearts! God does not wish you to be sad. A certain Persian king would allow no one to wait upon him if he had a sad countenance. It is not so with our Lord, for He looks with a tender eye upon those who are heavy of heart and He does not forbid them to come into His Presence. At the same time—

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

If you have everlasting consolation, my dear Sister, what reason have you for such constant fretting? If you have a good hope through Grace, my dear Brother, why did you say, the other day, that you were tempted almost to give up all hope? May the Lord comfort your hearts! Perhaps you think it is a small thing for the Lord's people to be comforted, but God does not think so. He said to His servants, the Prophets, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God." It was not one alone whom He told to do this, but He said, "Comfort you My people," as though He summoned all His servants and said to them, "Whatever you do in denouncing sinners and in stirring up My people to work for Me, never forget this part of your duty—'Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.'" Our Lord Jesus Christ did not think that it was a small thing for His people to be happy, for, on the very night in which He went forth to His passion, among the last words that He uttered were those blessed ones which have cheered millions of mourners—"Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me."

The normal condition of a child of God—I mean, his healthy condition—is one of repose, rest, comfort and delight. Certainly, the Lord has given special promises to those who reach this state of mind—such as this, "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." He means, then, to give great things to those who honor Him by trusting Him so that they cease to be troubled and are comforted, whatever happens. What ails you, daughter of sorrow? Are you poor? So was your Lord! Yet I never read that He complained at what His Father willed. Why should you complain of the dispensations of Providence? Are you sick, my dear Brother or Sister? You will not be the first child of God who has pined away into Heaven if that should be your lot. Perhaps the Lord means thus gradually and gently to take down your earthly tabernacle, but, if so, remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "Ah," you say, "but it is one who is very dear to me who is dying." Yes, but when the Lord lent you your husband, or your wife, or your child, He did not tell you that any of them would live

forever! Be thankful that you have had these loans so long. After all, they are not really yours and if the Lord takes back what He lent to you for a while, why should you be so cast down? "I have lost all," cries one. Have you lost your God? "No." Then you have not lost your all. May the Lord comfort your heart, my dear Friends, because if you are unhappy, you dishonor your God by your doubts and fears, and you often hinder those who would enter into the Kingdom. They see your sad face and they say, "Christ's yoke must be a heavy one, and His burden must be intolerable! Look at the face of that Christian man or woman." I would rather that they should say to you, "we would gladly go with you, for there is a brightness about your face that we would like to have. We perceive that your Master is a good Master and that He cheers and comforts your hearts."

I believe that thoroughly happy Christians—those who really enjoy the things of God—are also among the most stable Christians. I think that is why Paul was guided to put the truth as it is in our text. You cannot get a man to give up that which is his daily delight. I never wonder when I hear of some professors giving up Christianity, for they have never experienced the joy of it—it was only a burden to them. When a poor fellow has a load on his back that does not belong to him and does not yield him any comfort, but only galls his shoulders, you are not surprised if he gets to one of those rests for porters in the city, he lays down his load and walks away and forgets it—and is very glad to forget it! But if it were his own property, his own treasure—you would not find him forgetting it, or going away and leaving it behind! The thing out of which you get the most joy will, in the long run, be the dearest thing to you! And if you continually rejoice in the Lord, your joy will greatly help you in resisting the many temptations to skepticism and superstition to which others will yield. You will stand fast in the Lord because you will be held there by the golden rivets of joy which God has given you in communion with Himself!

Then the Apostle adds, "and establish you in every good word and work." *He wants God's people to be established in every good word.* I suppose he mean that he would have us firmly fixed in our belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel and, Beloved, you may very well say that you will keep to them till somebody shows you something better, just as I have read that when the people of the State of Massachusetts wanted a set of laws, and they had not time to make them just then, they passed a resolution that they would be governed by the Laws of God until they had time to make better ones. We may believe the Doctrines revealed in the Word of God until we find better ones—and that we shall never do! Have those Doctrines converted you? Then, be established in them! Does your experience confirm the truth of them? Then, cling to them! It is one of the characteristics of the Doctrines of the Gospel that the older a man gets, the more he loves them. I always find that the older saints become more Calvinistic as they ripen in age—that is to say, they get to believe more and more that salvation is all of Grace. And whereas at first they might have had some rather loose idea concerning free will and the power of the

creature, the lapse of years and fuller experiences gradually blow all that kind of chaff away. Old saints get what is called "a sweet tooth." They love the sweet things of the Covenant. They like their meat to have a rich savor. I am not old yet, but I confess that I get more and more fond of the sweet things of the Gospel of Grace and cannot endure the novelties that are so current and so exceedingly popular nowadays. Oh, no! Tell me of my Father's eternal love, tell me of my Savior's precious blood, tell me of the Spirit's sacred indwelling and my heart is glad! But tell me anything short of this and my soul is not fed. I pray that you, Brothers and Sisters, who are members of this Christian Church, may know what you know and hold fast to it. May you drive your roots down into the rich soil of the Infallible Truths of God! May you not be as leaves of the forest, driven here and there by the winds because there is no life in you, but may you be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season," whose "leaf also shall not wither." God make you to be thus "established in every good word."

The Apostle would also have those to whom He wrote *established in every good work*. Sometimes an attack of this kind is made upon us—"It is no use trying to teach the Gospel to children. We cannot suppose that they can understand its deep mysteries." I heard that said only the other day. Well, I can say that we have tried it and we have found that whether you choose to call them great mysteries or not, children do understand the Gospel and seem, sometimes, to comprehend it better than their fathers do just because they are so childlike! This qualification for entering the Kingdom of Heaven is not fully-developed manhood, but rather that we should become as little children. And unless we do become childlike, we cannot enter the Kingdom. Dear Friend, do not be turned aside from your work by anything that is said concerning it. If people say that it is no use to go down to the lodging houses and talk to the poorest of the poor, be established in doing it because your Master did it and because the everlasting consolation which comes to you through the Grace of God makes you feel that to the most unworthy are the fittest objects for the Gospel of Jesus. Since you received consolation from God's mercy, you may well be established in the belief that there is consolation in the mercy of God for the vilest of the vile!

Do not be turned aside from any part of your work, and especially from the blessed work of prayer. Some people tell us that prayer is useless, but what do they know about it? They have never tried it! But those of us who have tried and proved it, and who still practice it from day to day, know that prayer is heard. We may send a telegraphic message, yet it may never get where we want it to go. We may mail a letter, yet it may never reach its proper destination. But when we pray, we are sure that we are heard, for we have distinct answers to our petitions and our heart is filled with delight as we recollect the hundreds and thousands of times in which the right hand of the Lord has been stretched out to help us when we have cried unto Him in our time of need! Be established in every form of good work, you who are part of the Lord's great army, meeting here for drill and for battle with the forces of

evil. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, let not your hearts grow faint, and do not so much as think of retreating in the day of conflict. Lo, our victorious Leader, "our Lord Jesus Christ Himself," is coming! Therefore let everyone of us play the man for our coming King. The fight will not be long and woe be to the man who turns his back in the day of battle—but blessed shall he be who is found faithful even unto death. I speak thus to you, Beloved, though I am fully persuaded that He who has begun the good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

I wish that my sermon had a great deal more to do with some of you than it has, for I fear that there are many here to whom I have not been speaking. Therefore, my closing message shall be to the unsaved. My dear Friend, I cannot bid you be steadfast, and I cannot talk to you of everlasting consolation, for you have not yet believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of your soul. There is an awful text of Scripture which at present applies to you. The Apostle Paul, a cool-headed and warm-hearted man who loved sinners, once wrote this—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." That is, accursed at the coming of Christ! O my dear Friend, that is what you will be if you love not our Lord Jesus Christ! And that is what you ought to be and what the warm-hearted lover of his race, who also loves his God, feels must be and ought to be your doom if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of that and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you first to trust in Jesus, and then to love Him, and so you shall be saved and shall bless Him forever!—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there."

—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 WRITING UPON MAN'S HEART
NO. 2992

A SERMON
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IN THE YEAR 1864.

"I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts."
Jeremiah 31:33.

THIS is not the language of the Old Covenant, but of the New Covenant. The prospects of life held out in the Law have all dissolved into a ministration of death as the penalty of disobedience. Its voice might have once captivated hearts that knew not their own weakness. How did it speak? "Do this, and live; keep My commandments, and you shall receive in return for your obedience singular blessings upon earth and rest in Heaven." But that Old Covenant, since the Fall, no man has kept, or can keep. Surely if any persons could have kept it, those to whom it was originally given were the most likely to do so. They were a separated people. They were removed into the wilderness, far from evil associations. They were miraculously fed out of the granaries of Heaven. They received their drink in an equally marvelous manner out of the smitten Rock. They had God, Himself, in the midst of them. They had His pillar of cloud to cover them by day and His pillar of fire to lead them by night. In all their difficulties they could appeal to Moses. If there had been an inadvertence or mistake, they could turn to Aaron and he, by the offering of the appointed sacrifice, could set them right again. They were placed where they had not the trials and the temptations of the rest of mankind. They were so cut off and separated that I may well compare them to—

"A garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground."

And yet, even in that favored soil, which was so well tilled and so well kept by God, it was utterly impossible that perfect holiness could grow and, therefore, the Law of God was broken. Even the seed of Israel, circumcised and blessed with covenants and promises—and having the immediate Presence of God in their sanctuary could not keep the Law—a clear lesson to us that "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." You cannot perfectly obey God! You cannot work out a righteousness of your own! You cannot do that which God commands you to do. Look to the flames which Moses saw—and sink, and tremble, and despair if you wish to be saved by your own works!

Now that Old Covenant has passed away with regard to the Lord's people. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are now under a New Covenant which is of quite a different kind. It does not say, "Do this,

and live." It says, on God's part, "I will give you a new heart; I will forgive your sins; I will bless you with My Presence. I will make you holy. I will keep you holy. I will preserve you in My ways; I will bring you to Myself at the last." And all this is vouchsafed without any conditions that render the fulfillment precarious, for whatever conditions there were, devolved not upon the sinner, but upon the sinner's Substitute—as though God had said, "I will do this if My only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, will give His blood for the remission of your sins and work out a perfect righteousness for your acceptance." That has been done and now, as far as you and I are concerned, the Covenant of Grace is one of promise, pure promise, nothing but promise! And all that we have to do, as poor, guilty, helpless, needy souls, is to sit down at the feet of our gracious God and receive from Him these wondrous blessings which the Covenant has secured to all the faithful—

"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.
Here when your feet shall fall,
Believer, you shall see
Grace to restore your soul,
And pardon full and free!
You with delight shall God behold
Sheep restored to Zion's fold.
And when through Jordan's flood
Your God shall bid you go,
His arm shall you defend,
And vanquish every foe!
And in this Covenant you shall view
Sufficient strength to bear you through."

One of the blessings of this New Covenant is heart-writing—"I will put My Law in their minds, and write it on their hearts." It is of that I am going to talk tonight. And instead of having different heads to the sermon, I will just offer a few observations, which have, I think, a very intimate connection with this point of writing upon the fleshy tablets of the heart.

My first observation is that WITH THE TABLETS OF STONE, CHRISTIANS HAVE NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO.

Do not be staggered or astonished at this remark. I know that there are certain places of worship where these two tablets of the Law stand right over the Communion Table, but they have no business there, for we can never have any communion with God upon the footing of the Law. If there must be anything there. If there must be any symbol at all there, then the Roman Catholic is right when he puts there the Cross, or a picture of the crucifixion. We put away all symbols lest they should become a source of idolatry. But, if there must be anything over the Communion Table, the Cross is the proper thing—not the two tablets of the Law, for, on the footing of the Law, God never had communion with

man—and He never can have, since man has fallen. With the two tablets of the Law as they are written upon the stone, the Christian has nothing whatever to do.

You know me too well to suspect me of being an Antinomian, yet I will not try to detract from the force of the expression which the Holy Spirit has taught us, "You are not under the Law, but under Grace." All the Ten Commandments the Christian loves. They are his rule of life and he decides to keep every single word that God has ever commanded to the sons of men. But, as they stand on those tablets of hard, cold rock, I have nothing whatever to do with them! Moses dashed them from his hands in holy rage and, surely, as I see their cracked fragments there, I can only say that I have done precisely what Moses did—and have broken those tablets to pieces, too! Even Moses could not carry these tablets in his hands without breaking them, nor can I do any better than he did. God rules His people, not by Law, but by love. They do not walk in holiness because they must, but because they wish to do so. The rule which governs them is not, "Do this, and live; do that, and perish," but this—"I have loved you with an everlasting love; what will you do for Me?" To quote two good lines of old Master Quarles, which just give me the sense I want to convey to you—

"Leave you the stony tablets for your Savior's part.
Keep you the law that's written in your heart."

As for the Laws written on the stone tablets, Christ has kept them and fulfilled them! Therefore they have lost their force to crush you. The tablet on your heart is your rule, your guidance and your law. See to it that you be not disobedient to the Revelation of "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

There are many of my hearers, tonight, who are always dealing with the tablets of the Law. You are trying to get to Heaven by what you can *do*. O my dear Friend, you cannot keep the Law—why do you try to do it? It is too high, too heavenly, too broad, too spiritual for you. It affects you in your imaginations, your thoughts, your words, your actions. Why, you break it every moment! You have broken it since you have been in this House of God. Think not, then, to do an impossibility! And even if you could keep it in the future, it would do you no good, for you have already broken it and to try to preserve what you have already broken is most absurd! If you had an alabaster box in your hand, and you had broken it to slivers, however careful you might be of the broken fragments, you could not put them together again. You have most effectually cut the throat of all your hopes of ever being saved by the Law of God! O Man, why do you try to do this when Christ has kept the Law for all who trust Him? Do you think that Christ would have come all the way from Heaven to keep the Law for you if you could keep it for yourself? If you could be your own Savior, what need was there for Him to be stretched upon the Cross and to bleed, and agonize, and die? Does Christ do that which is not necessary? O proud soul, proud soul to think to do what only a Savior can accomplish! Come now and leave your *doings*—for all your

righteousnesses are but as filthy rags! Come now and leave your virtues and all your boasted deeds, and look away to where He hangs who has woven a garment without seam from the top throughout and has dyed it in the crimson of His own blood! Put this on and you wear Heaven's court-dress, and you shall one day stand among the peers of Paradise! But without this, you are naked, poor and miserable! I counsel you, therefore, to buy of Him fair raiment—the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints!

With the Law as engraved on stone, then, the Believer has nothing to do—his business is with the Law as written with the Spirit of the living God upon his heart!

My next observation is that THE OLD HEART IS NOT FIT FOR GOD TO WRITE HIS LAW UPON.

Somebody said once that the human heart, in infancy at least, was like a piece of white paper, and that there might be anything written on it which we pleased. Little did that person know—little had he even guessed the truth concerning a human heart—for the heart is blotted, blurred, blacked, smeared, smudged, fouled, stained through and through even at the very beginning! Everyone can say with David, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." There is no such thing as a white surface upon the natural heart—and God never tried to write a sentence on the natural heart yet—and He never will because He knows right well that that heart is not a fit place for His holy Law to be written. If it should be possible for Him to put it upon that black heart, I think He would not do it, for it is an impure thing and God will never write His perfect Law upon an imperfect parchment like a depraved heart. It is too vile, too abominable for God to touch. All that can be done with the old, natural, human heart, is for God to mortify it, to pierce it through and through with the spear which pierced the side of Christ! "Death to the old Adam! Death to the old Adam!" is the cry of the Gospel. But as for modifying him, it never tries to do it, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor can the leopard change its spots. The old nature is looked upon as hopeless and is given up to die—and the sooner it dies, the better for you and for me! God will not write His Law upon it, for it is foul, and blotted, and too abominable for Him to touch.

Equally impossible is it for God to write upon the old heart because it is stony. He did write once on stone and the tablets were broken—He will not write on stone a second time. The first tablets of stone were broken and, as to the second tablets of stone, I know not where they are, they are lost—as if the very thought of goodness had been lost to man by nature. And if God should write upon a stony heart, this would be the result—that the heart with the Law written upon it must soon be broken and destroyed. What? Shall He write on such an unstable, treacherous, deceitful thing as an unrenewed heart? As well might you write upon the sand! Or, still worse, go write your name upon the treacherous billow and expect to find it handed down to fame! But God writes not on water.

He will not take His great pen into His hand to write on such a medium as the heart which "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "You must be born-again." God's promise is, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Let that prayer be breathed by you as you realize the unfitness of the old heart for God to write upon!

The old heart, then, being put out of the question, there is a new heart produced by the Holy Spirit. Transcending the greatest wonders in Nature is this bestowment of a new heart! You know, dear Friends, that a tree, if it has had some of its branches cut off, may grow new branches and there are some crustaceous animals which, when they lose a claw or a foot, grow fresh ones—but you never heard of an animal losing its heart and then having a new one! The thing is impossible in Nature, but this wonder of wonders God works in us! He gives a new core to our very being, a fresh life-fountain to the whole of our existence!

Well, when this new heart comes unto us, it must have something written on it. A heart with nothing on it would be too preposterous for imagination. Look at all God's works—they all have something written on them. Even the black brow of tempest has God's name of terror written upon it in letters of lightning. Do not the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of Armies? Is not the Eternal, Himself, mirrored in tempest upon the bosom of the stormy sea? Even the fields, whether they are white with winter's snows or golden with autumn's crown of glory, still bear the impression, either of Divine Power or of Divine Love. God has written the whole world over—there is not a slab in the great palace of creation which is left unsculptured. Everywhere there are great hieroglyphs which skillful men and initiated spirits love to read. And shall there be nothing on the heart, when God has taken the trouble to make it twice over, when He has made that heart new? If there were nothing on the heart, it would be no heart! A heart without something in it is just a dull, dead vacuum and not a fit heart for such a creature as man. What was the new heart made for—to what end and to what purpose—if it were not to bear some Divine inscription? The devil would soon attempt to write on it if God did not write. Is it not the very best way to keep a man from filling a bushel with chaff, to first fill it full of wheat? So, for God to write on the new heart—is not this the safest method to keep that heart pure for Himself, so that no word of the language of Hell shall be written there? If that heart were left empty, what would happen? Is it not written concerning the man's house that was swept and garnished, that the evil spirit came back to it? Why? Because it was empty! If there had been a tenant in it—if the armed strong man had kept the house—the old tenant could not have gone back. And so, when God has thoroughly written out this whole of His Law upon the tablet of a sanctified heart, there will be no possibility that sin shall ever be written there! I know it is an incorruptible seed that cannot sin, because it is born of God, but that very thing which makes it an incorruptible seed—the very life that is in it—makes it swell, and grow, and germinate.

As the heart is God's heart, and a renewed heart, there must be God's writing upon it. God does not send books into the world which are but blank paper. He does not produce as His Epistles that are to be known and read of all men, mere empty sheets! No, there must be upon the new heart some of the handwriting of God!

Pray the Lord to give you new heart, poor Soul. Or if you have it already, ask Him to write upon it now. Say, in the words of that verse—

"There shall His sacred Spirit dwell,
And deep engrave His Law—
And every motion of our souls
To swift obedience draw."

NEXT, IS NOT THE NEW HEART THE VERY BEST PLACE IN WHICH TO WRITE THE LAW OF THE LORD?

I cannot conceive of a better place to put it than in the new heart. A certain minister, preaching from the text, "Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You," had three heads to his sermon. First the best thing, "Your Word." Secondly, "in the best place—"have I hid in my heart." Thirdly, for the best of purposes—"that I might not sin against You." That is as a well-divided sermon! The heart is the best place, because, you know it is in his heart that a man carries his jewels. When Little-Faith was met down Dead Man's Lane by those three villains, they robbed him of most of his spending money, but they did not steal his jewels. The reason was because he carried them in the casket of his heart. Some men wear their religion as men wear their hats—where it can be snatched by a thief, or be blown away by the winds of temptation, or be laid aside to suit their own convenience when they get into the devil's drawing room. But the true Christian carries his religion in his heart. And as his heart is always safe in the very center of his being, so is his religion. Fair weather or foul weather, good company or bad company—it is all the same. In closing markets or the winning market—whether men cry, "Hallelujah" and, "Hosanna"—or whether they cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" the man is still the same because he has his principles in his heart, which is the best place for God's Law.

Putting the Law of the Lord into the heart signifies that it is put where it will be loved and where it will control the whole man. If you can put a thing into a man's heart, you have put it at the very center of his being. We have heard of a certain shepherd who had a flock of sheep in a meadow. A stream of water that ran through the meadow was very foul and muddy, so the shepherd dug some new channels. But after he had dug them, the water was still not very clear. He cleared out the channels again and again, but still, after a little while, the water was again impure. It was better than it had been before, when flowing through the muddy channel, but still it was not such as he wished it to be. At last, someone said to him, "Why do you not clear the water up upon the hill? There is a mass of mud and filth there and the water comes down the hillside laden with all this impurity. Purify it there, purify it near the fountainhead." So, when man gets purified at the fountain—when he gets the Law of the Lord in his heart—then it is that he is sure to be all right as to the

streams of his actions. You cannot put the Law of God, then, in a better place than in the heart, because there it will be preserved—and there it will influence the entire man. Lord, grant to me and to mine, that we may have Your Law thus safely locked up in the golden casket of a renewed heart.

Still, it must be admitted that IT IS VERY HARD TO WRITE ON HEARTS.

That same old poet whom I quoted just now, Quarles—pictures God as saying—

"What I indite
'Tis I alone can write
And write in books that I Myself have made.
'Tis not an easy trade
To read or write in hearts.
They that are skillful in all other arts
When they take this in hand
Are at a stand."

It is not easy to read hearts and it is still harder work to write on hearts. We can sometimes write on people's heads—that is comparatively easy. You may get a thing into the intellect. you may get it into the brains by sheer dunning and argument—but to get things into the heart is not so very easy—

"He that's convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still"—

and, though convinced, he still goes on in the same path, pursuing the thing which he knows to be his own worst enemy. There are no slaves like those who serve their enemies and those are the greatest slaves who are slaves to their own soul-destroying lusts. It is not an easy thing to write on hearts. When there are many conversions, certain simpletons are apt to think that there is something in the preacher to account for them. Suppose someone had gone to that ancient battlefield and had picked up the stone with which David smote Goliath's head, and said, "Well, it must be a very wonderful stone that could have killed a giant"? And then, after turning it round, and looking at it a little while, he would say that it was very much like any other smooth stone that might be put in a sling. And very likely he would throw it down in contempt and think nothing of it.

Well, that is how some people do with God's ministers. They first say, "Well, there are so many conversions. The preacher must be a very wonderful man." And then they find him wonderfully like any other common-place talker and so they think nothing of him. Ah, simpleton! Do you not know that it is not the stone, but the sling, and not even the sling, but the God who directs the stone to the giant's brow? And so it is not the man, but the man's Master—and it is the Spirit of God that makes the Word effectual. But what would you think if that stone should talk thus, "Oh, what a fine stone am I! I killed you, Goliath! What a fine stone am I! The daughters of Jerusalem ought to rejoice over me in the dance, and they ought to 'sound the loud timbrel' and say, 'Glory be unto

you', O Stone, for you have smitten the giant's brow"? What would the Angel of Wisdom say but, "O foolish pebble of the brook! Son of the dirt and of the dark and miry sea! There is nothing in you any more than in your fellow stones that slept with you in the flowing crystal! Had David picked any other stone, the work would have been done just as well and, inasmuch as he chose you, boast not of yourself as though there were anything in you."

Beloved, when you and I are privileged to do anything for Christ, let us remember that we are only like the poor stone out of the brook—that there is nothing in it—and that unto God must be all the glory. This writing upon hearts is hard work. I confess that I never could—and I never expect to be able to write God's holy Law on a human heart. No, Beloved, the heart is locked up too tightly for us to get at it. But God has the key and He opens it as a man would do his own writing desk. And He knows how to open the sheets, one after another, and begin to write with His own pen the blessed Commandments of His new and perfect Law. Jesus is the great Writer, for Jesus knows hearts! He is Divine and Omniscient and, therefore, He knows hearts. And He is a Man—every pang that rends the heart has rent His heart. He had a pierced heart and there was a terrible writing upon His heart when the spear wrote there this great word—"WRATH"—"the wrath of God on account of sin." He knows what heart-writing means. Deep on His heart are inscribed His people's names. He understands heart-writing and He can do for His disciples what has been done in Him. He has such a gentle hand, such loving fingers, such a great heart to move that hand, that He is the great Heart-Writer and there is none that can match Him in writing upon human hearts!

Further, WHEN GOD WRITES UPON THE HEART, HE WRITES BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT AND USES HIS WORD AS THE PEN.

There are several pens that God uses and one is His Written Word. This is a gold pen with a diamond point. It is marvelous how God can sometimes write on the heart with a text of Scripture, a promise, a threat, a word of doctrine, of exhortation, or of rebuke. When He writes with that diamond pen, there is never any mistake, never any scratching or catching in the paper—all is well written!

Then He sometimes writes on human hearts by His ministers. Mr. John Berridge once preached a sermon upon a different text from mine, but I may quote from his sermon. He says that ministers are like pens. There are some University ministers, he says, and they try to make them the same as people make steel pens nowadays—they make them by the gross! And though they have their excellences and many of them are highly educated men, yet they also have their deficiencies. John Berridge compared himself to an old goose quill. He said that he could not make such fine lady-like up-strokes as the University steel pens could, but he thought that God often made heavier down-strokes on the heart by him than He ever did by the University gentlemen. And that is the case with some of us. We have to be nibbled several times before we are fit to write

with at all—and when we do write, we sometimes make a sorry blotch of it—yet the Lord does help us, rough and ready as we are, to make some heavy down-strokes on the sinner's conscience. And if this is done, it is a reason for thankfulness and we will bless the Lord for it! Pens, however, must sometimes be sharpened—and so ministers must sometimes feel the sharp knife of affliction so as to make them more fit to preach God's Word.

Need I remind you, Beloved, that a pen cannot write of itself? Just take that pen and lay it down on the paper. Can that pen write, "Paradise Lost?" Why, it cannot even stir! It cannot write a single letter of the alphabet, much less can it write a poem! And so is it with the minister—he can write no Truths of God in the sinner's heart and conscience unless his Master holds him in His hands—but when the Master begins to write, oh, then, how well it is done, and how the white paper of the new heart receives the Divine handwriting and it remains indelibly there!

Neither would it be any use for writing even if it were the best pen in the world—without ink. And the analogy in this case is with the Holy Spirit. The minister must be dipped in this ink. He must have the Holy Spirit with him, or else it is no matter what he may be—he may be a goose-quill, or he may be the polished steel. He may have been well-sharpened, he may have written much in his time, but he can write nothing without the ink. Mr. Joseph Irons used to pray, as he went to his pulpit, "Oh, for an unction from on high! Oh, for an unction from on high!" And I think this may be the preacher's prayer whenever he goes to preach, "Oh, for an unction from on high! Oh, for much of this Divine ink—much of the Holy Spirit!"

Surely we may praise and bless the Lord whenever we see His Law written upon a human heart because it is God's Law, because it is God who wrote it and because it is the Spirit of God who is the Agent, through the Word, by whom that writing is put there! Let us join in hearty thanksgiving to Father, Son and Spirit, the Covenant-keeping God who writes His Law in our hearts!

And it may be well to make a special note of this fact—IT IS GOD'S LAW WHICH IS WRITTEN UPON THE NEW HEART.

I do not think it is the Law as it stands in the letter, either in Exodus or in Deuteronomy, but it is the *spirit* of the Law that is written upon the Christian's heart. With regard to the Law as a letter, we may say, "The letter kills." It is the spirit, the essence of the Law, which the Christian is to mind and which is written on his heart. Under the old Law, the Jew was often put to much inconvenience. For instance, the Law of the Sabbath, as it then stood, was, "In it you shall do no manner of work." Now, some Christians read it in that way even to this day—but when the Savior was on earth, His disciples rubbed the ears of corn together in the fields and ate thereof, on the Sabbath. The Pharisees complained of this, but the Savior replied to them that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath was never meant to be a fixed and tight bond to crush us and make us feel like slaves during the time

it lasted. It was made for our use, to be devoted to the best and highest of purposes. The Pharisees would never have healed anybody on the Sabbath—that, they thought, was dreadfully wicked! But Jesus Christ hallowed the Sabbath by acts of mercy. And now He gives to the Christian a day of rest, not, indeed, such a day of rest as it was to the Jew, but He gives us this that we may perform works of mercy, works of piety and works for necessary uses. These we do perform and when we do, there are some who cry out that such-and-such a Christian is not a Sabbatarian! No, and the Christian has no need to be! His Law of the Sabbath is not the old Law, as he finds it in Deuteronomy or Exodus, but the Law of the Sabbath as he finds it according to Christ—which is this—that the day is a day of rest and holy pleasure. A day in which we are to serve God with all our might and any kind of work which is wholly God's work—and in which we can serve God—is a work which we are permitted—no, which we are enjoined to perform!

So it is with all the Law. The Christian does not go back to the Law of Moses and say, "I feel very angry. I should like to know whether I may kill my brother." No, he has the Law of God in his heart and he does not want to kill anybody. He knows that he that is angry with his brother is a murderer, so he turns around and says, "I forgive you. I forgive you freely." Sometimes persons come and ask us questions which involve some degree of lust, but a Christian has the Law of God in his heart and he does not want to know whether this and that may be permitted as a sin of the flesh, but he remembers that, "whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" and so he spurns the sin. The Law written on his heart is enough for him and he delights in the Law of God after the inward plan, without needing to go to the letter, the killing letter—and reading in that the condemnation of offenses rather than the promptings of holy motives! The Law of God is perfect! Let us say nothing against it. But it is not so glorious as the Law which Christ has brought in and which He exhibited in His own Person. The glory of the Law was great, but the glory of Christ's Gospel is far greater! Remember, Christian, that there is to be written on your heart the whole of God's Law, but it is the *spirit* of that Law—not the letter of it—which is to be written there. And what that spirit is, you know, for our great Teacher epitomized it in one word, and that one word is "LOVE." Love that furnishes the impulse while it prescribes the duty.

The man who has God's Law written in his heart will go right without a book—he will go right without having somebody at his elbow to nudge him. And why will he go right? Why does the steam engine go? Because it has steam within it and the proper machinery—so it must go. You do not see 20 horses dragging a steam engine along, do you? There are some folks who want to make laws to make other people good. That is not the way in which Scripture goes to work. Scripture just alters the man's heart, puts new machinery in him and the heavenly steam—and then he cannot help going right! You are not to have a Law with 20 policemen behind it to drag a man to do right—that is not the thing to do. The man

must be renewed by Divine Grace and made a new creature in Christ Jesus—and then, by the force and strength of that new nature, the Law being written in his heart—he hates that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good. Some people cannot understand this. They know that they will not, themselves, do what is right unless they are flogged to it—while they do what is wrong at every opportunity from an evil bias. But the Christian is different! He has been born-again and now he would need flogging to do evil! And even then he would not do it. But he needs no driving to that which is good, for the ways of God are his pleasure and the pleasures of sin he hates. May we all in this sense have the Law written on our hearts! And what will that Law be? Why, this word, "LOVE." Love is the Law of the Gospel! "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself." This is the Law of the Christian, and this is the Law which is written on his heart! This is the sum and substance, the distilled essence of all the Ten Commandants. You may forget those Ten Commandments, O Believer, if you will but remember this new Law which is written on your heart, "Love, love, love!"

Last of all, THE WRITING PRESERVES THE HEART AND THE HEART PRESERVES THE WRITING.

Some of us who have a large correspondence sometimes have a grand burning. There are a lot of letters on my table, very possibly written by some of you, which will never get answered. But if people will write ten times as many as anybody can answer, they must not expect to get replies. Still, there they are, and sometimes there comes to be a general blaze—and while we are burning the letters up, every now and then we say, "Ah, I'll keep that!" Why? Well, it is in the handwriting of somebody we loved, but who is now dead. And we say, "Yes, I'll keep that. Just put that away in one of the pigeon-holes and there let it lie among the interesting letters." So, when God comes at last to look at all the writing of the universe, there will be a general burning—but He will come to one heart, and He will say, "Yes, keep that, that has my Law written on it—and wherever I see my Law, I see my dear Son's handwriting. He Himself died upon the Cross that this heart should not be burned. I will keep that." If you have God's Law written on your hearts, it will preserve you.

So, too, the heart preserves the writing. The Pharaohs have written wonderful inscriptions in Egypt upon their stone tombs, yet some of these have become defaced through the lapse of years—

"Time has a mighty tooth,
And bites the granite through."

But when a thing is written upon an immortal heart, no time can change it! The heart that had God's Law written on it years ago, still has it written there in the last expiring moments, as the Believer talks with his God upon his dying bed. The flesh has been committed to the grave, but the handwriting is not gone, for the heart on which it was written has soared aloft, and now it is before the eternal Throne of God! And

when the sun has grown dim with age and the moon has waned never to wax again, and the stars have quenched their tiny lamps, when—

"The great globe itself,
Yes, all which it inherits, shall dissolve
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rack behind"—

just as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever—when all the universe that God has made, except the Heaven which is to exist forever, shall have passed away, then the handwriting of God upon that heart will be as clear and as legible as it is now! Yes, and if you can fly on seraph's wings far, far away, till time seems a spot too small to be discerned by the keenest eye. If you have sped on till God has made and destroyed as many worlds as there are grains of sand by the seashore. Till He has piled up and dashed to pieces, again, as many mighty universes as there are drops in the ocean—changeless even then—the imperishable writing of the Divine hand shall still glitter on the immortal, eternal hearts that God has made and quickened—that they might be the pillars on which He might write the memorial of His love and holiness! Oh, that my heart might have His writing on it! Brothers and Sisters, I pray that it may be the case with you and with all of us!

But, remember, the old heart must be broken—and the place to get a new heart is at the foot of the Cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Whoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed." He that trusts in Jesus builds upon a rock! He builds for eternity and his happiness shall be secure.

The Lord send you away with His own blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

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

"THAT KING AHAZ"
NO. 2993

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 1906.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1863.**

***"And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz."
2 Chronicles 28:22.***

IT is absolutely certain, dear Friends, that whatever our personal characters may be, we shall have to know, by practical experience, the meaning of the word, "trouble." Saint or sinner, "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The road to Heaven is rough and the path to Hell is not always smooth. There are some tribulations which belong especially to the people of God, yet it is also true that "many sorrows shall be to the wicked." If a man, trying to escape from sorrow, should take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, he would find that sorrow was even there upon the sea! Should he go to the frozen regions of the North, he would find sorrow there, for there have some of the fondest human hopes been wrecked. Let him journey to the sultry South and trouble shall pursue him there, for plagues, fevers and disease haunt that region and the gates of death are near. Until we mount to Heaven, we shall never be able to escape from sorrow and sighing—only there shall we obtain joy and gladness, when our somber companions shall have fled away forever.

Since, dear Friends, the stream of sorrow is here, and we cannot make it flow in any other direction, what shall we do with it? Let us try to put it to profitable uses! Let us lift up our heart in prayer to God that all our sorrows may be sanctified—that, with all other things, they may work together for our lasting good—and that we, who are the children of God, may be perfected in the image of Christ according to the Divine Purpose. Let us remember, however, that sorrow will not of itself be beneficial to us. It is possible to endure afflictions on earth and afterwards to endure eternal damnation in Hell. Sinners may go from beds of languishing to beds of flame, from toil and poverty here, to torment and all despair hereafter. There is nothing at all in sorrow that can burn out sin—there is no power in human suffering to remove the wrath of God!

I. I shall commence my discourse with this very simple remark—IN THEIR TIMES OF DISTRESS, GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE OFTEN FOUND VERY GREAT PROFIT.

Suffering is one of the things which is written in the Covenant of Grace as a blessing. The rod was promised to us when we became the children of God and we cannot escape it. And I think the poet Cowper was right when he said that "the trueborn child of God" would not escape

it if he might. The distress of Believers, when it is sanctified to them, *loosens their hold upon this world.* Trials cut the ropes which fasten our souls to earthly things and so enable us to mount. They file the chains which, as on the eagle's foot, will not let her spread her wings and soar upward toward the sun. Trouble, like a sharp spade, digs up the earth that is about our roots and then we bring forth more fruit. Were it not for the thorns in our nest, we would be so content with its soft lining that we would sit in it till we died. But the sharp thorns prick our breasts and then we turn our eyes aloft and learn to try our wings, ready for the time when they shall have fully grown and we shall mount to joys above!

Afflictions, also, are often to the benefit of Believers *in leading them to search for sin.* Our trials should be search warrants, sent to us from God that we may search and find out the secret evil that is within us—the offense that we have hidden, the lie that is in our right hand. You know, Beloved, that it is not an easy thing to bring us to self-examination. We are afraid of it—we are too apt to take things as they seem to be, without testing and trying them to see what they really are. But when the consolations of God grow small with us, then we say, "Is there any secret sin within us?" A rough wind blows through the forest and the rotten branches creak, and are torn from the oak, where otherwise they would have become a nest for all sorts of destructive insects and a center of decay for the whole tree. So, our afflictions often drive away some besetting sins, some darling propensities which otherwise we might have carried in our bosom till they had done us grievous damage.

Do you not also know, dear Friends, how *trials give new life to prayer*? Do we ever pray as well as when we feel the pricks of our Father's sword? He never wounds us so severely as to kill us, but He does, sometimes, just gently probe us to wake us up from our lethargy. Oh, what fervent prayers we offer when in the furnace! And I may add, oh, what grateful songs we sing when we come out! There is more life, I think, in one's piety in times of sorrow than at any other season. I do not wish to be laid aside from pulpit labor, but I must confess that I have often felt unusual spiritual power when coming up to preach to you after a season of sickness. And there have been times when I have heard some of you say, "Our minister speaks more sweetly, now, than he did before he was laid aside." Yes, the olives must go into the press if the oil is to be squeezed out of them—and the grapes must be trod upon with loving feet before the wine flows forth from them. The file must be used upon us to bring out the true quality of the metal. There is no hope that we shall ever be made into much fine gold unless we are often put into the crucible—and unless that crucible is put into the midst of the glowing coals! So I say that we get much good from our trials.

Have you not also found, dear Friends, that *trials make your faith grow stronger*? We who are but striplings in the Lord's army, enlist very readily. We put the colors in our cap and we think that we are going to do great things—to stir up the Church and to rout the world, the flesh and the devil! But we soon find that we have to be drilled by the black sergeant, Affliction, and afterwards we have to march out to the battle of the warrior, "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood." And, by-

and-by, after many a conflict, we become hardened veterans and we who might have turned our backs before, if it had not been for trial, become bold as lions for the Lord our God! Brothers and Sisters, there is no teaching, no ministry, even of the best-taught servant of God, that can do you such good as sanctified experience! You must learn for yourselves—under that blessed schoolmaster, Mr. Affliction—you must study the sacred science of Divinity! It is good to go to his school, for the lessons to be learned there are so beneficial. One of his scholars wrote, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word."

We also get *our sweetest comforts in the time of trouble*. Do not mothers often give their children, in their seasons of sickness, tokens of love that they never give them when in health? I know that there are kisses of Jesus' lips for His tried children that He gives not to those who are without trial. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Then I would love to be a lamb, to ride so near to His heart—"and shall gently lead those that are with young," and it is well for us, sometimes, to fake those pains and weaknesses that we may have more of the gentle leadings of the tender Shepherd! I think it was Rutherford who said that when Christ put him down in the cellar of affliction, he knew that He kept His wine there, and he groped about until he found the bottles—and then he drank and was revived! Ah, there is rich wine of comfort in the lowest cellars of affliction when Christ puts us down there! Even the joys of Heaven will be all the sweeter because of our experiences of trial here, where we often sing—

"Sweet affliction
Thus to bring my Savior near."

Christ is superlatively sweet to us and the next sweetest thing in all the world is Christ's dear Cross. He is, Himself, most precious, but next to the kisses of His lips are the blows—the love pats—of His pierced hands!

II. Now I advance another step and remind you that VERY OFTEN, THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD, UNGODLY PERSONS HAVE HAD REASON TO BLESS THE LORD FOR THEIR AFFLICTIONS.

Not infrequently have I heard a story of this kind from a man who has passed the prime of life, whose garments bear evidence, though he still looks respectable, that he is one who has seen many sorrows and trials—and who carries on his brow the marks of the plowshare of grief. He has come to unite in fellowship with the Church and he begins telling the story of his conversion, which is something like this—"I was once a flourishing tradesman. I had a large business and was a wealthy man, but, alas, I was foolish. Worse than that, I was wicked. I misspent my time, I delighted in the ways of sin and became a profligate. My companions thought me generous and I did not wish to be less than they thought me to be, so I wasted my substance in riotous living. My business suffered and, at last, there came a crash. All I had went where all must go when a man squanders his time and money as I squandered mine. I became poor. I had not previously known what it was to eat the bread of dependence, but I did eat it for a few months. Friends assisted me for a time, but they grew tired of doing so and I was cast off by the world. And I felt, when any looked coldly upon me, that I deserved it. I

have been a fool, Sir, I know that I have. But it was then, one cold, pitiless night, when there was only one place where I could find shelter for my head—that place was the pauper's last refuge—it was then that I thought upon my ways and lifted my eyes to Heaven and breathed the prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The man has told me that he blesses God for his poverty, for that was the means of bringing him to Christ! And since he has come to know the Lord, he has thought it a thousand mercies that he was thus brought very low, for if he had not been, his proud spirit would never have been broken and he would never have been humbled before the Lord.

And some of you, my Sisters, know that you have told me and the Church your story. You were happy mothers in your households, but you feared not the Lord. You had your children around you and you and your husband took what you called, "your pleasure," on the Sabbath, for you had no fear of God before your eyes. But, by-and-by, one of your little ones was taken ill. You watched, with anxious care, the pale cheek as it grew still paler—and grim Death took your darling from you. Again his shaft flew and a second one was taken—and your soul was melted because of heaviness. There is one here who had four children taken away in succession, till, at last, the mother's agonized soul, bereaved of all earthly comfort, could go to no one else but Christ—and when she went to Him, she found in Him what was better than 10 sons—His love, His pardon, His acceptance, His free gift of eternal life!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there have been many who have thus, by a series of bereavements, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, been brought to know the Lord! I need not stay to mention instances of which I am constantly hearing. I believe that the black angel of distress has brought as many to Christ as the bright angel of tender mercy. In fact, if you look well at the black angel, as I have called him, you will see that he is not black, but exceedingly bright, for there is a gracious ministry in those loving sorrows! There is an angelic kindness in those loving cruelties (as some term them) by which God sometimes bring hardened sinners to Himself!

III. But now I come to the main point of my discourse which is that although distress is often blessed to God's people, and is frequently sanctified to the conversion of sinners, our text is a notable proof that THERE IS NOTHING IN TRIAL, ITSELF, WHICH WILL NECESSARILY SOFTEN THE HEART AND MAKE A MAN REPENT. "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz."

If further proof were needed that trouble, affliction, sickness and familiarity with death necessarily softened the heart, then those people who have most to do with these things would have the most tender hearts—but it is not so. Think of the man who has to deal with the dead. Where will you find anywhere, as a class, a more hardened set of men than undertakers often are? I know that anyone who is well acquainted with them, must have observed how they joke over a corpse and make mirth over the death of their fellow creatures, regarding a fever rather as a blessing which brings them employment than as a calamity which

takes away the husband from the wife, or the parent from the children. I do not speak without my book in this case, and it is very much the same with other people. I think I said, one day, that if a man or a woman were not converted before they became pew-openers at a church or a chapel, it was probable that they never would be converted—and I am still of the same opinion. I once said that I thought even reporters of sermons, if they did not know the Lord before they undertook that work, would very likely fail to get any good out of the sermon and, therefore, it is always a great joy to me when I know that those who have any share in the preparation of my sermons with a view to their publication have realized the power of the Truth of God in their own hearts so that, even while engaged in the mechanical operations connected with reporting and printing the sermons, their souls drink in something of the sweetness of the Truth which is afterwards to be read by others.

Probably, however, the truth of the text will be best illustrated by a Scriptural instance. Look at Pharaoh. Was any man ever more troubled than he was? All the power of land, and water, and sky united to plague him! It seemed as if all the frogs in the world had made Egypt their rendezvous—and the locusts, and the lice, and the flies, and cattle diseases, and boils, and the hail, and the thick darkness—and though all these plagues came upon Pharaoh, he still hardened his heart and would not let the people go! Affliction did not soften him. On the contrary, it hardened him. And the case of Ahaz is another instance of the same evil spirit, for the more trials came to him, the more did he trespass against the Lord. The children of Israel, too, though they were smitten many times, yet revolted again and again. They were hunted about by marauders and delivered up to their enemies. Their crops were devoured of locusts. Famine and pestilence came upon them, but, for all that, they turned not unto the Lord, but hardened their hearts against Him and were a stiff-necked generation, even as they are unto this day!

However, I need not go on beating round the bush, for, if further proofs that sorrow does not necessarily soften are needed, there are plenty of such proofs here at this moment. There is that sailor over yonder. He knows that he is a great deal worse than he was three or four years ago. He had more pricks of conscience then, than he has now, yet it is not many months since he escaped from shipwreck. He thought the angry deep must surely swallow him up, so he cried unto God in his time of trouble, and said, "Save me, O God, for the waters have come in unto my soul!" God spared his life, but the trial he then endured had no beneficial effect upon him and, as I have said, he is a worse man, now, than he was years ago! Then there is that man yonder—whose business has been going down. What effect has that had upon him? He is growing harder and harder and is even cursing God for what he calls his bad luck! In trying to improve his position, he is only plunging deeper into the mire and he will be head over heels in the morass, presently, unless the almighty Grace of God shall deliver him! But the man is not softened in spirit by all that he has had to endure. That which would have softened him had he been as wax, has hardened him because his nature

is like clay. May God yet have mercy on him, for I plainly perceive that his briars, by themselves, will be of no use to him!

And you, too, who have come creeping out to this service—you have been so ill that hospital after hospital has turned you away as incurable. The doctors say that nothing more can be done for you, so you have come limping in here, though you can scarcely keep your seat for weariness—you are very ill and weak—yet your unhumbled spirit is as proud as though your ribs were made of iron and your heart were strong as steel! If you should be chastened any more, you would only revolt more and more. You have already been smitten until your whole head is sick and your whole heart is faint—from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet there is no soundness in you, for you have become, as the result of God's chastisements, a mass of wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! Yet still is sin as strongly entrenched within your soul as ever it was! What more shall the Lord do to you? Shall He give you up as hopeless? Shall He make you as Admah? Shall He set you as Zeboim? Shall He say concerning you, "He is joined unto his idols; let him alone"? What else remains to be done for you where all this affliction and trial will not break your heart?

I might go on pointing out you who are like king Ahaz, for my Master knows all about you and He knows how to direct my tongue so that I shall describe you. I feel a great yearning of heart, the throes of strong convulsions in my soul over some of you who are here! I know that I have a special message from God for some whom I am now addressing. Who and where they are, the Lord knows. I do not, but I pray that my message may now be accepted by them. As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you turn not at His rebuke, O Soul—if this last affliction shall not humble you, He will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel and break you with a rod of iron! "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" Why will you draw destruction down upon your own head? Why will you stain your garments with your own blood? Why will you dash yourself to pieces upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler? Why will you run upon the edge of His sword? Why will you leap into the fires of Hell? Why will you ruin your soul forever? Pause, I entreat you! A brother's love bids you pause! You who are like "that king Ahaz" who, in the time of his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, I pray you to stop and consider, lest, at your next step, your feet should hang over the awful darkness of the Pit and your soul be hurled into the eternal depths!

I have thus, I hope, come somewhat near the mark at which I am aiming. And I am getting to speak right home to those who have had afflictions and trials, but are growing worse, rather than better, notwithstanding all that has happened to them. I will turn from them to speak to some of you who have the notion that you will repent and believe in Christ some day, but you will not repent and believe in Christ just yet. You have not made up your minds that you will go to Hell—oh, no, you mean to be saved, one of these days! You have not decided when it shall be, but still, you do mean it to happen one of these days! Your secret thought is that one of these days you will be obedient to the

heavenly vision. You talk to yourselves in some such fashion as this, "I shall be laid aside one day. Perhaps it may not be until I grow old and when I am ill—then I shall have time to turn the matter over calmly and quietly. I have heard my friends say concerning some who had lived very bad lives, that they hoped it was all right with them at the last and, therefore, may I not hope that it will be all right with me?"

Friend, I want to give you a warning word! Perhaps my meeting you here and talking especially to you for a little while may be the means of your eternal salvation! What makes you imagine that a time of sickness is a suitable time for repentance? Do you not think that you will have quite enough to do to bear your bodily pains without having to think of the state of your soul? When your head is aching, you cannot properly attend even to your earthly business—so how can you hope to attend to your soul's business when your head and your heart will both be aching? You find that your worldly concerns need a healthy mind and body to conduct them properly—so do you think that when the mind is becoming weak through senile decay and physical infirmity—that then will be a fitting time to think of these momentous and eternal realities?

In many diseases I believe that repentance and faith are scarcely possible, for some of them bring such a lethargy of spirit that the mind is hardly able to act at all. There are, doubtless, many persons who are alive but who, for all practical purposes, are dead long before they actually die. You know, too, how often the very thought of death is so harassing to an unbeliever that he can hardly think of sin. A murderer may repent that he has been brought to the gallows, yet not repent of the murder that brought him there—just as, on their deathbed, many repent of Hell, but not of sin! I fear that often the sense of the wrath to come gets to be so vivid and so real that sin hardly comes into the reckoning—and remember, Friend, that it is not repentance of Hell that will save you, but repentance of SIN—not repentance of the punishment, but repentance of the evil deed itself—a sincere hatred of the very pleasure which sin would bring! O Sirs, take my word for it—and I think that if there were physicians here, they would certify that I am speaking the truth when I say that there are other things to do on your deathbed than to talk of "making your peace with God." I am uttering a solemn Truth of God, but it is one that must be spoken! There may have been some few persons who have been saved on a deathbed, but my own conviction is that they have been very, very, very, very, very few! We only read in Scripture of one who was saved at the last—the dying thief on the Cross—and it has been well said that there was one so that none might despair—but *only one* that none might presume! I do not know that there ever was another besides the dying thief who was called by Grace at the eleventh hour! I repeat that I do not know. I do not say that there have not been any—I hope there have been many—but I do not know it. I have no revelation concerning it. There is nothing in this blessed Book about it. Only this I know—there was one—and therefore I hope there have been more. But since I only know of that one, I would warn you not to put any confidence in a repentance that may possibly come at the last.

You may be saved on your deathbed, but I think there is every probability that you who have loved sin so long, will hug it to the last! I do not see any reason why you would suddenly turn your backs on your former course. If there is any such reason, let it operate upon you *now*. Surely it would have as much force upon your conscience at this moment—while you are capable of weighing the whole matter calmly and deliberately—as it will have when you are tossing on your bed and your judgment has lost a great part, if not all of its former vigor! May God bring you to Christ now! But do not, I pray you, be dreaming about a deathbed on which you may never lie, or of a repentance which you may never experience!

There was a man who was an awful swearer and whenever anybody spoke to him about his not being saved, he used to say, "Oh, well, when my turn comes to die, I shall just say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and that will be enough." It happened that one dark night, when going home on horseback, drunk, his horse leaped the railing of a high bridge and horse and rider fell right into the water. And the last word that the man was heard to utter was an oath—so beyond all doubt he plunged into a hopeless eternity! It is quite possible that you will never have the opportunity to breathe a dying prayer, or if you could have such an opportunity, it is quite possible that you would have no inclination to utter it. Remember that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." May God, in His Sovereign Mercy, turn you to Himself now!

Now I come back to you who have had many trials, but who have not been bettered by them. My Friend over yonder, you do not often hear a minister preach the Word of God and, therefore, now that I have you here, let me deal very plainly and faithfully with you. Why do you think that your trials were sent to you? I have shown you that distress often has been blessed to others. Now, supposing you have had an experience which has been blessed to others, but it has been no blessing to you—what is the inference? If a man takes a piece of quartz in which he thinks there is some gold, and puts it through the usual processes for extracting gold—and when he has done that, sees that there is no likelihood of finding gold in it, what is he likely to do with it? Why, I think, before long, when he has tried all the plans he can think of, he will throw it away and have nothing more to do with it! And is it not likely that God will soon throw you away as utterly worthless? Did you not say, the other night, that you wished God would leave you alone? You would not have come in to this service if you had thought that I should speak so pointedly and personally to you, would you? You would like to see every church, and chapel, and mission-hall destroyed—you would like to have no Sundays, and no religious people, because they plague you—they get in your way, they stick pins in your pillow, they will not leave you alone to sleep the sleep of death!

But do you not see that the fact that you want to be left alone is, itself, a proof of your reprobate mind? God is beginning to leave you alone, I am afraid, inasmuch as you are wishing to be left alone. I am afraid that awful curse will come upon you and, possibly, it will come upon you

soon. Should your present condition continue much longer, I can tell you what will happen to you—you will become an avowed atheist. You will even deny the existence of God! You may even become an open blasphemer, or you may become unconscious of any spiritual emotion. Your conscience will never prick you and you will go on sinning with a high hand until you come to die. Perhaps, even then, no alarm or terror will disturb your false peace of mind. Even when you dip your feet in the chilly stream of the River of Death, you will be self-deceived to the last. But oh, Sir, what a change will come over you when you once get into the world of eternal realities! When, at last, you realize that you are a lost soul and that you have forever to anticipate the wrath to come, what will you do then? O Man, how will the blood boil in your veins and your nerves become burning tracks for the wheels of pain to travel on! God help you! God save you! Only He can do this, for I see the dread forecast of the flames of Hell in you when you begin to ask God to leave you alone in your sin!

"Well," says one, "like that king Ahaz, I have transgressed yet more and more against the Lord notwithstanding all my distress. But God, who knows all things, knows that I would be saved if I could. While you were singing that hymn just now, I thought I would act upon it. I said in my heart—

"'I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away I know,
I must forever die.'"

Dear Friend, give me your hand! I feel that I may rejoice over you, for if God the Holy Spirit has put it into your heart to say, "I am resolved to try," or, better still, "I am resolved to trust Jesus Christ as my Savior—though He slays me, I will trust in Him"—depend upon it, He will not slay you! He would not do so even if you were the blackest of sinners—one who had sinned till you had become the vilest of all offenders! Jesus casts out none who come to Him by faith. Do, I pray you, now say in your soul, "God helping me, I will now come to Him—and who can tell whether there may not be a harp in Heaven even for me, and a crown of glory for me? I trust that I may yet stand with all the blood-washed host before the Throne of God above and join in singing the everlasting song of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And even here on earth, I may be among the children of God, I may be forgiven, I may be saved, I may be accepted in the Beloved." If you talk thus, and mean all that you say, I say unto you, not only that this may be the case with you, but that it may be the case with you this very hour—

"Oh, believe the promise true,
God to you His Son has given!"

A loving Father waits with outstretched arms to welcome the returning prodigal to His heart. Jesus waits by the fountain filled with His precious blood to wash you from all your sinful stains. The Holy Spirit is working in you even now—'tis He who bids you come! Let not Satan persuade you that it is too late for you to come to Jesus—it is never too late while the Messenger of Mercy continues to speak to you! Let not the devil convince

you that you are too sinful to be saved—often the greatest sinners are the first to be saved! If the devil tells you that you are an extraordinary sinner, tell him that Christ is such an extraordinary Savior that He can save all sorts of sinners, ordinary and extraordinary, too! Say not in your heart that you cannot be saved, for, high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's thoughts above your thoughts and His ways above your ways! My poor Friend, if you feel your need of a Savior, join with me and with all the people of God here in singing this verse! Sing it from your heart and the great transaction's done—

"Nothing in my hands I bring:
Simply to Your Cross I cling!
Naked, come to You for dress—
Helpless, look to You for Grace!
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—509, 473, 514.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 THESSALONIANS 1; 2:1-4.

[This Exposition belongs to Sermon No. 2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE—but there was not space available for it there.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

2 Thessalonians 1:1, 2. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* All nations have their special forms of salutation and this is the Christian's greeting to his fellow Christians—"Grace unto you, and peace." How much there is in this prayer! "Grace"—the free favor of God, the active energy of the Divine Power. And, "peace"—reconciliation to God, peace of conscience, peace with all men! My Brothers and Sisters, what better things could I desire for you, and what better things could you wish for your best beloved friends than these, "Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"?

3. *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren.* We do not feel this bond as much as we ought. We often feel ourselves bound to grumble and complain, but I question whether we think enough about being bound to praise God. And if we do not thank God as we ought for ourselves, it is little marvel if we are very slack in the duty of thanking Him for others. Herein, then, let us imitate this devout Apostle and let us consider ourselves bound to always thank God for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

3-7. *As it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other abounds; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to*

you who are troubled rest with us. You will perhaps say that this command is more easily given than carried out. And yet, my Brothers and Sisters, the Grace of God always enables us to perform what the precept of God commands! You who are troubled rest with us. If you can get even a partial glimpse of the Glory that is to follow your trouble. If you can see Christ suffering with you and realize your union with Him. If the blessed Spirit who pledges Himself to be with all the Lord's people, shall be with you, you will find it not hard thing thus to rest. "You who are troubled rest with us."

7. *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels.* This rest, then, it seems, is to be given to us mainly when Christ shall come with His mighty angels.

8, 9. *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.* I wonder what those persons who say that it is not the duty of men to believe the Gospel, make of this passage? Paul writes that those who "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction." Then, clearly, the Gospel *demands and commands man's obedience*, and those who will not believe it shall be punished, not only for their other sins, but for this as their chief and damning fault—that they will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as set before them in the Gospel of His Grace.

10. *When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* Which passage means, I suppose, that as Christ will be admired in His own Person, so His Glory, reflected in all His children, will be a subject of admiration to the whole intelligent universe. The saints of God shall be so pure, so bright—such trophies of the Redeemer's power to save—that He shall be admired in them! We know that in God's great temple of the universe, everything does speak of His Glory and so, in the great spiritual temple of His Church, every separate saint shall show forth the Glory of Christ!

10, 11. *(Because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Therefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the word of faith with power.* Ministers should be much in prayer for their people. When John Welsh's wife found him on the ground with his eyes red with weeping—and she found that he had been there supplicating by the hour together—she asked him what ailed him and he replied, "Woman, I have three thousand souls to care for, and I know not how they all prosper; therefore must I wrestle with God for them all." Oh, that we felt more the weight of our ministry! It is, perhaps, the great fault of this age that so many who preach, yet preach with so little earnestness and are not sufficiently alive to the value of immortal souls! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make our ministry to be "the burden of the Lord" upon us!

12. *That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the Grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.* In his former Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul had written as if he expected Christ to come immediately. And the people seem to have taken his words so literally as to have lived in expectation of Christ's advent and, perhaps, to have exhibited some degree of fear concerning it. He now calms their minds by telling them that Christ would not come until certain events had happened. The history of the world was not complete. The harvest of the Church was not ripe—neither had the sin of man and especially the "man of sin" become fully developed.

3, 4. *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* If this "man of sin" is not the Pope of Rome, we cannot tell who is the antichrist! Certainly, if this description were put in the *Hue-and-Cry*, and we were police officers, we should at once arrest the Pope as the man whose character agreed with the warrant in our hands! What does he call himself? "Vicar of Christ on earth." What does he do but set himself up to be adored and worshipped as though he were Divine, making himself out to be the fountain and channel of all Grace? Beloved, this "man of sin" has been revealed! Now we may look for the coming of the Son of Man—but the day and the hour when He shall come, no man knows. No, and not even the angels of God!

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

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

JUDE'S DOXOLOGY
NO. 2994

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1875.

"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." Jude 1:24, 25.

PAUL'S writings abound in doxologies. You will find them in different forms scattered throughout all his Epistles. But he is not the only Apostle who thus pauses to magnify the name of God. Here is "Judas, not Iscariot," but the true-hearted Jude who has been writing an Epistle which seems all ablaze with lightning, it burns so terribly against certain orders of sinners. Almost every word that Jude writes seems to have the roll of thunder in it—he appears to be more like the Haggai of the Old Testament than the Jude of the New. Yet he cannot close his short Epistle until he has included some ascription of praise to God!

Learn from this, dear Friends, that the sin of man, if we are ever called to denounce it, should drive us to adore the goodness and glory of God. Sin defiles the world, so after you have done your best to sweep it out, resolve that, inasmuch as man has dishonored the name of God, you will seek to magnify that name. It is true that you cannot actually redress the wrong that has been done, but, at any rate, if the stream of sin has been increased, you may increase the stream of loyal and reverent praise! Take care that you do. Jude is not satisfied with having rebuked the sons of men for their sin, so he turns round to glorify his God!

Observe that these doxologies, wherever we meet with them, are not all exactly the same. They are presented to the same God and offered in the same spirit, but there are reasons given for the doxology in the one case which are not given in the other. Our morning text [Sermon No. 1266, Volume 21—PAUL'S DOXOLOGY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] told us of what God is able to do and so does this. They both begin with praising God's ability, but while Paul spoke about the greatness of that ability in what it could do for us, Jude speaks of the greatness of that ability in *preserving us from falling* and perfecting us so that we may be presented faultless before the Presence of the Glory of God. Let us, in an adoring frame of mind, think over this sublime subject.

I. First, LET US ADORE HIM WHO CAN KEEP US FROM FALLING.

I now address myself, of course, only to God's own people. When shall we ever see a congregation in which it will be needless to make such a remark as that? I cannot call upon some of you to adore God for keeping you from falling, for, alas, you have not yet learned to stand upright!

God's Grace has never yet been accepted by you. You are not on the Rock of Ages—you have not yet set out upon the heavenly pilgrimage. It is a wretched state for you to be in—in which you cannot worship Him whom angels worship. It is a sad state of heart for any man to be in! To be excluded—self-excluded—from the general acclamations of joy in the Presence of God—because you feel no such joy and cannot, therefore, unite in such acclamations!

But to the people of God, I have to say this. Dear Brothers and Sisters, *we need keeping,* therefore let us adore Him who can keep us! As saved souls, we need keeping from final apostasy. "Oh," says one, "I thought you taught us that those who are once saved shall never finally apostatize." I do believe that doctrine and delight to preach it—yet it is true that the saved ones would apostatize—everyone of them—if the Lord did not keep them! There is no stability in any Christian, considered in himself. It is the Grace of God within him that enables him to stand. I believe than the soul of man is immortal, yet not in and of itself, but only by the immortality which God bestows upon it from His essential immortality. So is it with the new life that is within us. It shall never perish, but it is only eternal because God continues to keep it alive. Your final perseverance is not the result of anything in yourself, but the result of the Grace which God continues to give you and of His eternal purpose which first chose you and of His almighty power which still keeps you alive. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, the brightest saints on earth would fall into the lowest Hell if God did not keep them from falling! Therefore, praise Him, O you stars that shine in the Church's sky, for you would go out with a noxious smell, as lamps do for lack of oil, did not the Lord keep your heavenly flame burning! Glory be unto the Preserver of His Church who keeps His loved ones even to the end!

But there are other ways of falling beside falling finally and fatally. Alas, Brothers and Sisters, we are all liable to fall into errors of doctrine. The best-taught man, apart from Divine Guidance, is capable of becoming the greatest fool possible! There is a strange weakness which sometimes comes over noble spirits and which makes them infatuated with an erroneous novelty, though they fancy they have discovered some great Truth of God. Men of enquiring and receptive minds are often decoyed from the old paths—the good old ways—and while they think they are pursuing the Truth, they are being led into damnable error! He only is kept, as to his thoughts and doctrinal views, whom God keeps, for there are errors that would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect! And there are men and women going about in this world with smooth tongues and plausible arguments, who carry honeyed words upon their lips, though drawn swords are concealed behind their backs! Blessed are they who are preserved from these wolves in sheep's clothing! Lord, You alone can preserve us from the pernicious errors of the times, for You are "the only wise God, our Savior."

And, dear Friends, we need keeping from an evil spirit. I do not know whom I should prefer—to see one of my dear Christian Brother fall into doctrinal error, or into an un-Christian spirit. I would prefer neither, for I think this is a safe rule—of two evils, choose neither! It is sad to hear some people talk as if they, alone, are right, and all other Christians are

wrong. If there is anything which is the very essence and soul of Christianity, it is brotherly love—but brotherly love seems to be altogether forgotten by these people. And other Christians who, in the judgment of sobriety, are as earnest and as true-hearted and as useful as themselves, are set down as belonging to a kind of Babylonian system—I hardly know what they do not call it, but they give it all sorts of bad names—and this is thought to be a high style of Christianity! God grant that the man may be forgiven who thought it to be a worthy purpose of his life to found a sect, whose distinguishing characteristic should be that it would have no communion with any other Christians! The mischief that man has done is utterly incalculable! And I can only pray that in the Providence of God, some part of it may die with him.

O Brothers and Sisters, I charge you, whatever mistakes you make, not to make a mistake about this one thing—that even if you have all knowledge, and have not charity, it profits you nothing! Even if you could get a perfect creed and knew that your modes of worship were absolutely Apostolic, yet if you also imbibed this idea that you could not worship with any other Christians and that they were altogether outside your camp, your error would be far worse than all other errors put together—for to be wrong in heart is even worse than to be wrong in head! I would have you true to God's Truth, but, above all, I would have you true to God's Love! My Brother, I think you are mistaken about this matter or that, but do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, I love you. I have no doubt that I, also, am mistaken about some things, but do not, therefore, withdraw your hand and say that you cannot have fellowship with me! I have fellowship with my Father who is in Heaven and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and with His blessed Spirit. And I think that it ill becomes you, if you call yourself a son of that same God, to refuse to have fellowship with me when I have fellowship with Him! God save you from this evil spirit, but you may readily enough fall into it unless the Lord shall keep you. Your very zeal for the Truth of God may drive you into a forgetfulness of Christian love! And if it does, it will be a sad pity. O Lord, keep us from falling in this way!

But there are falls of another sort which may happen to the brightest Christian. I mean, falls into *outward* sin. As you read Jude's Epistle through, you will see what apostates some professors became and you will be led to cry, "Lord, keep me from falling!" And if you were the pastor of a large church like mine, you would see enough to convince you that traitors like Judas are not all dead—that amidst the faithful, the unfaithful are still found—that there are bad fish to be thrown away, as well as good fish to be kept. And every time we execute an act of discipline—every time we have to bemoan the fall of one who looked like a Brother—we may thank God that *we* have been kept—and may sing this doxology, "Unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, be glory and power forever."

And, dear Friends, there is a way of falling, out of which people are not so often recovered as when they fall into overt sin. I mean, falling into negligence as to natural or Christian duties. I have known professors who have been very lax at home—children who were not obedient to their

parents—husbands who did not love their wives as they ought—wives who were quite at home at this meeting and that, but very negligent of their domestic duties. And, mark you, where that is the case, it is a thing to mourn over, for the Christian ought to be absolutely reliable in everything he has to do! I would not give twopence for your religion if you are a tradesman—but not fair in your dealings! I do not care if you can sing like David, or preach like Paul—if you cannot measure a yard of material with the proper number of inches, or if your scales do not weigh rightly, or your general mode of business is not straight and true—you had better make no profession of religion! The separation at what is called, "religious," from the, "secular," is one of the greatest possible mistakes. There is no such thing as a religion of Sundays, and of chapels and churches. At least though there is such a thing, it is not worth having. The religion of Christ is a religion for seven days in the week—a religion for every place and for every act! And it teaches men, whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the glory of God! I pray that you may be kept from falling away from *that* religion, and that you may be kept up to the mark in serving the Lord in all things *and* attending diligently to the little commonplace matters of daily life.

And you know, dear Friends, there is another sort of falling—that is when the heart gets gradually cold, when the Christian wanders away little by little—when the life become more or less inconsistent with the profession. Oh, how many professors get into this state! They are like people who are not as well as they used to be. They do not know when they began to feel worse—it was months ago and every day they have got weaker—till now you can see their bones, though once they were full of flesh. Now they discover that whereas once they could have walked ten miles without fatigue, half a mile or less wearies them! Their appetite, too, has gradually gone. They scarcely know how. Ah, these are the sick folk with whom the physician has more trouble than he has with those who are suddenly seized by some well-known disease! And that gradual decline of spiritual health which does not come all at once, but, little by little, is one of the most perilous of evils and we have need to continually cry, "Lord, keep us from this!" And to praise His name that He is able so to keep us!

Thus I have shown you that we need keeping and, Brothers and Sisters, *none but the Lord can keep us.* No man can keep himself. Without God's Grace, he will surely fail! And no *place* can keep us. Some people think that if they could get into such-and-such a family, they could keep from sin, but they are mistaken. In every position which man occupies, he will find temptation. We have heard of the hermit who hoped to get rid of all sin by living in a cave. He took with him his little brown loaf and his jug of water, but he had hardly entered the cave before he upset his jug and spilt the water. It was a long way to the well and he got so angry with himself for what he had done that he soon discovered that the devil could get into a cave as quickly as he could! So he thought he might as well go back and face the trials of ordinary society. There is a story which they tell in Scotland of a family who were thriftless and, therefore, did not succeed. But they thought it was one of

the "brownies" that kept them from getting on, so they decided to "flit." They put all their things into a cart, but just as they were about to start, they heard a noise that made them cry out, "The brownie is in the churn!" So, wherever the churn went, the brownies would go too. And you may remove wherever you like and think, "If I get into such a position, I shall escape from temptation, but you will find that "the brownie is still in the churn," and he will follow you wherever you may go! You cannot be kept from falling by choosing another situation. You had better stay where you are, Brother, and fight the devil there, for perhaps the next place that you select as the scene of combat may not be as suitable as the one you have now.

"Ah," says one, "I wish I could get to—

'A lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me again.'"

Yes, yes. But that is not the way to conquer sin, is it? Suppose the battle of Waterloo is just beginning and here is a soldier who wants to win a victory. So he runs away—gets off to Brussels and hides himself in a cellar! Is he likely to be numbered among the heroes of the day? No, Brothers and Sisters, and if there is any sin to be overcome in this world, there is no credit to the man who says, "I'm going to hide somewhere out of the world." No, no, my Brother, accept the lot that God has provided for you! Take your place in the ranks of His soldiers and whatever temptation comes, look up to Him who is able to keep you from falling—but do not dream of running away, for that is the way to fall—that is being defeated before the battle begins! Nobody but God can keep you. You may join whatever church you like. You may wear a hat with a broad brim and say "thou" and "thee." You may meet with those who break bread and preach nothing but the Gospel of the Grace of God. You may dwell among the best people who ever lived, but you will still be tempted! Neither place nor people, neither manners nor customs can keep you from falling—God alone can do it!

But here is the mercy, *God can do it*. Notice how Jude's doxology puts it—"To the only wise God our Savior." It is because He, alone, is wise that He, alone, is able to keep us from falling. He does it by teaching us the Truth, by warning us against secret sin and by His Providential leading. Sometimes He keeps temptation from us. At other times He allows a temptation to come to us that, by overcoming it, we may be the stronger to meet another one. Oftentimes He delivers us from temptation by letting affliction come upon us. Many a man has been kept from falling into sin by being stretched upon a bed of sickness. Had it not been for the loss of the eye, he would have looked upon vanity. Had it not been for that broken bone, he would have run in the ways of ungodliness. We little know how much preservation from falling we owe to our losses and crosses! The story of Sir James Thornhill painting the inside of the cupola of St. Paul's is probably well known to you. When he had finished one of the compartments, he was stepping backward that he might get a full view of it and so went almost to the edge of the scaffolding—and

would have fallen over if he had taken another step—but a friend, who saw his danger, wisely seized one of his brushes and rubbed some paint over his picture. The artist, in his rage, rushed forward to save his painting and so saved his own life! We have all pictured life—what a fairy picture we made of it! And as we admired it, we walked further and yet further away from God and safety—and got nearer and nearer to perilous temptation! But when trial came and ruined the picture we had painted and then, though scarcely knowing why, we came forward and were saved, God had kept us from falling by the trouble He had sent to us!

God has often kept us from falling by a bitter sense of our past sin. We have not dared to go near the fire again for our former burns have scarcely healed. I have also noticed, in my own case, that when the desire for sin has come with force, the opportunity for sin has not been present—and when the opportunity of evil has been present, then, by God's Grace, the desire has been absent. It is wonderful how God prevents these two things from meeting and so keeps His people from falling.

Above all, it is by the Divine Spirit that God bears us up as upon eagle's wings. The Spirit teaches us to hate sin and to love righteousness—and so we are daily kept from falling.

Brothers and Sisters, join with me in adoring the Lord that *He will keep us to the end*. Have we committed our souls into the hands of Jesus? Then our souls are safe forever! Are we trusting to Him to keep us till the day of His appearing? If so, He will keep us—not one sheep or lamb out of His flock shall by any possibility be destroyed by the wolf, or the bear, or the roaring lion of Hell! They shall all be His in the day when they pass again under the hands of Him that counts them!

II. NOW, SECONDLY, LET US ADORE HIM BECAUSE HE WILL, AT THE LAST, PRESENT US "FAULTLESS BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF HIS GLORY WITH EXCEEDING JOY."

There will come a day, Brothers and Sisters, when we shall either be presented in the courts of God as His courtiers, or else be driven from His Judgment Seat as rebels against His authority. We look forward with the confident expectation that we shall be presented as the friends of Christ, unto God, even the Father and that is, indeed, a cause for adoring gratitude!

Do you notice how Jude puts it? "To present you faultless." *There shall be none in Heaven but those who are faultless*. There shall by no means enter into those holy courts anything that defiles. Heaven is perfectly pure and if you and I are ever to get there, we must be pure as the driven snow. No taint of sin must be upon us, or else we cannot stand among the courtiers of God. His flaming Throne would shoot forth columns of devouring fire upon any guilty soul that dared to stand in the courts of the Most High, if such a standing were possible! But we are impure—impure as to our acts and, worst of all, impure as to our very nature! How, then, can we hope to ever stand there? Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, our confidence is that we shall. Why?

Is it not because *Christ is able to present us faultless there*? Come, Christian, think for a minute how faultless Christ has made you so far as your past sin is concerned. The moment you believed in Him, you were

so completely washed in His precious blood that not a spot of sin remained upon you. Try to realize that whatever your past life has been, if you now believe in Jesus Christ, you are cleansed from all iniquity by virtue of His atoning Sacrifice and you are covered by a spotless robe of righteousness by virtue of His blessed life of perfect purity and obedience to His Father's will. You are now without fault, as far as your past sin is concerned, for He has cast it all into the depths of the sea—but you feel that you are not without fault as to your nature.

"Oh," you say, "I feel everything that is evil rising at times within me." But all that evil is under sentence of death. Christ nailed it to His Cross. Crucifixion is a lingering and very painful death—and the culprit struggles before he breathes his last. But your sins have had their deathblow. When Christ was nailed to the Cross, your sins were nailed there, too, and they shall never come down again. Die they must, even as He died. It will be a blessed hour when sin shall at last give up the ghost—when there shall be not even the tendency to sin within our nature! Then shall we be presented faultless before the Throne of God!

"Can that ever be?" asks one. Well may you ask that question, Brother. Can it ever be that we shall not be tempted by one foul lust, nor be disturbed by one unbridled passion, nor feel the emotions of envy or of pride again? Yes, it shall surely be! Christ has secured this blessing for you. His name is Jesus, Savior, "for He shall save His people from their sins." He must and will do this for all who trust Him. Rejoice that He will do this, for no one but God can do it. It must be "the only wise God our Savior" who can accomplish this—and accomplish it He will! Does your faith enable you to picture yourself as standing faultless before the Throne of God? Well then, give to the Lord the glory which is due unto Him for such a wondrous act of Grace as that!

This is how you are to be presented by Christ in Glory. There is a great stir in a family when a daughter is to be presented at court and a great deal is thought of it. But one day you and I who have believed in Jesus, shall be presented to the Father. What radiant beauty shall we then wear when God, Himself, shall look upon us and declare us to be without fault—when there shall be no cause for sorrow remaining and, therefore, we shall be presented with exceeding joy! It shall be so, my Brother! It shall be so, my Sister! Therefore do not doubt it. How soon it shall be, we cannot tell—possibly, tomorrow. Perhaps before the sun rises again you and I may be presented by Christ "before the Presence of His glory with exceeding joy." We cannot tell when it will be, but we shall be there in His good time. We shall be perfect! We shall be "accepted in the Beloved" and, therefore, "unto Him be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

III. That is the note with which I have to close my discourse. LET US, BECAUSE OF THESE TWO GREAT BLESSINGS OF FINAL PRESERVATION AND PRESENTATION BEFORE HIS GLORY, OFFER UNTO THE LORD OUR HIGHEST ASCRIPTIONS OF PRAISE.

Jude says, "Both now and forever." Well, we will attend to the "forever" as eternity rolls on, but let us attend to the praise of God "now"—at this moment! "To the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty,

dominion and power" now! Come, Brothers and Sisters, think of what you owe to Him who has kept you to this day—and will not let you go! Think of where you might have been and think, I may say, of where you used to be in your unregenerate state. Yet you are not there now—but here you are, without self-righteousness, made to differ from your fellow men entirely through the Grace of God! You have been kept perhaps 20 years, 30 years, 40 years—possibly 50 years! Well, unto Him be the glory! Give Him the glory even now!

How can you do it? Well, feel it in your hearts! Speak of it to your neighbors! Talk of it to your children! Tell everybody you meet what a good and blessed and faithful God He is, and so give Him glory now. And be happy and cheerful. You cannot glorify God better than by a calm, quiet, happy life. Let the world know that you serve a good Master. If you are in trouble, do not let anyone see that the trouble touches your spirit—no, more, *do not let it trouble your spirit*. Rest in God—take evil as well as good from His hands and keep on praising Him. You do not know how much good you may do and how greatly you may glorify God if you praise Him in your dark times. Worldlings do not care much about our Psalm-singing unless they see us in pain and sorrow and observe that we praise God then. I like, and the world likes, a religion that will wash—a religion that will stand many showers and much rough usage. Some Christians' joy disappears in the wear and tear of life—it cannot endure the world's rough handling. Let it not be so with us, Beloved, but let us praise, bless and magnify the name of the Lord as long as we have any being!

I know that in speaking thus, I am only addressing a part of my congregation. I wish that every man and woman here were now praising the Lord—and I am sure that you could not have a better occupation to all eternity. Remember that if you do not praise God, it is impossible for you ever to enter Heaven, for that is the chief occupation of Heaven! And also remember that praise from your lips, until those lips are divinely cleansed, would be like a jewel in a swine's snout, a thing altogether out of place! For you, dear unsaved Hearer, the first thing is not praise, but prayer—no, not even prayer first, but *faith*. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." And then, in faith, pray the prayer which God accepts. But you must first believe in Jesus. "And what does believing in Jesus mean?" you ask. It means this—your sin deserves punishment, for God, who is just, must punish sin. But His Son came into the world to suffer in the place of those who trust Him. And now, God can be just and yet the Justifier of every soul that believes in Jesus! In the Person of His Son, God hangs upon a tree and dies a felon's death—will you believe in the merit of that death and in the love of God who spared not His own Son in order that He might spare us? Can you trust Jesus as your God and Savior? Will you do it now? Then you are saved!

The first moment of thus trusting God is the beginning of a new life—a life which will drive out the old death of sin. The moment that you thus trust your God, you will be placed upon a new footing with regard to Him—your whole aspect towards God will be changed. Repentance will take such possession of your spirit that you will be actuated by new

motives and swayed by new desires! In fact, you will be a new man in Christ Jesus. This is being saved—saved from the love of sin, saved from returning to sin, saved from falling and so completely saved that Christ shall one day present you "faultless before the Presence of His glory with exceeding joy." May God do this for everyone of you, my Hearers, according to the riches of His Grace! It is my heart's last, best and strongest desire that everyone of you may be saved. May we all meet in Heaven, before the Throne of God, never more to be parted!

While I am away, listen with all earnestness to other heralds of the Cross, and pray the Lord to bless their messages to your salvation, if mine have not been so blest. I pray that by some instrumentality, you may all be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

Verse 1. *Jude*. That is to say Judas, not Iscariot.

1. *The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.* He does not say, "and brother of our Lord," for we know that James and Judas were, both of them, among the Lord's kinsman according to the flesh. But now, after the flesh, knows he Christ no more, but is content and happy to be known as "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James."

1. *To them that are sanctified by God the Father*. For the decree of election, the setting apart of the chosen is usually ascribed unto God the Father.

1. *And preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.* We have here a very blessed description of the whole work of our salvation—set apart by the Father, joined unto Christ and preserved in Him—and then, in due time, called out by the Spirit of God.

2. *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied*. Christian letters should be full of love and good will. The Christian dispensation breathes beneficence—it is full of benediction! "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied." May the Divine Trinity give you a trinity of blessings!

3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was necessary for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints*. In the sense of being once and for all given to the saints, the faith of Christians is not a variable quantity. It is not a thing which changes from day to day, as some seem to suppose, vainly imagining that fresh light is bestowed upon each new generation. No, the Truth of God was delivered once and for all, it was stereotyped, fixed—and it is for us to hold it fast as God has given it to us.

4. *For there are certain men crept in unawares*. They did not boldly avow their heresy when they came in—they would not have been allowed to enter if they had done so—but they sneaked in, they climbed into the pulpit, professing to be preachers of the Gospel when they knew, all along, that they intended to undermine it. Basest of all men are those who act thus! "There are certain men crept in unawares."

4. *Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.* Proscribed by God as traitors long ago! Those who have not the courage of their convictions probably have no convictions at all, but seek to undermine the faith which they profess to hold.

4. *Ungodly men, turning the Grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and Our Lord Jesus Christ.* Antinomians, "turning the Grace of our God into lasciviousness," falsely declaring that the Law has no binding force upon the Christian's life and saying that we may do evil that good may come—and Socinians, "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.* If we have no real faith, we may appear to go a long way towards Heaven—but we shall not enter the heavenly Canaan.

6. *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.* See, then, the need of stability, the need of abiding in the faith and abiding in the practice of it, lest we should turn out to be like the Israelites, who, though they came out of Egypt, left their carcasses in the wilderness, or like the angels, who, though they once stood in God's Presence in Glory, have fallen to the deeps of the abyss because of their apostasy!

7, 8. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion and speak evil of dignitaries.* They cast off all restraint; they claim to have liberty to do whatever they like—and when reproved, they utter railing words against those who honestly rebuke them!

9. *Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you.* To what does this refer? I am sure I do not know. I cannot think it refers to anything recorded in the Old Testament, but to some fact, known to Jude, who here speaks by Revelation and records it. We believe it and learn from it that when an archangel disputes with the devil, he does not use hard words even against him, for hard words are an evidence of the weakness of the cause which they are used to support! Hard arguments softly put, are the really effective weapons, but it takes some of us a long time to learn this and generally, in our younger days, we wear away our own strength by the violence with which we use it.

10. *But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.* It is a horrible thing when a man's sin goes the full length of his knowledge and he sins up to the degree of his possibilities!

11, 12. *Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots.* "These are spoilers," so it may be rendered.

12. *In your feasts of charity.* They spoil your love feasts at the Communion Table. They mar your fellowship when you gather together for worship.

12. *When they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.* Some of the best Christians who come to the Lord's Table, come there in great fear and trembling. And I have known some who have had an undoubted right to be there, half afraid to come. Yet those very persons who have a holy fear lest they should come amiss, are those who really ought to come. "Feeding themselves without fear" is the mark of those who are further off from God.

12. *Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds.* They believe according to what is said to them by the last man who speaks to them—they are easily persuaded to this doctrine, and to that, and the other.

12. *Trees whose fruit withers, without fruit.* They seem to be bearing fruit, but it drops off before it ripens.

12, 13. *Twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea.* They have nothing to say for Christ, yet they must say something, so they are "raging waves of the sea."

13. *Foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the thickness of darkness forever.* These are the false professors of religion, the members of the church for whom there are seats reserved in Hell! This is a dreadful thought—"to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"—not for the heathen, not for the open refusers of the Gospel, but for such as creep into the churches unawares, teach false doctrine, live unholy lives!

14, 15. *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.* How Jude knew that Enoch said that, I cannot tell—it is another instance of Divine Inspiration.

16. *These are murmurers, complainers.* You know the sort of people alluded to here, nothing ever satisfies them. They are discontented even with the Gospel. The bread of Heaven must be cut into three pieces and served on dainty napkins, or else they cannot eat it! And very soon their soul loathes even this light bread. There is no way by which a Christian can serve God so as to please them. They will pick holes in every preacher's coat and if the great High Priest, Himself, were here, they would find fault with the color of the stones of His breastplate!

16-19. *Walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time who should talk after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.* People who must, if they make a profession of religion at all, be continually breaking up churches and holding themselves aloof from

others, having no fellowship with anybody but those who can say "shibboleth" as plainly as they can, and sound the "h" pretty loudly.

20-22. *But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference.* Some of those professors who are not living consistently with their profession, in whom you can see signs and tokens of sin, yet there may be some trace of repentance, some reason to hope that they will forsake the evil when they see it to be evil—"have compassion" upon them.

23. *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.* When you have to deal with unclean professors, there must be an abhorrence and detestation of their sin even when there is great gentleness towards the sinner. We must never be such believers in the repentance of the guilty as to be willing to wink at sin, for sin is a great evil in any case and repentance cannot wipe it away. And though it behooves us to be tender to the sinner, we must never be tender to the sin. How beautifully this short and sad Epistle ends! Having described the many who, after making a profession, yet turn aside, Jude bursts out with this jubilant doxology!

24, 25. *Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 441, 245, 160.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"He...put his household in order, and hanged himself."
2 Samuel 17:23.

AHITHOPHEL was a man of keen perception and those who consulted him followed his advice with as much confidence as if he had been an oracle from Heaven. He was a great master of diplomacy, versed in the arts of cunning—far-seeing, cautious, deep. He was for years the friend and counselor of David. But thinking it judicious to be on the popular side, he left his old master that he might, like many other courtiers, worship the rising sun and hold an eminent position under Absalom. This, to use diplomatic language, was not only a crime, but a mistake. Absalom was not the man to follow the warnings of wisdom and Ahithophel found himself supplanted by another counselor. And whereas he was so incensed that he left Absalom, hurried home, arranged his personal affairs and hanged himself in sheer vexation.

His case teaches us that the greatest worldly wisdom will not preserve a man from the utmost folly. Here was a man worthy to be called the Nestor of debate, who yet had not wit enough to keep his neck from the fatal noose! Many a man, supremely wise for a time, fails in the long run. The renowned monarch, shrewd for the hour, has before long proved his whole system to be a fatal mistake. Instances there are, near to hand, where a brilliant career has ended in shame—a life of wealth closed in poverty—an empire collapsed in ruin. The wisdom which contemplates only this life fails even in its own sphere. Its tricks are too shallow, its devices too temporary and the whole comes down with a crash when least expected to fall! What sad cases have we seen of men who have been wise in policy, who have utterly failed from lack of principle! For lack of the spirit of honor and truth to establish them, they have built palaces of ice which have melted before they were complete. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The wisdom which comes from above is the only wisdom—the secular is folly until the sacred blends its golden stream therewith!

I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. *"He put his house in order, and hanged himself."* To put his house in order showed that he was a prudent man. To hang himself proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care and yet shall be so hapless as to take his own life afterwards? As Bishop Hall pithily says, "Could it be possible that he should be careful to order his house who

regarded not to order his impetuous passions? That he should care for his house who cared not for either body or soul?" Strange incongruity—he makes his will and then, because he cannot have his will, he wills to die! 'Tis another proof that madness is in the hearts of the sons of men! Marvel not at this one display of folly, for I shall have to show you that the case of Ahithophel is, in the spirit of it, almost universal. And as I shall describe sundry similar individuals, many of you will perceive that I speak of you. Thousands set their houses in order, but destroy their souls! They look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts' best interests. They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care—everywhere but where they are most required. They save their money, but squander their happiness. They are guardians of their estates, but suicides of their souls. This folly takes many forms, but it is seen on all hands, and the sight should make the Christian weep over the madness of his follow men. May the series of portraits which will now pass before us, while they hold the mirror up to Nature, also point us in the way of Grace!

See before you, then, the portrait of AN ATTENTIVE SERVANT. He is faithful to his employers and fulfils well the office to which he is appointed. He is up with the lark. He toils all day—he rests not till his task is done. He neglects nothing which he undertakes. I see him among the throng, I will single him out and talk with him.

You have been engaged for years in farming. You have plowed, sown, reaped and gathered into the barn—and no one has done the work better than you, and yet, though you have been so careful in your labor, you have never sown to the Spirit, nor cared to reap Life Everlasting. You have never asked to have your heart plowed with the Gospel plow, nor sown with the living Seed—and the consequence will be that at the last, you will have no harvest but weeds and thistles—and you will be given over to eternal destruction! What causes you to care for the clover and the turnips, the cows and the sheep, but never for yourself, your truest self, your ever-existing soul? What? All this care about the field, and no care about your heart? All this toil for a harvest which the hungry shall eat up—and no care whatever about the harvest that shall last eternally?

Or you have been occupied all your life in a garden and there, what earnestness you have shown, what taste in the training of the plants and flowers, what diligence in digging, planting, weeding and watering! Often has your employer congratulated himself that he has so careful a servant. You take a delight in your work and well you may, for some relics of Eden's memories still linger around a garden—but how is it that you are so choice with yonder tulip and so indifferent about your own spirit? What? You care for a poor rose which so soon is withered—and have no thought about your immortal nature? Does this sound like a reasonable man? You were very careful, in the winter, to keep up the heat of the greenhouse, lest those feeble plants should suffer from the frost. Have you, then, no care to be protected from temptation and from the dread storms of Almighty Wrath which are so soon to come? Can it be that you are diligent in ordering the walks, beds and shrubberies of your master's grounds, and yet are utterly careless about the garden of

your heart in which fairer flowers would bloom and yield you a far richer reward? I marvel at you! It seems so strange that you should be so good a worker for others, but take such poor care of yourself! I fear your lament will have to be, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

It would be too long a task to dwell particularly on each of your employments, but I will hope that, in each case, you are anxious to do your work thoroughly, so as to secure approval. The horse is not badly fed, nor the carriage recklessly driven, nor the wall carelessly built, nor the woods ill planed—you would be ashamed to be called a negligent workman. Put it, then, to yourself—will you watch over another man's goods and be unmindful of your own highest good? What? Do you mind the horse and the wagon, the parcels, the errands, all sorts of little matters and shall that soul of yours, which will outlast the sun and live when stars grow dim, be left without a thought? What? Do you love others so much and yourself so little? Are minor matters to absorb all your thoughts, while your own eternal concerns are left in utter neglect?

Some of you are domestic servants and endeavor to discharge your duties well. You have much to do from morning till night and you would be ashamed for anyone to say, "The room is unswept, cobwebs are on the walls, the floors are filthy, the meals are badly cooked because you are a bad servant." No, you feel rather proud that when you have a situation, you can keep it and that the mistress is content with you. Suffer me, then, to ask you, in the gentlest manner, Is your heart never to be cleansed? Are your sins always to defile it? Have you no thought about the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Do you think God made you to be a mere sweeper and cleaner of rooms, a cooker of meat, and so on, and that this is all you were designed for? There must be a higher and a better life for you—and do you altogether disregard it? Will you weary yourself, day by day, about another person's house and have you no interest in your own soul? Have you so much care to please (as you should) your master and mistress, and no care about being reconciled to God? I will not think that you are so bereft of reason!

I address a still larger class, probably, if I say there are many here who will go off to the City, in the morning, to fulfill the duties of confidential accountants. You never suffer the books to be inaccurate—they balance to a farthing! It would distress you if, through your inadvertence, the firm lost even a sixpence. You have perhaps been many years with the same employers and have their unbounded respect. From your boyhood to this day, you have been connected with the house. I have known several admirable men of high integrity and thorough faithfulness, whom their employers could never sufficiently value, for they laid themselves out with intense zeal to promote their commercial interests and worked far harder than the heads of the house ever did! Had the whole concern been their own, they could not have been more diligent—and yet these very men gave no head to their own personal interests for another world! It was grievous to observe that God was not in all their thoughts, nor Heaven, nor Hell, nor their own precious souls. You good and faithful servants of men, will you perish as unfaithful

servants of God? What? Will you never look onward to the last great reckoning? Is it nothing to you that the debts due to Divine Justice are undischarged? Are you willing to be called before the Lord of All and to hear Him say, "You wicked and slothful servant! I gave you a talent, but you have wrapped it in a napkin." God forbid that I should diminish one grain of your diligence in your secular avocations, but, from the very zeal you throw into these, I charge you, if you are reasonable men, see to it that you destroy not your own souls! Be not like Ahithophel who set his house in order and hanged himself! Set not your master's concerns in order and then destroy your own souls—for how shall you escape if you neglect the great salvation?

Look now to another picture—THE PRUDENT MERCHANT. I must briefly sketch him. He knows the ways of trade, studies the state of the market, is quick to perceive the opportunity of gain, has been cautious in his speculations, has secured what he has obtained and is now in possession of a competency, or on the road to it! He prides himself in a quiet way, upon the prudence with which he conducts all his worldly transactions. And, my dear Friend, I am sure I am glad to see you prudent in business, for much misery would be caused to others as well as to yourself by recklessness and folly. But I want to ask you, if you are thoughtless about religion, how it is that you can be so inconsistent? Do you study how to buy, and buy well, but will you never buy the Truth of God? Do you put all that you get into a safe bank, but will you never lay up treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts? You are wary of your speculations, but will you play so deep a hazard as to jeopardize your soul? You have been for years accustomed to rise up early, sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness—will you never rise early to seek the Lord? Will you never prevent the night watches to find a Savior? Is the body everything? Is gold your god? Why, you are a man of intelligence and reading and you know that there are higher considerations than those of business and the state of trade! You do not believe yourself to be of the same order of beings as the brute that perishes—you expect to live in another state! You have a Book which tells you what that life will be and how it may be shaped for joy—or left to be drifted into endless sorrow.

Am I a fanatic, my dear Sir, if I respectfully put my hand on yours and say, "I beseech you, think not all of the less, and nothing of the greater, lest haply, when you come to die, the same may be said of you as of a rich man of old who had been as cautious and as careful as you—'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall these things be which you have provided?' I charge you, if you are prudent, prove it by being prudent about the weightiest of all concerns. If you are not, after all, a mere bragger as to prudence, a mere child enraptured with silly toys, then show your wisdom by following the wisest course." I have heard of one, the stewardess of an American vessel, who, when the ship was sinking, saw heaps of gold coin scattered upon the cabin floor by those who had thrown it there in the confusion of their escape. She gathered up large quantities of it, wrapped it round her waist, and leaped into the water! She sank like a millstone, as though she had studiously prepared herself for destruction! I fear that many of you traders are

diligently collecting guarantees for your surer ruin, planning to bury yourselves beneath your glittering hoards. Be wise in time. My voice, no, my *heart* pleads with you, for your soul's sake and for Christ's sake, be not like Ahithophel who set his house in order, and hanged himself! Take sure bond for enduring happiness! Invest in indisputable securities! Have done with infinite risks and be assured of life everlasting!

A third photograph shall now be exhibited. This will describe a smaller, but a very valuable class of men—and if they were blessed of God, how glad would I be! THE DILIGENT STUDENT. He seeks out the best of books to assist him in the pursuit of his branch of knowledge. He burns the midnight oil. He is not afraid of toil. He cares not for throbbing brain and weary eyes, but he presses on—he trains his memory, he schools his judgment and all with the hope that he may be numbered with the learned. The examinations of his university are to him the most important periods in the calendar—his degree is the prize of his high calling. Knowledge is sweet and the honor of being associated with the learned is coveted. My young Friend, I would not for a moment abate your zeal, but I would beg space for one consideration worthy of immediate attention. Ought the best of sciences to be left to the last? Should self-knowledge and acquaintance with God be treated as secondary importance? Should not the Word of God be the chief volume in the wise man's library? Should you not burn the midnight oil to peruse the Infallible page written by the Divine finger? With all your getting, should you not get the understanding which comes from above and the knowledge which is the gift of God, and which will introduce you, if not among the learned, yet among the gracious? If not into the academy of savants, yet into the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven? Should there not be with you the wish to train your complete manhood and to educate yourself to the fullness of the stature of what a man should be? Should not the noblest part have the chief care? I speak to a wise man! I would have him be truly wise. I would not have him set his study in order and tutor himself—and then forget the eternal life and the destiny that awaits him. O Student, seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and then shall your temple of wisdom be built upon a Rock!

I will take another character, a character which is very common in great cities—I am not sure but what it is common enough—THE REFORMING POLITICIAN. I value our politicians highly, but we scarcely need to be overstocked with those who brawl in public houses and discussion rooms while their families are starving at home! Some men who spend a great deal of time in considering politics, are hardly benefiting the commonwealth to the extent they imagine. I will suppose I am addressing a man who feels the home and foreign affairs of the nation to be his particular department. Well, my respected Friend, I trust you occupy a useful place in the general economy, but I need to ask you one or two questions well worthy of a Reformer's or a Conservative's consideration. You have been looking up abuses—have you no abuses in your own life which need correcting? There is no doubt about the Reform

Bill having been needed, but do you not think a Reform Bill is needed by some of us at home—in reference to our own characters and especially in reference to our relation towards our God and our Savior? I think only he who is ignorant of himself will deny that. And would it not be a fine thing to begin at home and let the politics of our house and our heart be set quite right, and that immediately? You have in your brain a complete scheme for paying off the National Debt, elevating the nation, remodeling the navy, improving the army, managing the Colonies, delivering France and establishing the best form of government in Europe! I am afraid your schemes may not be carried out as soon as you desire, but may I not suggest to you that your own heart needs renewing by the Spirit of God, your many sins need removing by the Atonement of Jesus and your whole life requires a deep and radical change? And this is a practical measure which no aristocracy will oppose, which no vested interests will defeat and which need not be delayed for another election or a new Premier!

I daresay you have faced much opposition and expect to face much more in agitating the important question which you have taken up, but ah, my Friend, will you not sometimes agitate questions with your conscience? Will you not discuss with your inner nature the great Truths which God has revealed? Would it not be worth your while, at last, to spend some time in your private council chamber with yourself thinking of the now, and of the past, and of the to come—considering God, Christ, Heaven, Hell and yourself as connected with all these? I press it on you—it seems to me to be the greatest of all inconsistencies that a man should think himself able to guide a nation and yet should lose his own soul! That he should have schemes by which to turn this world into a Paradise and yet lose Paradise for himself! That he should declaim violently against war and all sorts of evils and yet, himself, should be at war with God! Himself a slave to sin! Shall he talk of freedom while he is manacled by his lusts and appetites? Shall he be enslaved by drink and yet be the champion of liberty? He that teaches freedom should himself be free! It is ill to see a man contending for others and a captive himself! To arrange the nation's affairs and to destroy yourself is as foolish as Ahithophel who put his household in order, and hanged himself!

We will pass to another character—and how much of what I am now to utter may concern myself I pray God to teach me—THE ZEALOUS PREACHER. The character is no imaginary one. It is not suggested by bitterness, or colored by fanaticism—there have been such and will be such to the end—men who study the Scriptures, are masters of theology, versed in doctrine, conversant with law—men who teach the lessons they have gathered and teach them eloquently and forcibly, warning their hearers of their sins, pointing out their danger—and pleading with them to lay hold on Christ and life eternal. And yet—for all this, they are themselves unconverted! They preach what they never felt, they teach what they never knew by experience. Brother ministers, I allude not to you any more than to myself, but of all men that live we are most called upon to watch lest our very office should help us to be hypocrites—lest our position as teachers should bring upon us a double curse! Do not let us seek the salvation of others and lose our own souls! To preach Christ

and not to have Him—to tell of the Fountain, and not to be washed in it—to speak of Hell, and warn men to escape it, and yet go there ourselves—God grant it may never be so with any of us!

But, mark you, the point of this warning comes to many here who are not altogether ministers. You are not preachers, but you are Sunday school teachers, tract-distributors, Bible women, or city missionaries. Then hear you the same warning! Will you go round with those tracts from house to house and yet have no religion in your own houses? O miserable souls! Who has required it at your hands to teach others of God when you are not reconciled to God yourselves? What can you teach those children in the Sunday school? I say, what can you teach those children, when you yourselves are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity? May not the very words you spoke to your classes today, rise up against you in the Day of Judgment and condemn you? Do not be content to have it so. Do not point out the right way to others, yet run in another road yourself! Do not set others in order and slay yourselves!

I have another picture to look upon—it represents A CAREFUL PARENT. Many who may not have been included under other descriptions will be mentioned here. You love your children well and wisely. As far as this world is concerned, you are careful and prudent parents. You were very watchful over them in their childhood, you were afraid that those infant sicknesses would take them to the grave. How glad you were, dear mother, when once again you could lift the little one from the bed and press it to your bosom, and thank God that it was recovering its health and strength! You have denied yourself a great deal for your children. When you were out of work and struggling with poverty, you did not so much grieve for yourselves as for them—it was so hard to see your children needing bread. You have been so pleased to clothe them, so glad to notice their opening intellect and you have, many of you, selected with great care places where they will receive a good education. And if you thought that any bad influence would come across their path, you would be on your guard at once. You wish your children to grow up patterns of virtue and good citizens—and you are right in all this. I wish that all felt as you do about their families and that none were allowed to run loose in the streets, which are the devil's school.

Now, as you have been so very careful about your children, may I ask you—ought not your own soul to have some thought bestowed on it, some anxiety exercised about it? It is a child, too, to be educated for the skies, to be nurtured for the Father's House above. Look in the baby's face and think of the care you give to it—and then turn your eyes inwardly upon your soul and ask, "What care have I given to you, my Soul? I have left you unwashed, unclothed, unhoused. No blood of Christ has fallen on you, my Soul. No righteousness of Christ has wrapped you. For you, my Soul, my poor, poor Soul, there is no Heaven when you must leave this body. For you there is no hope but a fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation! My Soul, forgive me that I have treated you so ill. I will now think of you and bow my knee and ask the Lord to be gracious to you." I wish I could call upon you personally and press

this matter upon you. Think that I am doing so! When you reach home, think that I am following you there and saying to you, "If you care for your children, care for your soul." Look at the boys and girls sleeping in their cots, tonight, and if you are unconverted, say to yourself, "There they lie, the dear ones, they are little sermons to me. I will remember what the preacher said when I look at them. My God, my Father, I will turn to You—do turn me, and I shall be turned."

The last of my crayon sketches is one which may concern many. It is that of THE OUTWARD RELIGIONIST who yet is regardless of his own soul. It is the oddest and strangest of all that there should be such people. I have met with Protestants, flaming Protestants, I might add, raving Protestants who, nevertheless, know no more about Protestantism than about the genealogy of Greek gods! And were they questioned as to what it is that was protested against by the Reformers, they would guess wide of the mark. Yet are they very concerned that our glorious constitution in Church and State should be "thoroughly Protestant"—though I cannot for the life of me see what difference it would make to them! If they have no faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, what matters it to them how a man is justified? There are others who are "Dissenters to the backbone," but yet sinners to their marrow! To ungodly men I say solemnly, What matters it what you are in these matters? In all probability, the side which has the honor of your patronage is a loser by it! If you are leading bad lives, I am very sorry that you are Dissenters, for you injure a good cause. What fools you must be, to be so earnest about religions in which you have no concern!

Many, again, are very orthodox, even to being strait-laced and yet are unbelievers. If the preacher does not come up to their weight and measure, they denounce him at once and have no word bad enough for him. But now, my Friend, though I cannot say that I am altogether sorry that you think about doctrines and churches, let me ask you—Is it wise that you should set up for a judge upon a matter in which you have no share? You are vociferous for setting the church in order, but you are destroying your own soul! If these things belonged to you, I could understand your zeal about them. But since you have nothing to do with them, (and you have not if you have no faith), why do you look after other people and let your own salvation go by default? It may be a very important thing to somebody how the Duke of Devonshire may lay out his estate at Chatsworth, but I am sure it is not important to me, for I am in no degree a part proprietor with his grace. So it may be very important to some people how such-and-such a doctrine is taught—but why should you be so zealous about it when you are in no degree a part proprietor in it unless you have believed in Jesus Christ?

What startles me with some of you is that you will cheerfully contribute for the support of a Gospel in which you have never believed! There are those of you here to whom I am thankful for help in Christ's service. You put your hand into your pocket and are "generous to the Lord's cause." But how is it that you do this and yet refuse to give Jesus your heart? I know you do not think you are purchasing His favor by your money—you know better than that—but why do you do it? Are you like those builders who helped Noah to build the ark and then were

drowned? Do you help to build a lifeboat—and being yourself shipwrecked, do you refuse the assistance of the lifeboat? You are strangely inconsistent! You keep God's Sabbaths, and yet you will not enter into His rest! You sing Christ's praises and yet you will not trust Him. You bow your heads in prayer and yet you do not pray! You are anxious, too, sometimes, and yet that which would end all your anxiety, namely, submission to the Gospel of Christ, you will not yield! Why is this? Why this strange behavior? Will you bless others and curse yourselves?

I speak to the whole of you who as yet have not believed in Jesus and I ask—What is it with which you are destroying your souls? Every unbeliever is an eternal suicide—he is destroying his soul's hopes. What is your motive? Perhaps some of you are indulging a pleasurable sin which you cannot give up. I entreat you, cast it from you! Though it is dear as the right eye, pluck it out! Or useful as the right arm, cut it off and cast it from you! Suffer no temporary pleasures to lead you into eternal destruction! Escape for your life! Sweet sin will bring bitter death—may God give you Grace to cast it away!

Or is it some deadly error with which you are destroying your soul? Have you a notion that it is a small thing to die unsaved? Do you imagine that, by-and-by, it will all be over and you can bear the temporary punishment? Dream not so! Not thus speaks the Infallible Word of God, though men would thus buoy up your spirits and make your forehead brazen against the Most High! It is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! God grant that you may not run that risk and meet that fate!

Or perhaps some self-righteous trust holds you back from Christ. You can destroy yourself with that as well as with sin. To trust to ourselves is deadly—only to trust to Jesus is safe. I will explain that to you and have done. Inasmuch as we had sinned against God, God must punish us—it is necessary that sin should be punished, or there could be no moral government. Now, in order to meet that case, to have mercy upon men in conformity with justice, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world and became Man and, as Man, He took upon Himself the sins of all His people and was punished for them. And whoever trusts Jesus is one of those for whom Jesus bore the smart, for whom He paid the debt. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you trust your soul with the Christ of Nazareth, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you! Go in peace—your soul is saved! But if you put away from you the Christ who says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," you may be very wise and you may arrange your business very cleverly, but, for all that, you are no wiser than the great fool of my text who set his house in order, and hanged himself! God teach both hearers and readers to be wise before it is too late! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 15:12-37.

Verse 12. *And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.* Absalom had, by graft, insinuated himself into the hearts of the children of Israel and led a rebellion against his father David, that he might obtain the crown for himself.

13, 14. *And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee, for we shall not else escape from Absalom; make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.* It must have been a sore peril which compelled so brave a man as David to say to his servants, "Arise, and let us flee."

15. *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king shall appoint.* What a loyal spirit they displayed in the time of trial! Oh, that such loyalty could always be found in all the servants of King Jesus! But, alas, many of His servants pick and choose as to which of His commands they will obey! Some of them will not understand the plain letter of Scripture and others of them know their duty, yet they do it not. There is reason to question whether we are the servants of Christ if we have not the spirit of obedience to Him. Brothers and Sisters, let us search and look in the book of the King's ordinances and see whether we are walking in all of them blamelessly. If we can say that we are, it is well. But I am afraid that there are some of His commandments which we would rather not understand—or if we do understand them, we are not in a hurry to obey them. How easy it is to make excuses for not doing what we have no wish to do! Blessed are those Christians who can say, "Behold, Your servants are ready to do whatever my Lord the King shall appoint"

16-18. *And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women which were concubines, to keep the house. And the king went forth and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.* The king's bodyguard of personal friends who had seen long service with him in the contest with Saul—these kept close to him.

19, 20. *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, why go you also with us? Return to your place, and abide with the king: for you are a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us? Seeing I go where I may, return you, and take back your brethren: mercy and truth be with you.* This was the manifestation of a generous spirit on the part of David and therein he was like the Son of David, who thought more of the safety of His disciples than He did of any way of escape for Himself. Let the same mind be in us which was also in David, and in Christ Jesus, great David's greater Son! And let us look, not only on our own things, but also on the things of others.

21. *And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be,*

whether in death or life, even there also will your servant be. He was a newcomer, but he was a fine recruit—and when our young converts who have lately joined the Church, have this spirit of loyalty in them, they will make mighty men of valor in the Lord's army! Whether Christ's cause be held in honor or in contempt, we will cast in our lot with Him! Whether He is reigning on the earth or His name is cast out as evil, we will share His fortunes. To whom should we go but to Him? And where could we find a better Master than this gracious King under whose banner we have enlisted?

22-26. *And David said to Ittai, go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness. And lo, Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the Ark of the Covenant of God: and they set down the Ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation; but if He thus says, I have no delight in you; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seems good unto Him.* David would run no risks with this sacred treasure—and though it would have been a great comfort to him to have had the Ark of the Covenant with him, yet he cared too much for it to think only of his own comfort. How careful ought we to be of the Truth of God and of the things of God—of which this Ark was but a type! Lord, let us run what risks we may, but we would not expose Your Truth, or Your good cause to any risk.

"Let Him do to me as seems good unto Him." What a grand spirit there was in David even in his exile! There was a sweet spirit of song in him before his great fall, but that fall broke his voice and he sang more hoarsely ever afterwards. Yet what depth, what volume, what melody and harmony are here—"deep calls unto deep." What submission and subjection to the Divine will and, withal, what a holy confidence! Let the Lord do as He wills—David feels himself to be less than nothing and submits himself absolutely to the Divine Purpose. It is not easy to get to that way, but we must be brought to it. If we are the Lord's servants, we must lie passively in His hands and know no will but His. Yet deep waters will have to be passed through before we reach this blessed experience.

27-30. *The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Are not you a seer? Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there comes word from you to certify me. Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the Ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there. And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.* David probably wept partly because of his troubles, but also because of his sin which the thought of his troubles

doubtless brought to his mind—and especially that sin which he has so deeply deplored in the seven penitential Psalms—and most of all in the 51st Psalm. He wore no royal robe on this pilgrimage of sorrow! And "he went barefoot" up the slopes of Olivet.

31. *And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray You, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.* Ahithophel was David's choicest friend, companion and counselor, yet he had failed him in his time of need. David could use the weapon of all-prayer when he could use no other—and this is like the flaming sword at Eden's gate which turned every way. It will slay our foes if they come from Hell. It will drive away Satanic suggestions. It will overcome our adversaries if they come from earth. It will sanctify our afflictions even if they come from Heaven. To know how to pray is to know how to conquer! David checkmated Ahithophel when he said, "O Lord, I pray You, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

32. *And it came to pass that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth upon his head.* Here was an immediate answer to David's prayer, for the very man who alone could deal effectually with Ahithophel, comes to the king!

33-37. *Unto whom David said, If you pass on with me, then you shall be a burden unto me: but if you return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be your servant: then may you for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And have you not there with you Zadok and Abiathar the priests? Therefore it shall be that what thing soever you shall hear out of the king's house, you shall tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send unto me everything that you can hear. So Hushai, David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.*

You know the rest of the history, how Absalom took the advice of Hushai and Ahithophel was defeated. God does not always answer prayer quite so rapidly as He did in this case, yet, when His people are in sore straits, they often have prompt replies to their petitions, to encourage their faith and to keep their hope alive in the time of trial!

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

ENQUIRING OF GOD
NO. 2996

A SERMON
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"And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?"
2 Samuel 2:1.

You perceive, dear Friends, that, although David knew that he was anointed to be king over Israel, yet he would not take a step towards his rightful position without first asking guidance from God and, moreover, he was not content with a general direction, but wanted to have a particular and special indication as to where he was to go. It was not enough for God to say to him, "Go up"—he wants to know precisely to which town of Judah he shall go!

Nor, mark you, was this an exception to David's usual habit. From his youth up, he had been accustomed to ask the Lord's direction in all cases of difficulty. When he fled from Saul and went to Nod, to Abimelech the priest, Doeg told Saul that Abimelech *enquired of the Lord* for David. It was not enough for David that he had Goliath's sword, he must also have guidance from God. When he was in the town of Keilah, which he had rescued from the Philistines, after he had twice enquired of the Lord whether he should do so, he asked whether the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul and, as a result of the oracular response which he obtained from God, he was able to make good his escape. Afterwards, when David had become king over Israel in Hebron, before he fought with the Philistines, he enquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up to the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" The Lord's answer was favorable and David gained a great victory. But when the Philistines came up again, David did not go out to fight with them until he had once more enquired of the Lord—and then it was that God gave him that memorable answer, "And let it be when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself; for then shall the Lord go out before you, to smite the hosts of the Philistines." David was a man who always needed to see God's finger pointing out the right road, to hear God's voice, saying, "This is the way, walk you in it." And he never seemed to be satisfied unless he could hear the sound of his Master's feet close behind him, or see a clear indication that his Master was just in front of him, or walking by his side!

I hold up David to you as a model for your imitation in this respect, although I am going to leave David and talk more generally of the duty of enquiring of God as to what we shall do when we are in any difficulty

and, indeed, of enquiring of Him at all times, whether we are in difficulty or not!

I. My first remark is that TO ENQUIRE OF THE LORD AND TO SEEK GUIDANCE AT HIS HANDS IS THE DUTY OF ALL CHRISTIANS.

This may be inferred from God's relationship to them. God is their Father and they are His children—minors who have not yet come of age. When a son is of age, it is respectful and often very prudent for him to still consult his experienced sire, but the child in his minority should venture upon nothing of importance without first going to tell his father. And if that child is beset by many false friends—by those who would mislead and ruin him—it will be his privilege as well as his duty to be often running to his parent and saying, "Father, what shall I do in this matter? What is true and what is not? Show me what you would have me do." If God is our Father, we are His children. And if we do not consult Him, surely we are but sorry children. We lose a great blessing and incur no small guilt if, professing to be the sons and daughters of our Father who is in Heaven, we never ask Him to direct our way!

We also talk of God as our Shepherd. And an important part of a shepherd's duty is that of guiding his flock. What would you think if, in the East, where the shepherd leads the way, the sheep should all think themselves wise enough to find the road alone? Why, the flocks would soon be broken up and the pastoral relationship would become mere farce! If God is your Shepherd, follow Him. Often say to Him, "Show me the footsteps of the flock." Desire always to hear the Shepherd's voice, for this is the mark of God's sheep! "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." How can you call God your Shepherd if you do not follow Him and never consult Him?

Do you not know also, dearly Beloved, that Christ calls us His spouse? But what sort of spouse would she be who never entrusted any of her secrets to her husband and who asked no counsel of him even when she came into dire distress? There may be some women who are wiser than their husbands and who can give advice rather than require to ask it, but it is not so in this case, for never did any other husband have so weak and foolish a spouse as Jesus Christ has! In fact, her only wisdom is to confess her folly and to throw herself into her Husband's arms, and cry—

"Lead me all my journey through!"

What can be our reason for calling God our Lord if we refuse to consult Him? Do not even the heathen always conclude that a god is to be consulted? Though their lying oracles have deluded them, yet have they always been right in the idea that the very thought of godhead implied guidance! And shall we turn away from Jehovah who really can guide us? While the heathen look to stocks of wood and stone, shall we confide in human oracles and neglect to consult God who knows all things?

I find *an argument for this Truth of God in the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.* What is our blessed Lord to us? He is a Prophet. But how can He be a Prophet to us if we never go to Him? What does the sacred mantle that He wears mean if He is never consulted? Is not His office a mere

name, an empty title, an office which has no value, if we call Him Prophet and yet never seek His face, nor say to Him, "What is the way that I am to take? Be pleased to direct me in it." He is a Priest—but is it not part of a priest's duty to use the Urim and the Thummim upon His breastplate and to show to those who go to Him what is the proper path for them to take? But how can I call Christ my Priest if I never consult Him? He is neither Prophet nor Priest to me if I choose my own way or cut out my own path for myself.

In one place, at least, Christ is called a Counselor—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." But how is He your Counselor if you never consult Him? I cannot think that Christ takes upon Himself empty names and titles! I read in a Preface to our Bible, "James, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland." There is an empty title, for he was never king of France, though he was called so. But Christ has no empty titles! He is called King because He reigns! And He is called Counselor because He gives advice to His people and pleads their cause! If you would not, therefore, make out Christ's offices to be worthless, and His glorious titles to be but empty words, go and consult Him, for thus you shall make His heart glad and magnify His name and prove your love to Him!

But, dear Friends, there is an argument which comes closer home than this. *Our own character should teach us the duty of enquiring of the Lord.* If you know yourself rightly, you know that you are very far from being wise. If I understand myself rightly, I was born like the wild ass colts—with strong passions and much willfulness, but with no knowledge, or experience—and needing much guidance for the whole of life. What is the experience of the most experienced of men worth? I can conceive that in the eyes of God, the greatest wisdom of Solomon was the greatest folly, and that the experience of Job was but as the knowledge of a day! One of Job's friends said, "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." And when we think we know the most, we generally know the least.

You have probably noticed that good men usually fail just where they think they are strongest, yes, and where they really *are* strongest! Noah was a preacher of righteousness, yet did he fail in righteousness when his sons saw him in a state of drunkenness. Moses was exceedingly meek, yet did he lose his temper and say, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we fetch you water out of this Rock?" Look, too, at Job, one who excelled in patience, yet he failed in patience. And you and I will find that the devil will carry our hearts by storm, not where we think the walls are weak, or the fortress is dismantled, but just where the flag waves defiantly over the strongest and loftiest part of our bastion, for Satan delights to pull down our lofty things of which we are so proud—just as God loves to pull down the lofty things of sin! See to it then, Christian, since you are so weak and since you cannot see a day, nor a minute before you, that you often enquire of your God! I think, too, your past

indiscretions and the distresses into which your willfulness has driven you might teach you henceforth to wait only upon God.

I shall give only one other argument, here, because I need not prove what all admit, but what so few practice. *The Christian should enquire of his God for his own avowed objective in life*. We profess, though we do not carry it out as we ought, that we are living for God. Is there a man living who could truly say, with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ"? I believe there are hundreds and thousands of such men, but I do not believe that anything like one-half of the professing Christians of today know what that test really means. "For to me to live is Christ." If they truthfully wrote their own commentaries upon it, many of them would say, "We cannot say that. We never could be so enthusiastic or so fanatical as to say that." And they would almost as soon give up their profession of Christianity as attempt to carry out that text as it ought to be carried out! Yet this is what we profess—and if we profess to live for God's Glory and for the extension of Christ's Kingdom, how can we do it except in God's strength? And how will God give us His strength without also giving us His wisdom with which to use it? A man clothed with Divine energy, unaccompanied by Divine wisdom, would be one of the most dangerous persons in the whole world! A man who can speak so as to move the multitude and to stir the souls of men, is a very dangerous person unless piety fills his heart and the Grace of God controls his tongue. Suppose that man to have Divine power given to Him, as Judas had in a certain sense, but without the wisdom of God to guide him? We might as well have a devil on earth as have such a man as that! No, if we could succeed in attaining our avowed objective in life—the glorifying of God—we must enquire of Him!

II. Now I come to a second remark which is this. IF CHRISTIANS ASK GOD TO GUIDE THEM IN EVERYTHING THEY DO, THEY OUGHT TO SEE TO IT THAT THEY NEVER DO ANYTHING ABOUT WHICH THEY CANNOT ASK GOD'S GUIDANCE.

This Truth of God comes close to home to some people. For instance, *unlawful pleasures are manifestly forbidden to the Christian*. Those which the worldling may indulge in without any very great injury to himself are forbidden to the true Christian because he cannot enquire of the Lord about them. I have heard of people who say that they can go to the theater and yet are Christians. Well now, I would like somebody to write a form of prayer to be used by Christians in theatres, something to this effect—"O Lord, lead me not into temptation, but be pleased to bless the play tonight to my soul's welfare. Grant that if it is Your will that I should die here, I may enter into eternal life having gone from the pleasures of this life to the pleasures that are to be hereafter!" If I were to write such a prayer as that, you would say, "Oh, that is shocking! It is shocking for anybody even to *think* of praying there!" Ah, it *is* shocking—not shocking to think of praying, but shocking to go where you *dare not pray*! Should a Christian ever be anywhere where he would be ashamed to die? I heard a lady once say that religion ought to be confined to places of worship and that it ought not to be talked about anywhere else. So I suggested to her

that we ought to have our places of worship made larger, for, of course, people would want religion when they came to die—so they had better die where religion would be in its proper place!

A Christian knows that he should not go to such places of amusement as worldlings frequent—they may go without any very great mischief, but he may not. He could not feed on the fare that is provided there, for it is not to his taste and, moreover, he would not go there because he could not expect to have communion with Christ there. And he could not ask God's blessing upon his going there. There are many amusements in the world—and you can always tell which are right and which are wrong by this text. You may do anything upon which you can ask God's blessing—but if you cannot ask God's blessing upon it, have nothing to do with it! If there are any things about which you have any doubt, leave them alone! Another man who has no doubt about the matter, may do without sin what you must not do if you have any doubt about it. If you feel, in your conscience, that you can expect the Lord's blessing and maintain communion with Christ in what you do, then you may do it. But if not, it is at your peril that you will do it.

Then there are *unlawful avocations in which Christians must not be engaged*. I could not ask the Lord's blessing if I were selling gin and other liquors all day long. I do not know how some men may feel, but if I had pocketed the fools' pence, I could not pray, "Lord, be pleased to guide me where I shall open the next devil's-house and set traps to catch poor drinking men." I should expect, if I went to ask God's guidance about that matter, that I should receive a very sharp rebuke from Him for having the impudence to ask Him about any such thing! There are also other trades and employments which you must not touch, as you know that they are so beset with evil customs that you cannot ask the Lord's blessing upon them. I am sure that man up in the gallery did not ask the Lord to bless him when he was taking his shutters down this morning—and as he could not ask God's blessing upon it, he ought not to have done it! There are some of you here who still have your shops open. Your daughter hates the business, but she is chained to the counter while you are here. How can you come to the House of God and yet violate the Day of God? Have you any conscience or have you drugged it to sleep? If you should have your house full of silver and gold gained by such trading as that, it will be a curse to you and a curse to your children—and to your children's children! It is a curse to have that which has not God's blessing upon it—and ill-gotten gains never can have it. Old Hard-Fists cannot ask God's blessing upon his action when he takes his brother by the throat, and says, "Pay me what you owe, even to the uttermost farthing." And the man who grinds down the poor needlewomen who work for him cannot ask God's blessing—neither can the man who pays his employees barely enough to get a crust of bread, yet spreads out his money and says, "Thank God that He has given me wealth!" No, the curse of the Almighty rests upon them and God will one day avenge the

blood of those whom they have cruelly put to death that they might increase their ill-gotten gains!

I pray you, members of this Church, and members of Christ's body everywhere, touch nothing upon which you cannot ask God's blessing! The moment you perceive that God cannot be consulted about a thing, turn your back upon it and say, "Let those who mean to damn their souls do the devil's work! But a Christian must not and will not touch it." I am aware that in my saying these things, I may strike some persons who are engaged in trades which they conduct lawfully. My censure is not intended for those persons who, though in a trade which I might not choose, yet do their best to conduct it honorably. Still, I would make the censure as sweeping as it ought to be, for there are far too many men merely for gain following that which they know is damnable—and must in the end ruin their own souls!

I think this rule may help guide you through life—Do nothing upon which you cannot ask God's blessing. Young woman, if you can ask the Lord's blessing upon your contemplated marriage, you may enter upon it. Young man, if you can ask the Lord's blessing upon the taking of that new shop, you may do it. You who already have plenty of business and who now give some of your time to God's cause, but who know that if you take that next shop, you cannot continue to do so, ought not to give up the service of God's House in order to increase your worldly business. I am not always sorry when men do not get on in business as fast as they wish, for I remember the case of good Jehoshaphat who "made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not, for they were broken at Eziongeber." And a great mercy that they were, for if they had gone and had brought the gold to the king, I do not know what Jehoshaphat might have done with it! Was it not Mr. Cecil, who, on hearing that one of his friends had come in for a great deal of money, went to sympathize with him and to pray for him, "under the trying circumstances"? Doubtless, the more a man has, the more is he tempted not to use it rightly. And while it is, in some senses, a high privilege to have wealth, yet it involves such solemn responsibilities that a man should never have it without enquiring of God how he can rightly use it.

III. Now, thirdly, THIS DIVINE GUIDANCE IS AS NECESSARY, NOW, AS IT EVER WAS, AND IT IS NECESSARY IN ALL THINGS.

Some people say, "Yes, we believe that the Lord's guidance would be a great blessing to us, and that it is our duty to seek it. But how can we get it? There is no priest to whom we can go for direction and we cannot go to our minister and say, 'What shall we do?' He is not able to give us the Infallible answer we need." Your minister does not wish to do it, for he thinks he is better employed in preaching the Gospel to you and giving you Infallible directions concerning your immortal souls! I certainly do not approve of the practice by which some people say they can tell the Lord's will by just opening the Bible and noticing the first text which catches their eye. I know that Mr. Wesley frequently practiced this plan, but, like some other good men, he had his faults and I know that others have imitated him. But I should think myself no more

justified in seeking guidance in that way than I should in shuffling a pack of cards! I could no more expect to be guided by a text of Scripture, picked out in that haphazard style, than by a Norwood Gypsy. No, no! We are above all that kind of thing!

How, then, does God guide His people? Well, there are several ways which are very clear, and the first is, *God guides them by His Word*. I will suppose there is a young woman here who is contemplating marriage and she wants to know whether it would be right. She turns to her Bible and she finds this text—"Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The young man in question is an unbeliever, so she does not need to turn to any other passage of Scripture, for this one is decisive. If she really wants to know God's will, here it is—and she could not have it more clearly even if God were to flash it in lightning across the sky, or roll it out in tones of thunder! This is the way plainly marked out for her and I would that she and all other young Christians—before they ruin their prospects, before they bring upon themselves lifelong misery—would hear the voice of God saying to them, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The case is as plain as possible. Nobody need be consulted. You need not go to friends. You need not come to me and ask, "What ought I do?" If you are disobedient and are afterwards made miserable, it is nothing more than you ought to expect. I single that case out because it happens to be one that often comes up, especially in a large congregation like the present, with so many in it who are young. And here, I say, God's Word becomes a faithful and unerring guide!

I have heard of a poor Christian man who was in great difficulty. One day, when his wife and children were almost starving, and were shivering with cold, and he had nothing with which to make a fire, the devil said to him, "Your rich neighbor has a good stack of wood and you may go and take some of it, for the Bible says that, "all things are yours.'" He was going to take it, but, all of a sudden, that old command came into his mind, "You shall not steal." That was quite enough for him—he did not need anything else. He turned back at once, for God's Word was to him a sufficient guide.

The next guidance is *our own spiritual profit and God's Glory*. You need to know whether you shall move to such-and-such a town. Well, is there a good Evangelical minister there? Can you hear the Word to profit in that town? If not, unless there are some very strong reasons why you should go there, you ought to remain where your soul can be best profited. A man would often be better off with less earnings where he could hear a faithful minister than with more money in a place where the Gospel is not preached! Ask the question, too, "Can I serve God there?" If you cannot, what right have you to go there? If you have to give up a sphere of usefulness and there is no other sphere open to you, then pause. You will always know which way to go if you have this compass in your hand, for it will always point you to the right pole. And if you use it,

you will always be guided to the paths of righteousness—Can I serve God there? Will my soul be in a more healthy state if I go there?

Then another way of guidance is *by the leadings of Divine Providence*. This is nothing as clear as the rules I have already given you, because when you want to do a thing, you can always find a Providence which seems to be in favor of it. It is remarkable how many ministers leave salaries of £200 a year in places where they might still have been comfortable and useful, to go where they would get £250 a year—they have said it was Providence—but it is equally remarkable how very few of them ever move from £250 to £200. I have but little faith in "Providence" of this sort! I believe in Divine Providence, but I do not always believe in what people speak of as Providence. They say, "There is such-and-such a thing. I know it is not quite right, but I would like to have it. And then, you see, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so, and—it looks quite like Providence." Nonsense! God's Providence never permits you to do wrong! But when you wish to act for the Glory of God, a path cleared before you and an open door will help you to feel that you are being Infallibly led by the Providence and the Word of God—and by His Spirit in your heart.

Beside this, I think that *young people would do well to seek advice from experienced and consistent Christian friends*. By stating their difficulty, it may be that God's servant will be helped to tell them just what they need and, often, you may receive through the lips of a preacher who knows nothing of your case, guidance from God. Many and many a time have I seen this to be the case! God has told the preacher what to say about a certain person's case although he did not even know who the person was to whom he was unconsciously speaking—and who was rightly guided by what the preacher was moved to say.

Sometime, too, but rarely, *God guides us by very vivid impressions*. I have seen so much of people who have been impressed this way and that way, and the other way, that I do not believe in impressions except in certain cases. I was once in conversation with two friends, one of whom was guided by his judgment, while the other was swayed by impressions, and I could not help noting that the man who was guided by impressions was, as such people will always be, "unstable as water." If I am impressed in one way one day, I may be impressed in another way the next day, so impressions are unreliable guides. There was a young man who was impressed with the idea that he ought to preach for me one Lord's-Day. But as I was not impressed to let him do so, he lost out and probably will continue to lose out for some little time! He had no gifts of speech, but he thought his impression was quite sufficient. When I receive a similar impression, the Revelation will be a proper one and you will have the pleasure of listening to his voice, but certainly not before that!

Occasionally, impressions do guide a man right. A Quaker, one night, could not sleep and he had a very strong impression that he must get up and saddle and mount his horse. He did so and rode along the streets, his horse's hoofs noisily clattering in the silence of the night. He did not

know where he was to go, but there was a light in one house, and something seemed to say to him, "This is the house to which you are to go." He dismounted and knocked at the door. A man came down and asked why he was there at that time of night. "Perhaps, Friend," answered the Quaker, "you can tell me, for I do not know, but I have been moved to come here." "I can tell you, indeed," said the man, with much emotion, and he took him upstairs and showed him a short halter with which he was about to hang himself when the Quaker came to his door! Such strong impressions are not to be despised and I have no doubt that highly spiritual minds do become like the photographer's sensitive plate and receive impressions. What another man may be a fool for talking of, such men may truly speak of, for God does sometimes reveals His will in that way.

IV. And now, to close, let me say that WHEN WE HAVE RECEIVED COUNSEL FROM GOD ABOUT ANYTHING, LET US ACT ACCORDING TO IT.

If you go and ask God about anything, do not, as some people do when they consult their minister, make up your mind beforehand as to what you will do. But having consulted your God and learned what is His will, mind that you do it. If all the devils in Hell stand in your way, mind that you do it. If friends oppose and foes assail you, still do it. There may be a point on which I differ from you, but I shall do what I believe is right and shall not hesitate, whoever may oppose. When God moves us, we are not to be turned aside by any man's words, or by a thousand men's words. If once we have, "Thus says the Lord," we must and will go on over the mountains and through the seas if God so wills it.

I will finish with an instance of what I mean. There was a missionary, who is still living, who had given himself to God's cause and had gone out without purse or scrip, simply depending on the bounty of Heaven. He was called, in the Providence of God, to go in a vessel to one of the guano islands where a great number of ships were congregated to take away that valuable manure. He found very little opportunity of serving his Master for some time until a mutiny broke out on the island. The mariners rebelled. They fought with the men employed in moving the manure and the most fearful scenes ensued—the men being drunk from morning till night. The ship-masters did not know what to do, but at last they sent for one of Her Majesty's men-of-war. It came and when the captain had landed with the marines, he told the mutineers that unless they submitted at once, he would fire upon them. They appeared to be very humble and seemed to be subdued at once. The vessel could not stay long, for she was looking out for slavers on the African coast, and as soon as the ship was out of sight, the mutineers were as wild and ferocious as they were before.

There was one man there—no very extraordinary man in his own esteem—he sits behind me now. He was the missionary of whom I spoke. He felt in his heart that he had a call from God to speak to those men, so he begged the captain to send him on shore in a boat. But the captain

said he was not such a fool, for the missionary would be killed directly. He asked again, but received a similar refusal. He found another captain and persuaded him to plead his cause and, at last, after much talking, it was agreed that he should go, though the captain said, "You will surely not go and preach the Gospel to those devils—they ought to be hung, everyone of them." The missionary said that he felt that God had called him to do it and he would go. So he was rowed ashore and down came these fiends in human shape to meet him. He felt some little apprehension, but he was sure that he was doing the right thing. He had asked counsel of God and he knew that God would help him, so he pulled out of his pocket a Bethel flag.

The great, rough fellows came crowding round him, but, holding up the Bethel flag, he began talking to them as if he had been the coolest and most collected man in the world, though I expect his heart was beating fast all the time. He said, "My good fellows, they tell me that you are like devils, that you won't work, and that it is no use for me to come to talk to you. But I believe that some of you had pious mothers who used to teach you the Gospel. And I know that when you were in England, you were not what you are now. Besides, I have heard you sing your songs and I should like you to sing with me now." Then he gave out the hymn—

"O God of Bethel by whose hand
Your people still are fed
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Have all our fathers led."

After they had sung the hymn, he went on talking to them. And when some big fellows, a little way off, looked as though they were meditating mischief, he pointed to them and said, "If any of you attempt to disturb me, there are plenty of good fellows round me who will stop you, so you had better come and listen to what I have to say." The men came near and he preached to them with fervency and power—and his Master's blessing was upon him, for, the next day, all the men were at their work again—and many of them were ready to do as they had done in their better days! And what Her Majesty's ship, with so many guns, could not do, the poor preacher's word did, for it turned the lions into lambs!

Whenever any of you have anything to do which you know is right, do it! After you have enquired of God, do not stop to consult friends, but go and do it! Take your sling and your stone and, in God's name, sling the stone into the giant's forehead and, like David, come back victorious, for that shall be your last answer to those who would persuade you not to do it! Never ask God to guide you and then, when He says, "This is the way," stand still, and say, "That way is too hard, too stern, too difficult, I will not walk in it." Go forward, for, if Hell, itself, were before you, God would divide it even as he divided the Red Sea for His ancient people! Only have faith in God, for "all things are possible to him who believes." There is one short message that God gives for guidance to everyone of us and more especially to you who are not converted! It is this, "Seek you My face." This very moment, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for, "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of

salvation!" When you have taken God's advice concerning your poor soul's eternal welfare. When you have believed in Jesus to the salvation of your soul—then go to Him about your temporal concerns and about everything—and you will then be able to say, with the Psalmist, "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 63.

"A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah."

Shall we praise God in the garden and not praise him in the wilderness? No! We will sing a new song when we come into the desert, for, even if we are in a desert, that is no reason why there should be a desert in us, so let us praise God even in our wilderness experience!

Verse 1. *O God.* Two very solemn words. Never use them, I pray you, as hasty, thoughtless expressions. God's name must never be taken in vain. I fear that there are some who do this and are not rebuked for it. When we say, "O God," there ought to be something solemn to follow.

1. *You are my God.* The second word, "God," signifies, "my strong one, my mighty one, to whom I can bring all my weakness and all my care; for You are strong enough to take care of me even in the wilderness."

1. *Early will I seek You.* That is, "at once." "I will not delay, but immediately will I seek You. I will not so much seek to get out of the wilderness, or seek for comfort in the wilderness, as seek for everything in You."

1. *My soul thirsts for You.* This is a blessed experience. It is a sad thing to be without God in any degree, but it is a blessed thing when we cannot rest without Him.

1. *My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.* "My flesh"—that lowest part of me—even that has been awakened and quickened! "My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." "Where there is no water, no well, no cloud, no rain, I am longing for You, my God." "My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is"

2. *To see Your power and Your Glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* David remembers better times that he had enjoyed in the past and he longs to have them back. He wants again to know, and feel, and enjoy all he has ever known, and felt and enjoyed. And, blessed be God, He will grant us that gift!

3, 4. *Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live.* "Whether I live in a sterile wilderness or in a fertile land, I will bless You while I live."

4. *I will lift up my hands in Your name.* "I will pluck up my spirit. I will begin to pray. I will begin to work. I will look toward Heaven—'I will lift up my hands in Your name.'"

5. *My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* There is everything that is satisfactory in

God. If we do but enjoy His Presence, we cannot lack anything. Are we not put, as it were, into Heaven itself when we are brought near to God? Are we not willing to remain for a while on earth and to stay out of Heaven, if we may but have the Lord with us and constantly enjoy His company?

6. *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches*. When one is living near to God, he is not afraid of sleeplessness. He would be glad of the rest that sleep brings, but if he cannot sleep, he finds a sweeter rest in God! I remarked, one day, to one who lives very near to God, that it was a weary and sad thing to lie sleepless. And he said to me something that stuck by me. "I do not think so," he said, "for when I wake in the night, my Heavenly Father talks so sweetly to me that I do not want to go back to sleep. And when He does not want to speak to me, I speak to Him in prayer, and so the hours glide away most happily."

7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice*. "If I cannot look up and see the light of Your face, the very shade of Your wings shall make me glad, and I will sing like a nightingale in the dark."

8. *My soul follows hard after You.* The Hebrew is, "My soul is glued to You." "I am like a dog that keeps close to his master's heels and will not leave him."

8. *Your right hand upholds me*. We could not follow the Lord if His hand were not still underneath us to keep us going.

9, 10. *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 foxes*. The jackal is the creature meant here, for he haunts the battlefield and devours the slain. So it came to pass with many of David's foes. They fell in battle and the wild beasts devoured them.

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*. If they cannot be stopped by reason or by repentance, they shall be stopped with a shovelful of earth, for God will stop the mouths of all liars in one way or another.

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

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."
Matthew 4:1.

WHAT a terrible incident! Well may our hearts be moved with fear and our blood run cold as we read it! Our adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We are taught by our Lord Jesus to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." What we are taught to seek or shun in prayer we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very warily, therefore, should we endeavor to avoid temptation, seeking as to walk in the path of obedience that we may never be guilty of tempting the devil to tempt us! We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. The lion may cross our path, or come to our houses and doubtless he will, but we have nothing to do with hunting this lion. He that meets with him, even though he wins the day, will find it sharp work and a stern struggle! Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Savior, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples, "Pray that you enter not into temptation."

But let us do what we will, we shall be tempted! God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without temptation. The natural man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward—and the Christian is born to temptation just as certainly and necessarily. It is our duty to be always on our watch against Satan because we do not know when he will come. He is like a thief—he gives no intimation of his approach. Like the assassin, he will steal upon his victim. If Satan acted always above-board—if he were a bold and open adversary, we might deal with him—it is because he meets us unawares, and besets us in dark and miry places on the way, that we have need to pray against temptation and have need to hear the Savior's admonition, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

Still, wise Believers, those who have had experience of the ways of Satan, will have found that there is a method about his temptations—

that there are certain times and seasons when he will most probably attack the child of God. It often happens that a Christian is put on a double guard when he expects that he is in double danger. The danger may then be averted by his preparation to meet it. Prevention is better than cure—it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you—than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you do come off conqueror.

We have observed—you have all done so who know anything of the spiritual life—that the most likely times for Satan to attack a Christian are those he deems unlikely. In carnal security you are most insecure. In such an hour as you think not, the Prince of this world comes. Just when you would have said, speaking after the manner of men—"I am safe," then it is that you are in danger! When Mr. Carnal Security has said, "There is no need for us to be in perpetual alarm—evidently the Prince Emmanuel smiles upon us and the Holy Spirit dwells within us—we are the children of God, let us sit at the table and feast. Let us eat, drink and be merry"—it is at that very time that you might hear a sound as of One who says, "Arise, let us go hence, for this heart has become polluted. I will no longer shed abroad the conscious delights of My Presence in it." Beware, dear Friends, of the devil! Beware of him most when you think you have least need to beware of him!

For a key-note to our meditation tonight, I propose to take the word, "Then," as it stands in the forefront of our text. I think there will be found something of instruction here, especially to young Believers, as to the times when Satan will most probably beset them and they will, probably, be surprised to find that the very times when Satan will be likely to attack them, according to the judgment of experience and the examples of God's Word, are the times when they would have thought him least likely to do so! I want you to observe the time of our Savior's temptation—first, with regard *to the circumstances which preceded it* and then *the circumstances which followed it*. When we have noticed those two things, we will take the whole case and see if we do not derive some instruction from it.

I. First, OBSERVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PRECEDED THE TEMPTATION OF OUR SAVIOR IN THE WILDERNESS.

Jesus had been in an especially devout frame of mind before He was led into the wilderness. It is recorded by Luke that our Savior, when He was baptized, was praying. He was always a Man of prayer. This is, indeed, a Characteristic of the Savior—and if we should be asked what there was in Christ which distinguished Him from other men, besides His outward holiness and His inward consecration, we would say, "The habitual exercise of a spirit of prayer." It is recorded that Jesus, as He was baptized, was praying and yet, after this prayer was offered, after Jesus had thus worshipped at His Father's Throne, the temptation came!

So, you may have been in your closet and had a season of special refreshing. The Lord may have manifested Himself to you, as He does not unto the world, in your private devotions—but do not, therefore, conclude that you are rid of Satan's temptations! You shall no sooner, it may be, have passed out of the closet than you shall be challenged to the conflict. The communion shall cease and the combat shall begin! Satan knows that you have been doing mischief to his cause in your prayers. Have you not been bringing blessings down from on high? Have you not been shaking the walls of the spiritual Jericho—and does he not, therefore, hate you? Satan has the same hatred of you that we find in evil men—and we know that all bad men are always more angry when good men are more busy. So Satan becomes the more Satanic when he knows that you have been unlocking the treasury of God to make those rich whom he would have poor. Why, your prayers, if I may use so daring a speech, have been instrumental in opening blind eyes, quickening dead hearts, unlocking the doors of spiritual prisons and shaking the gates of Hell—and do you not think that Satan will attack you now? Expect that Satan is at the closet doors and if, when you are lax in devotion, you are not tempted, rest assured that whenever you are much in prayer, you may expect Satan to be exceedingly enraged against you. Do you not see, dear Friends, that it is not to his advantage to let you continue in the act of prayer? He knows that when you grow more like your Master, you get more of the Holy Spirit in you and, therefore, it is to his interest to spoil this spirit of prayer! So he meets you, as it were, with his great club in his hand to knock you down. "Pray, will you?" he says. "No, that you shall not, for I will tempt you. Pray, will you?—Grow strong and laugh me to scorn? No, that you shall not," he says! And he leaves no stone unturned to try, if he can, to lead you away from the heavenly, soul-enriching employment of private prayer! Now, if such a thing should happen to you, do not be surprised, as though some strange thing had occurred. It was so with your Lord. He prayed and temptation came! And when you have been in prayer, you may expect to be tempted by the devil.

So, too, *our Savior had been engaged in an act of public obedience to His Father's will*. You will not forgot that He had been baptized. He went to the Jordan's brim and gave Himself into the hands of the Baptist, that He might be immersed beneath Jordan's waves. "Thus it becomes us," He said, "to fulfill all righteousness." Some persons after Baptism are favored with great joy, as the eunuch, to wit, "he went on his way rejoicing." But this is no rule. It will often happen that after the public avowal, after our public confession of faith, there will come a time of unusual struggling and conflict. You are not to say, dear Friend, "I know I have done right because I feel so happy." You have done right if you

have fulfilled God's command, whether you feel happy or not! The witness of the Spirit to an ordinance is not your happiness after the ordinance, for it may so happen that instead of happiness following immediately after your obedience, you may have to enter into a terrible conflict with the Prince of Darkness! Little children must have little rewards for every service that they do while they are little children, but those sons and daughters of the family who have had their senses exercised do not expect to have sweetmeats given to them every time they are obedient. No, they can be obedient and take medicine from a father's hand—and consider even the bitter draught to be as real a proof of acceptance as though it had been some sweet thing such as they had in their younger days. We are not to always be children—not always little babies. It was because the eunuch was but a babe in Grace that he went on his way rejoicing, but stronger Believers will often be tried as Christ was. They will come up dripping from Baptism to go down dripping into the floods of another river of deep temptations and sorrow. You must not always expect even the Lord's Supper to yield you excessive comfort, or, if it does yield you comfort, you may expect that Satan will meet you very soon after. The more soul-enriching ordinances become to you, the more probability there is that you will be tempted after them. If there is a pirate out at sea, what ship does he attack? An empty one? No, no! That which has been to the mines and is coming home with a rich freight! Then says the pirate, "Up with the black flag! Now is our time for prize money." And when you have been to Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or to prayer and your soul has grown rich through fellowship with the Lord Jesus, "Now," says Satan, "it is my time! I will attack the heavenly-laden ship and see what spoil I can get!"

Not only had our Savior been devout and obedient, but *He had also been in an exceedingly humble frame of mind*. He was baptized by John. John said, "I have need to be baptized of You," but the Master puts it, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." Talk of what is becoming! The Son of God speaking, not only of what is right, but of what is becoming and expedient! This shows how holy was His mind as to humbleness before God—and yet He was tempted. When we are proud, we may expect to be tempted or, rather, we are already tempted, for the devil has at least one of the meshes of his net over us! But when we are humble, when God has been pleased to make us lie low at the foot of His Throne, we perhaps think that now no temptation can come. Let us not be quite so sure. Where did Christian meet with Apollyon? Do you remember? It was in the Valley of Humiliation! Not on the mountaintop, but in the valley where the shepherd boy said he who was down need fear no fall. The boy was right in one sense, but there are some of us who, in another sense, need to be watchful and afraid even there! Satan does so hate humility that he will spit all his venom on it—

he does so thoroughly abhor that sweet flower, the perfume whereof God does delight in, the prayer of a humble and contrite heart—that he will pour all his malice upon it! If you have had a broken heart, Satan and you will never be friends, for you fulfill the promise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." God has put an enmity which never was in your heart before—between you and Satan! Your brokenness of heart is an evidence that God put that enmity there—of Grace, alone, comes such experience! Your antagonist, seeing that enmity against him in the fact of your humiliation and contrition before God, will do his utmost to tempt you, if he can, to commit sin!

We find that *our blessed Lord was on this occasion favored with a Divine seal and token of His Sonship*. From the opened heavens, the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Him and a Voice came from the excellent glory, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Will He *now* be tried by the arch-fiend? Did the devil hear that? He has much too quick ears not to have heard it. He therefore must have known that Christ was God's well-beloved Son—but has he the impudence to attack Him? Yes, so great a fool is the devil that he will thrust his hand into the fire and burn it! He will attack a child of God, though he must know that he cannot overcome him. So stultified is he by sin that he will rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler and stand in conflict with the Spirit who is infinitely stronger and greater than he!

Now, Beloved, you, perhaps, have had some very sweet witness with your spirit that you are born of God. "Abba, Father," has been upon your tongue all day. When you knelt down to pray, the sweet beginning of the Lord's Prayer was the beginning and end of it all, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," and you took your mercies as coming from a Father's hands and your sufferings and chastisements as from the same paternal love. I hope you are not sitting down and saying, "Now, my battle is over—my victory is won forever!" Beloved, if you do, you reckon without your adversary! You are thinking you are in port, while as yet you are only midway on the ocean! You are thinking about sweet fields before you have fairly crossed the swelling flood! Come and be wise, lest that arch-deceiver take you unawares! If you had hope of your adoption, be still on the watchtower, lest Satan come against you! The surer I am that I am a child of God, and the clearer that is made to appear to other people, the more the devil will make me a target for his arrows. I am borrowing many a good figure just now from one dear Friend who has written upon this subject fully and largely. He says, quoting an old Divine, "A man never goes forth to shoot his own fowls. When he goes forth with his gun, it is against *wild* birds. And so the devil never goes out to tempt his own children—that is not necessary, for they are his, already—but when he

knows that a man is a child of God, and is, as it were, a wild bird to him, then he goes out against him." The more surely, then, you are known to be a child of God, the more certainly will Satan be against you!

Again, to return to the narrative, we are told by Luke that *Jesus Christ was full of the Holy Spirit*. He was full of the Holy Spirit, yet He was tempted. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is never given in vain and, if given to us, it is as a preparation for conflict in order that we may have strength proportioned to our need. And again, where the Holy Spirit is given, the evil spirit will soon labor for the very reason I have referred to before, because, where God's treasure is, there the thief will try to break in. I think it was one of my predecessors who said that nobody ever broke into a Baptist minister's house because it was well known there would be nothing for them to get! But thieves often broke into other people's houses because they knew there was treasure there. So the devil does not go after people who are without Divine Grace. "Why," he says, "there is nothing there for me to steal!" But if you are full of Grace, then you may expect the arch-adversary to come and attack you. When old Farmer Jones went home on Friday evening, nobody went to watch for him on the road. But it was on a market night, when he had been selling wheat and some fellow had marked him on the Exchange taking money—it was then that the thief stopped him and robbed him of his gold. The devil knows when you are getting rich and full of the Holy Spirit. Now he thinks there is something worth his time and trouble—and so he speeds with dragon wings to the place where this rich child of God is and he waylays him—that he may attack him and cast him down. Well, there is never a better time to fight the devil than when you are filled with the Spirit! So the devil is a fool for meddling with you then. There never was such a fool as the devil is and though he hears us say that now, he knows it! He is a fool and will be to the end of the chapter, till my Master puts the bit into his mouth and the bridle to his jaws and hurls him down to the regions where he shall dwell forever!

Thus much, then, for the circumstances preceding our Lord's temptation. I think we may ring the alarm and this may be a note of warning to you, even though you may have been in deep devotion and may have performed acts of obedience in the most humble and acceptable manner—and received tokens of adoption and are now full of the Holy Spirit.

II. Now, to change the strain, THE SUCCEEDING CIRCUMSTANCES ARE WORTHY OF YOUR SERIOUS REFLECTION.

Jesus Christ was just beginning His public ministrations. As one says, "So long as Jesus Christ had nothing to meddle with but the chips in His father's carpenter's shop, the devil never tempted Him, but now that He was beginning to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, the devil attacked Him." While we have nothing to do in the cause of God and are secret

and retiring, it may be we shall escape—but no common temptation will happen to the man who is engaged in unusual labor. Satan will find some extraordinary means of tempting him whom God puts upon extraordinary service. Satan is very much afraid of all beginnings except one. He loves the beginning of sin, for it is like the letting out of water, but he cannot bear the beginning of a new life in the Christian! "Behold, he prays!" "Ah," says the devil, "I hate that first prayer." Satan loves not the beginning of repentance. There is the letting out of water, indeed! The beginning of a holy project, the beginning of a Christian ministry, the beginning of some ardent missionary, the opening up of some new field of Christian labor, the devil hates. If he can nip these things in the bud, he knows they cannot come to perfection. So Jesus is beginning to preach the Gospel and Satan, therefore, attacks Him. To what may we trace the attacks of Satan just at these beginnings?

A primary cause is *Satan's malice*. No sooner is Christ acknowledged openly to be Anointed of the Holy Spirit to preach glad tidings, than the devil says, "I will shoot my arrow at Him. This is the Heir! Come, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours." So, in the beginning of the Christian life, and especially at the outset of the Christian minister, Satan says, "Here is another God-ordained man—here is another raised up against me," and there is another arrow directed at the child of God. It is the devil's complimentary arrow on the earnest soul when first God launches it in life. Another cause is Satan's craftiness. He can foresee where we cannot. When there is a good project in hand, many an unbeliever says, "Oh, nothing will come of it—it is an Utopian desire—fanaticism projected it and enthusiasm will carry it out for a little, but it will be all a bottle of smoke." Do you hear the devil? He is saying to himself, "I know the beginnings are good. I have crushed too many of them not to know the look of the Lord." "Ah," he says, "if I leave this Man alone, all Jerusalem and Judaea will go after Him. I must crush Him at once." There is a hellish industry about Satan. He knows that his Kingdom stands upon a rickety foundation and, therefore, he is always anxious. Like a man at sea in a leaky ship, who is afraid of every wind that blows, so is the devil afraid of every new good thing and every fresh device of Divine Grace! And when he sees the beginnings, he thinks, "I will destroy the beginnings! I will break down the foundations and then the walls can never be built."

We may, then, attribute temptation, at the beginning of the Christian life or Christian effort, to Satanic craft as well as to Satanic malice.

A further reason why you are thus tempted and tried is that *God, in His wise Providence, is now testing you to see whether you are a right man for His work*. Before a firearm is sold, it is taken to the proof-shop and there it is loaded with a charge much heavier than it will ever have

to carry in the ordinary sportsman's hand. The barrels are fired and if they burst in the proof-house, no great hurt is done. Whereas it would be exceedingly dangerous if they should burst in the hand of some unskillful hunter. So God takes His servants—some of whom He will make special use He, perhaps, loads with five times more temptation than He means they should ordinarily have to endure, in order that He may see and prove to onlookers that they are fit men for His Divine service! We have heard that the old warriors, before they would use their swords, would bend them across their knees. They must see whether they were made of the right stuff or not before they would venture into battle with them. And God acts thus with His servants. Martin Luther would never have been the Martin Luther he was if it had not been for the devil. The devil was, as it were, the proof-house for Martin Luther. He must be tried and tempted by Satan and so he became fit for the Master's use.

Our Savior Himself became perfect through His sufferings. Through His temptations He became able to succor those who are tempted, for He was tempted in all points like as they are. And you, Christian, will never be of great service in God's Church without temptation—you shall neither be able to strengthen the weak, nor to comfort the faint-hearted. You cannot teach the ignorant, or inspire with courage the wavering unless you have, yourself, been taught in the school of experience. John Bunyan, who teaches all the ages and will teach us till we meet in the Celestial City, must himself be taught, in five long years of dark despair, the ruin of the creature and the glory of Free Grace. I believe you will find it to be the case in regard to most of the preachers whom God has signally honored—in fact, I think in regard to all preachers who have been of great use in the Church, that there has been a preparatory struggle in the wilderness, a preparatory forty days' fasting before they have come forth to labor for the Lord!

"Well!" says one of my hearers, "I think I have found something out tonight. When I came into this Tabernacle, this was my state of mind. I have been lately undertaking some new project and ever since I have thought of it, and commenced it, I have had such a gloom of heart as I have never known before." My dear Friend, I think I have told you the reason of this. Take is as a favorable omen. Satan knows that your project will do a serious injury to his Kingdom and this is why he is endeavoring, with his entire strength, to divert you from it. I am sure you and I would do the same if we were engaged in the same struggle as Satan is—and as he has a vast deal more sense than we have, he will not be likely to leave that stone unturned. Go on, Brother, go on! If you tread on a dog, he will bark—and you may depend upon it that you have trodden upon him when he does bark—and so you may know you have done mischief to Satan when he begins to roar at you! Go on! Make him

roar more! Never mind his roaring—make him roar again! Yes, stir him up if you are in God's service and count it a triumph when you hear a growl! It is a good sign that angels are singing when devils are howling. It is a good omen that you are progressing when Satan is so endeavoring to cast you down!

III. Taking the case of the Savior being tempted, as a whole, I may offer a few closing reflections.

First, *a holy character does not avert temptation*. Perfect, spotless, without any propensity to sin, yet is Jesus tempted! In Him the Prince of this world found nothing congenial to his temptations. When Satan tempts us, he strikes sparks on tinder. But, in Christ's case, when the devil tempted Him, it was like striking sparks on water, yet he kept on striking. Now, if the devil goes on striking where there is no better result than that, how much more will he do it when he knows what inflammable stuff our hearts are made of? Expect it, then. Though you become ever so sanctified by the Holy Spirit and destroy sin after sin and lust after lust, you will have this great dog of Hell still barking at you!

The greatest distance from the world will not insure you from temptation. When we mix with the world, we know that we shall be tempted. In our business in the banking-house, on the farm, on the vessel, in the street, we expect that in the world we shall have temptation. But if you could get out of the world, you would still be tempted! Jesus Christ went right away from human society into the wilderness and, "then," was He tempted by the devil. Solitude is no preservative against temptation from Satan! Solitude has its charms and its benefits and may be useful in curbing the flesh, and certainly in checking the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life—but the devil should be worsted by other weapons than that of solitude! Still he will attack you even there. Do not suppose, then, that it is only the worldly-minded who have dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations, for even spiritually-minded persons may have to endure the same! And with the boldest character and the holiest position, there may yet be the darkest temptation.

The utmost consecration of spirit will not insure you against Satanic temptation. Christ was consecrated through and through. His Baptism was real. He was truly dead to the world. He lived only to do His Father's work. It was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him—yet He was tempted. Your hearts may glow with a seraphic or cherubic flame of love to Jesus and yet the devil will try to throw cold water upon it and to bring you down to Laodicean lukewarmness.

Nor will the highest form of Grace or the greatest development of a spiritual mind prevent our being tempted. No, the most eminent public service and the most favored private communion will not keep us from

being assailed! Asked one, "At what time may the Christian take off his armor?" If you will tell me when God permits a Christian to lay aside his armor, I will tell you when Satan has left off temptation. Inasmuch as we are to do as the old knights did in war time—to sleep with the helmet and breast plate buckled on—you may rest assured there is good need for it. At the very time we think not, the arch-deceiver will be on the watch to make us his prey! The Lord keep us watchful in all seasons and give us a final escape out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear!

Alas, there are some here who are not thus tempted and who are, perhaps, congratulating themselves and saying, "We were never tempted like that!" Ah, you are never emptied from vessel to vessel! You are settled on the lees and why are you left so quiet? Is it not because there is no spiritual life in you? You are dead in trespasses and sins! You are the devil's own—why should he hunt *you*? A man does not go forth with a lasso to catch a horse that stands in his stable already bridled and saddled for him to ride whenever he likes! He goes forth to hunt the wild horse that is free. So the devil knows that he has you bridled and saddled—and that he can ride you whenever he pleases—so he does not need to hunt you. But he will hunt the free Christian, upon whose back he cannot place a saddle and into whose mouth he cannot fix a bit. I wish you were tempted. I wish there was something in you worth the devil's efforts, but there is not. May God renew your hearts and give you a right spirit! Remember that the way of salvation is to trust Jesus. Do that and you are saved. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. If you are believing in Jesus—trusting only in Jesus, entirely, with your whole head—then you are saved. Then you may defy the power of Hell and come off more than conqueror! May the Master bless these words to the warning of many and the comfort of some, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 4:1-11.

Verse 1. *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* He had just been baptized, the Spirit of God had descended upon Him and the Father had borne witness to Him, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," yet immediately after all that, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil! So, after your times of sweetest fellowship with God. After the happiest enjoyment of Gospel ordinances. After the sealing of the Spirit within your hearts, you must expect to be tempted by the devil. You must not suppose that in your Christian life, all will be sweetness—that all will be spiritual witness-bearing. You have to fight the good fight of faith and your great adversary will not be slow to begin the encounter! You are a

pilgrim in a strange land, so you must expect to find rough places on the road to Heaven. Yet, since you are so much weaker than your Master was, you will do well to pray the prayer that He taught His disciples, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."

2, 3. *And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward hungry*. And when the tempter came to Him, see how Satan seizes opportunities. When he finds us weak, as the Savior was through long fasting—when he finds us in trying circumstances, as the Savior was when hungry in the desert—then it is that he comes to tempt us. This dastardly foe of ours takes every possible advantage of us, that he may, by any means, overthrow us.

3. *He said, If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made into bread*. He begins with an, "if." He tries to cast a doubt upon the Savior's Sonship—and this is the way that he often attacks a child of God now. He says to him, "If you are a son of God, do such-and-such." He challenged Christ to work a miracle for Himself—to use His Divine Power on His own behalf, but this the Savior never did. He challenged Christ to distrust the Providence of God and to be His own Provider—and this is still a very common temptation to God's people.

4. *But He answered and said, It is written*. That is the only sword that Christ used against Satan—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." There is nothing like it! And the old dragon himself knows what sharp edges this sword has. Christ said, "It is written."

4. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*. God can sustain human life without the use of bread, although it is the staff of life, bread does not sustain life unless God puts power into it to do so. And He can, if it pleases Him, use that power without the outward means. Our Lord thus showed that God could provide for Him in a desert without His interference with the plans of Divine Providence by selfishly catering for Himself. So the first victory was won,

5, 6. *Then the devil took Him up into the Holy City, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. And said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down: for it is written.* Here He plays with the Word of God, for the devil can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose to do so—"It is written."

6. *He shall give His angels charge concerning You: and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You cast Your foot against a stone*. The devil did not quote correctly from Psalm 91:11, 12. He left out the most important words—"He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways"—but it was not Christ's way to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple! Jesus therefore answered Satan's misquotation with a true quotation.

7. *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* I know some people who earn their living in employments which are very hazardous to their immortal souls. They are in the midst of evil, yet they tell me that God can keep them in safety there. I know that He can, but I also know that we have no right to go, voluntarily, where we are surrounded by temptation! If your calling is the wrong one and you are continually tempted in it, you may not presume upon the goodness of God to keep you, for it is *your business* to get as far as you can from that which will lead you into sin! God does not put His servants on the pinnacle of the Temple—it is the devil who puts them there and if they ever are there, the best thing they can do is to get down as quickly and as safely as they can—but they must not cast themselves down! They must look to Him who alone can bring them down safely. With some professors, presumption is a very common sin. They will go into worldly amusements and all sorts of frivolities and say, "Oh, we can be Christians, and yet go there!" Can you? It may be that you can be hypocrites and go there—that is far easier than going there as Christians!

8-10. *Again, the devil took Him up into an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.* Christ will not endure any more of this talk! When it comes to a bribe—the promise that the devil will give Him earth's glory if He will but fall down and worship him—Christ ends the whole matter once and for all. Thrice assaulted, thrice victorious, blessed Master, enable us, also, to be more than conquerors through Your Grace!

11. *Then the devil left Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.* Regarding it as their highest honor to be the servants of their Lord!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 266, 262, 55.

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

THE RULE OF CHRIST
NO. 2998

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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"And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."
2 Samuel 23:4.

No doubt, in the first place, David was speaking of the benefits of a wise and just ruler over man. In the East, where rulers are despotic, they can very soon lay on such heavy taxation and make such oppressive laws that the people are grievously impoverished. Sometimes the inhabitants almost cease to cultivate their lands, since they feel that if they do produce crops, they only produce them for a tyrant's table. By such cruel exactions, the trade of a country is often driven away and fruitful lands are turned into a desert. At the present moment there seems to be little or no reason why Palestine, for instance, should not once again become as fruitful as it used to be, were it not that the Turkish rule is so severe and so unjust that the people have no reason for industry and no motive for economy, since they are so ground down by those who are in power. It was largely so in David's day. Nations were so completely subject to the rule of their kings that according to the character of their ruler was the state of the people. It is a happy circumstance for us that, as a nation, we have ended all that, but it was the prevailing state of things in the days of David. So, I suppose, as a description of what he, himself, had been and as expressive of his hope of what Solomon would be, he says, "A good ruler is to a people like the rising of the sun." Their troubles disappear—he conquers for them in foreign wars and he deals out justice to them at home. A good ruler removes, or at least reduces, the sorrows of the people over whom he rules. He is to them as "a morning without clouds." They cannot find fault with his administration, for all his days he does them good and no harm—and he makes even their past sorrow to contribute to their present good. Under his rule they enjoy a season of clear shining after a long rain of sorrow and, by his wise laws, he makes the land so fruitful and the people so prosperous, that he is to them "as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." No doubt that was a part of what David meant.

But, please remember that this was David's swan song, for the chapter begins thus, "Now these are the last words of David." And also remember that these last words of David are prefaced by this most important

declaration, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me." So, under these circumstances, we cannot suppose that the meaning which I have given to the text can be the full interpretation of it, since there would be no necessity for Inspiration to teach that, and no need whatever for the God of Israel so to speak and the Rock of Israel thus to deliver Himself. We may feel quite sure that there must be some deeper, fuller, more mystical and spiritual meaning here.

And Christians of all times, and Jews also of former ages, have all been agreed that this passage relates to the Messiah. And we who know that the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, can, without the slightest difficulty, apply these words to Him and feel that they are most true concerning Him. Even if they did not primarily refer to the Messiah, we would be quite right in making them do so, because, if it is a general rule that a good ruler is all this to his people, then Jesus Christ, being the best of Rulers, must be all this to His people and He, ruling among men as He does—for this day we call Him Master and Lord—and ruling as He does, most wisely and in the fear of God, He must be, to those who belong to His blessed Kingdom, all that any other good ruler could possibly be and far more, so that for many reasons, we are quite right in ascribing to our Lord Jesus the language of our text—"He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

I want to do two things. First, to show you that *this passage describes our experience of the rule of Christ*. Secondly, to prove to you that *our experience should encourage others to receive Him as their Ruler.*

I. First, then, there are many of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, who can join with me in saying that the text IS A TRUTHFUL DESCRIPTION OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF THE RULE OF CHRIST since that dear hour which brought us to His feet, cut up all our self-righteousness by the root and blessedly taught us to trust and rest in Him.

Let us take the sentences as they stand and let the hearts of God's children respond as I speak upon each one of them. Has it not been true, Beloved, that *Jesus has been to us as the light of the morning, when the sun rises*? Was He not so when first you saw Him? You were in the dark—an Egyptian darkness that might be felt was upon you. You had aforetime walked in the feeble and fickle light of the sparks of your own kindling, but those sparks were, at last, all stamped out and the light of all your candles was quenched in thickest gloom. Was it not like the rising of the sun when you—

"Saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood"—

and as He fixed His languid eyes on you, you realized that He had suffered in your place and borne the wrath of God on your behalf! The weary sentinel who has stood upon the watchtower all night, keeping

guard in the pitiless tempest, longs to see the first streak of daylight—and he will not readily forget the moment when, in the East, he first perceived the glow which betokened the rising of the sun! He may forget that, but *we* shall never forget the hour when, in our deepest sorrows, we caught the first glimpse of a Savior and of His wondrous plan of salvation! We saw that there was salvation for sinners and we perceived that it was suitable for us—and we perceived yet more gladly the fact that we might have it—that we might have it then and there by simply looking to Jesus Crucified! And we did look to Him and, oh, the brightness and the glory that we then saw! I am sure that I have no need to enlarge upon that—I have only to awaken your joyful recollections of that wondrous period and you will at once take down your harps from the willows and awaken all the strings to melodious praise of that rising sun which then arose with healing for you beneath its wide-spread wings!

Now, since that time, has not Jesus been as the sun in the morning, from the fact that He has never gone down? There have been clouds which have, for a time, obscured His light—in this misty world, there must be clouds. You have not always seen the golden light of Christ's love as you have seen it at certain times in your experience, yet since you first looked to Him by faith, you have never been in the same darkness that you were in before, for Jesus has never forsaken you, even though He has, for a while, hidden His face from you. Your vessel has rocked to and fro, but you have not been driven from your anchorage—your anchor has held fast even in the stormiest gale. You have been, sometimes, in great straits, yet Jesus has always been your rest and your stay. You have wandered in heart from Him again and again, but He has never refused to take you back to His bosom, as Noah took back the weary dove. O Soul, you know that Jesus Christ is not like the sun at its setting, when it goes from brightness into shade, but Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness which continues increasing in brilliance until it attains its perfect noontide glory! Have you not found it to be so until now? O child of God, if it were right for you to stand up and bear your testimony here, you would say, "Yes, He has not given me transient pleasure, but constant joy. He has given me peace like a river and righteousness like the waves of the sea. By trusting in Him I have had a continual holiday and a perpetual festival! Or if I have not, it has been because my faith has flagged, or my unstable heart has wandered from His love—but HE has always been 'as the light of the morning when the sun rises!'"

And, Brothers and Sisters in Christ have we not a good hope that the light which we have enjoyed will continue with us all our journey through? Thank God that Sun will not go down before the last stage of our life's pilgrimage shall be over! No, it will still rise higher and higher until the perfect day. And though the perfect day has not yet come, it will come. By faith our souls anticipate greater knowledge of Christ, greater enjoyment of Him, greater likeness to Him. We expect that as years tell upon us, although the flesh will decay, the spirit will grow stronger and

stronger! We believe that we shall still "bring forth fruit in old age" "to show that the Lord is upright." We know and are fully persuaded that with us, at eventide, it will still be light and that when the sun of our natural life goes down, the Sun of our spiritual life will not decline, but rather we shall be absent from this land of clouds, eclipses and shades, and enter into the glory that excels! Milton speaks of an angel who lives in the sun, but what will it be to live in the light of Christ—to live in that Sun forever and ever? The distant glimpses of His Glory, the transient gleams of His face are Heaven below to us! "But what must it be to be there" where they behold Him with eyes supernaturally strengthened to bear the sight—a sight which we could not bear now? John says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." And that would be the case with us if we could see Him now. But, by-and-by, we shall be able to endure that beatific vision and then we shall be favored with it! And then shall we understand to the full, the meaning of these words, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises."

This must suffice for the first sentence of our text. There is not one of us who has believed in Christ, but can say that this is true! We have not all experienced it in the same measure, but we can all say that it has been true to us up to the measure of our capacity to see this Sun and to bear the light of His beams upon us.

Now look at the next words—"even a morning without clouds." And it is true that *to those in whose heart Christ has risen, He has been a morning without clouds*. When He first came to us, there was a great cloud—an inconceivably black cloud of sin which hung over us. Oh, what tempests there were hidden in its dense shadows! Eternal hurricanes and unending destruction were couched in the black bosom of that cloud! But we saw Jesus and the cloud instantly vanished! Where had it gone? Perhaps, at that time, we scarcely knew more than that it was gone by reason of our having looked to Him. But, oh, you know the story—how a blessed wind came and caught that cloud and bore it away up where there stood a lofty hill that towered above the clouds—a mountain whose summit reached to Heaven itself! Can you look up and see it? Can you bear the dazzling glory of its brightness, for it was a mountain all of sapphire, like the terrible crystal for its brightness and its glory? But the cloud came sweeping over the head of this sapphire mountain and, lo, it burst! Dreadful were the volleys of its thunder! Terrific were the flashes of its flame! It shivered the peaks of that wondrous mountain and the storm burst there in terrible fury!

That Mountain was the Lord Jesus Christ and for all of us who trust Him, the thundercloud spent itself there forever, leaving only mercy drops to fall on us in the valley below! Christ's coming was to us henceforth as a morning without clouds! There is now no accusation to be brought against God's people anywhere. If all the Believers who have ever lived, or who ever shall live, could be gathered together, we might maintain that there is not, in the whole universe, a single sin that can be laid to the charge of any soul that believes in Jesus! What says the

Scripture? "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." The work of the Messiah was thus revealed to Daniel, "To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins"—dwell on that—*"to make an end of sins*, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Do you not see, then, that as compared to the black cloud of sin, Jesus Christ, when He came to us, was as "a morning without clouds," since He took all that sin away?

And since that time, He has been the same to us, for no clouds have come. No clouds of fear, for instance, except some vain and foolish fears which our poor flesh has tolerated, but there has been no ground for fear. On the brightest day, in our changeful English climate, the fairest morning cannot always prophesy a clear day and, oftentimes, in other lands, you may long look up to a cloudless sky but, by-and-by, there may be a little cloud, like a man's hand, and it will gather and grow until the storm bursts and puts an end to the brightness of the morning. We have no fear of that happening to us, notwithstanding all our shortcomings, mistakes, errors, failures and sins! Can any of us count them? None of us can! But they are not being treasured up against us—they are not gathering into a tempest to burst over our devoted heads. We are not laying by in store a dreadful measure of Divine Wrath, to be dealt out to us, by-and-by. That is to be the portion of those who are out of Christ—but those who are in Christ certainly have no need to fear any future storm of Divine Anger. As their sin is gone today, it is gone forever, for Christ has forever perfected those whom He has redeemed! Is it not a very delightful thing to live in this sense, on a morning without clouds—to look all around you and to feed that there is nothing to dread now that Christ is yours, and that, above, beneath, around, there is no cause for fear? Why, sometimes this glorious Truth of God makes our heart beat so quickly with joy that we wonder whether it will not leap out of our physical frame—to think that all is well, all well without, all well within, all well above, all well below, all well behind, all well before, all well for time, all well for eternity! "A morning without clouds"—where will you find this, in a spiritual sense, but beneath the blessed rule of Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords?

So, Brothers and Sisters, our morning is without clouds because we have no fear of any future trouble when we live under the rule of Christ. "Ah," says one, "but I sometimes have." But, my dear Friend, if you are really a Christian, you have no reason to have any fear of future trouble! "But I shall grow old," says one, "perhaps I shall not be able to earn my daily bread. I am very feeble even now and, by-and-by, I may be completely bedridden, or I may have to undergo a painful surgery. I am already sadly depressed in spirit—so what shall I be when I get into even worse troubles than I have now?" Ah, my dear Friend, the Lord has provided for you, not merely for tomorrow, but for all your days! You may say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Some people may starve, but God's saints shall not. Everyone who "walks righteously, and speaks uprightly," may claim the ancient promise,

"Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." You may make clouds if you like. You may take down the telescope and breathe on it with the hot breath of your anxiety and then, when you look through it, you may say, "I can see clouds!" There are no clouds there—it is only your breath on the glass that makes you fancy that you see them! God will make all things work together for good to you. If He shall send you troubles, it will only be when it is better for you to be troubled than to be at peace. And He will always make a way of escape for you out of them and give you all necessary support while you are in them. Your shoes shall be iron and brass and as your days, so shall your strength be. Be of good cheer, Mrs. Despondency and Miss Much-Afraid! Fetch out your harps and let us have a joyful tune to the praise of our ever-gracious God! There are no clouds where Jesus dwells! And where He rules, it is as "a morning without clouds."

There is not even the cloud of death to be feared. What a fuss many of us make about dying! Children of God, what a turmoil some of you sometimes make in your own souls about dying! I was speaking to a dear Brother whom you all know and he said to me, "I have once or twice lately been brought face to face with death. In extreme pain I thought that I should not be able to hold out many more minutes and that I must die. And oh, my dear Pastor," he said to me, "it seemed the sweetest thing in all the world to expect to see my Savior face to face in a few minutes! I have, sometimes," he added, "dreaded death, but when I seemed to be in the very article of death and thought that I must soon expire, I have wondered how I could ever have entertained such thoughts." What is there for a Christian to fear in death? It is not dying—it is *living*—about which we ought to be anxious, if anxious at all! But you say, "It is the thought of the pains of death that trouble me." But pains belong to *life*, so do not lay them upon poor death's back! Death is the physician that *eases* pain! He does but lay his skeleton hand upon the patient and, straightway, the fever has departed and the sufferer is where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick."—

"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne!"

Blessed be God, where Jesus rules, even the thought of death is not a cloud! If you are not under the rule of Jesus Christ, you will have many clouds, but if you are under His rule, if you have faith in Him, and live upon Him, and are a subject of His Kingdom, you will find that He is to you as "a morning without clouds."

The other sentence of the text teaches us that *Jesus Christ sanctifies to His people their varied experiences*: "As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Dear Friends, even under the rule of Christ we know that some trouble will come to us—there will be "rain." There will be the rain of sorrow for sin. That is a blessed rain. I would like to be wet through with that. Sometimes there will be the rain of depression of spirit, but God

forbid that we should have too much of that! There will be the rain of affliction and trial—but we are taught to rejoice in affliction and to count it all joy when we fall into divers trials. Sometimes there comes the rain of spiritual humiliation. We are conscious of our own emptiness and we seem to be in such a place as the Valley of Humiliation, of which Bunyan has written so sweetly in his "Pilgrim's Progress."

Yes, we do get times of rain, but there also come to us times of "clear shining." You know what that means to you after a time of trouble. It is very sweet, after you have been ill, to feel that you are getting better. I do not know any enjoyment in life that, to my mind, is equal to that of getting better after a severe illness—that is truly the "clear shining after rain." And when you have been depressed and have gotten back your joy, that is more clear shining. It is all the clearer because of the rain! And the clear shining does you more good because there has been rain, for clear shining without rain might bring on dryness and barrenness. But when the soil has been well soaked and the clear shining of the sun follows, then the tender grass appears—and what tender emotions of love, joy, peace, rest and gratitude, have often come into the soul when, after we have had a heavy rain, which has deluged us, there has come the clear shining—the full assurance, the applied promise, the conscious love, the certain Presence, the blessed manifestation, the sweet communion! Many of you know, from happy experience, what I mean. I am only giving you a brief summary, for I cannot fully describe that clear shining though I have felt it full often.

Then it is that Jesus becomes to us like "the tender grass springing out of the earth." In the East, when there has been no rain for a long while, everything looks dry and brown, but travelers tell us that in a few hours, after a heavy shower and a little sunshine, patches of green grass will be seen where everything was brown—and the daffodil, lily and all sorts of beautiful plants will spring up almost as if by magic! Is not that the case with us spiritually? When Jesus Christ appears to us, our soul, which had been saturated with sorrow, becomes joyous through the clear shining—and then brings forth the tender grass of gladness, gratitude, thankfulness and holy service for the Lord Jesus Christ! But if there is anything of that kind brought forth in us, let us remember that it is Christ, Himself, who is the sum and substance of it all, for it is He who is as the tender grass. "Without Me, you can do nothing," said Christ to His disciples—and the fruit of the Christian is practically Christ, for if the Christian brings forth the fruit of holiness, it is the glory of Christ reflected in him! If he is bright with hope, it is Christ within him who is the hope of Glory. If there are any graces in us, they are the virtues which Christ has given to us! Our green grass is Christ, Himself, appearing in us! Our verdure, our beauty, our fruit, our everything is Christ manifest in us!

I like this metaphor of the "tender grass springing out of the earth." Jesus Christ is to us what the green grass is to the field. In the story of the Creation, it is suggestive to read that the same day that God

separated the water from the land and called this, "Earth," and that, "Seas," He saw that something was needed to make it perfect. Imagine this earth just lifted up out of the waters—there are the mountains, the little hills, the plains and the valleys, but they are all like masses of mud, so God says, "Let the earth bring forth grass"—"tender grass" is in the margin, the very expression we have in our text. It looks as though God Himself could not bear to see the world naked, so He wrapped it up in those beautiful green garments which are like the holiday dress of this poor brown earth! And I believe that whenever God makes a Christian, the moment he is born anew, God looks at him and sees that he is just like the earth was before it was clothed with grass, so God gives him Grace to enable him to bring forth fruit. One of the first instincts of a true convert is to ask, "What can I do for Jesus Christ?" Though it is not much that he can do, it is like the grass—it covers him. Very soon the fruits begin to appear, bearing seed after their kind—it is Christ being displayed in the convert's life, work and fruit! I remember when Jesus Christ was to me the first fruit of righteousness that I ever brought forth and, to this day, all the fruit I ever have. And I am sure it is the same with you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and you are glad to confess that it is so—all your fruit comes from Christ alone! He is to us as "the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Thus I have spoken about our experience of the rule of Christ tallying with the Word of God as we have it in our text.

II. I will spend only a few minutes in speaking upon the second part of our subject, lest I weary you. It is this—OUR EXPERIENCE SHOULD ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR RULER.

If we had found Him a bad Master, we would tell you. As we have found Him inexpressibly good to us, we come to you and gladly bear our witness on His behalf. I am addressing a good many who have heard the Gospel for a long time and yet are not saved. When are you going to lay these things to heart? When shall the time of decision be? Listen to me with great earnestness for these last few minutes. I want you to receive Jesus Christ as your Ruler, but, before you do so, you must receive Him as your Savior! You cannot truly say, "I will serve Christ," until you have first said, "I will trust Him." The Gospel message is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." May the Spirit of God enable you, at this very moment, sitting where you are, or standing in the crowd, [or reading this] to trust the Son of God who lived and died that sinners might not perish. Trust Him and you are saved!

But, at the same time that you trust Him, please remember that Jesus Christ has come to be a Prince as well as a Savior. So if He is to save you, you must give yourself up to Him to be ruled by Him. Obedience to Christ must always accompany faith in Him. Jesus says to you, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But He adds, "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." Are there not some young men here who need a Leader—who desire to have a Pilot who

will conduct them safely through the voyage of life and land them at the Port of Peace? Then, accept the Lord Jesus Christ, once crucified, but now risen and gone into the Glory. Take Him as Savior to cleanse you and as Prince to govern you—and all shall be well with you forever!

Have you come to Him? That is the important point. How you come is quite a secondary matter. There is much discussion about how we are to come to Christ, but the great discussion should be about Him to whom we are to come—not so much about your coming, as about the Christ to whom you come—not so much about your faith, as about the Object of your faith—the Lord Jesus Christ. If you build upon the Rock of Ages, you build securely. And if you rest in Jesus, you rest safely. If you come to Him, you came to the right place, or, rather, to the right Person. O poor Souls, there are some of you who if you had to come to Jesus Christ in very beautiful order, marching like the Life Guards on parade, would never come! But you may come creeping like little children who fall at every second step that they take. So long as you do but come, you may come in the most irregular fashion, with some faith and a great deal of unbelief—with many a doubt and many a struggle—many a pang and many a cry—many a groan and many a mistrust! Yet, as long as you do but believe in Jesus, lean upon Him and trust in Him, He will not cast you out! I sometimes find that all I can do is just to swoon away into Christ's arms, but as long as I get there, He never casts me out. It is a very blessed thing, I find, to come to Christ arguing with myself as to why I come and understanding much concerning His blessed Person and Offices, His finished work, His Everlasting Covenant and the Election of Grace. That is a very happy way of coming to Christ, but there are hundreds of people who are such babes in spiritual things, that they do not know these great Truths of God. They are so weak that they cannot grasp them and so confused in their minds that they cannot understand them. Well, then, they must come as they can! For he who comes, enabled by the Grace of God to come straightway to Jesus—for that is the vital point—he that comes to Jesus, He will in no wise cast out!

Christ says nothing about coming to a priest for pardon. We read in the Scriptures of one who had sinned very grossly against Jesus. He went to the priests and confessed his sin and then he went out and hanged himself. And I do not wonder that he did so, for there is no comfort to be had from a priest! But if Judas had gone to Christ—if he had been like Peter and had gone to the Savior and confessed his sin, he might have been forgiven and might have rejoiced in being pardoned. It will not do to go to man for forgiveness—you must go to Christ! And it will not do to look to yourself. Christ does not say, "Him that amends himself, I will in no wise cast out." No, but, "Him that comes to Me." [This subject is more fully considered in the very remarkable Sermon, #3000, Volume 52—NO. 3,000—OR, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Is not this a very simple matter? I have read a great many definitions of faith and a great many books explaining what faith is. And I have

always felt, when I have finished reading them, like the good woman who read Thomas Scott's explanation of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." After that worthy minister had sent his book to an old lady, he went to see her and he said to her, "Have you been reading the book I sent you?" "Oh, yes, Sir," she said. "Could you understand it?" asked Scott. "Well, Sir," she said, "I can understand what Mr. Bunyan wrote and I think that, one day, by the Grace of God, I may be able to understand your explanation of it." It is just like that with explanations of faith. I can understand the Gospel and I have no doubt that, one day, I shall be able to understand the explanations that some writers give concerning what faith means. Very often, a cloud of words is only like a cloud of dust and explanations of faith often minister confusion rather than edification. There is Jesus Christ—will you trust Him? If you do, He will not cast you out. May He help you to trust in Him now!

Do you still hang back? Then let me plead with you. You surely do not hold back from Christ because you think His service will be hard. Many of us have tried it and we have proved that His yoke *is* easy and His burden *is* light. Oh, if you could but look the Prince Immanuel in the face—if those blind eyes of yours could be opened so that you could see Him—you would fall in love with Him! The poet was right when he wrote—

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

A spiritual sight of the Prince Immanuel would so enamor you of Him that you would count it your honor and glory even to be allowed to unloose His shoelaces! I would, young people, that you would so value the Christian experience of others that you would trust Christ for yourselves! He has been a good Master to me. I have served Him, now, for 25 years and, blessed be His name, He has never once done me or mine an ill turn! His work is good, His wages are good and He, Himself, is best of all! Oh, that you all would trust, and love, and serve Him!

Do you still hang back? Then what is your reason for doing so? Is it that you need more light? Listen! Christ is "as the light of the morning, when the sun rises," and you say that you are needing more light? Wanting more light, yet not coming to the Sun? You are awake in the morning with your shutters closed, your blinds dawn and you are fumbling about to find a match—and you are going to strike it and light a farthing candle—what for? Well, after you have lit it, you are going to open the shutters and see whether the sun is up! Very sensible behavior on your part, is it not? Yet this is what the sinner often does! He wants to get light enough to see whether Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, is shining! Oh, put away your matches and your candles! Do not look for any spiritual light but that which comes from Christ, for all the light that you ever get, unless it comes from Christ, is gross darkness! Go in your darkness to Jesus Christ, for He has light enough in Himself without your carrying any light to Him! We have an old proverb about carrying coals to Newcastle, but there is no folly in that compared with the folly

and sin of carrying light to the Sun of Righteousness! Go in your darkness to Jesus Christ and He will be light to you!

"Oh, but!" you say, "there are the clouds!" Yes, I know there are—your sins, your doubts, your fears, your hard hearts—and you are going to get all these put away and *then* you are coming to Christ, are you? You are something like a man who might be foolish enough to say, "My heart is affected, my limbs are full of pain and my eyes are bad—but when I get my heart better, and my limbs better, and my eyes better, I am going to a physician." And why are you going to see a physician *then*? To show him what a fine fellow you are, I suppose! Why, Man, the time to go to a physician is when you are sick! And the time to go to Christ is when you are sinful, when you are surrounded by clouds, for He is as "a morning without clouds." You can never get rid of the clouds, but HE can! So you must go to Him with all the clouds, all the sins and all the doubts about you—with a thousand ills wrapped round you, if so it must be—as full of devils as that poor man was out of whom Christ cast a whole legion! If you have all Hell within you, if you will but go to Christ just as you are, He will deliver you, here and now, with a single word! If you believe in Him, you need no preparation for going to Him!

"But," says one, "I really want to be doing something before I come to Christ." Possibly you have noticed what a fuss is being made in various newspapers concerning that hymn which contains the words—

"'Doing' is a deadly thing,
'Doing' ends in death."

Certain gentlemen are very fond of talking about the immorality of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and trying to show how it is destructive of good works. I think that those who talk thus should try to practice a few good works on their own account. And one of the good works I would suggest to them is that of being honest enough to quote the whole of a verse, instead of half. Suppose I were to go about, and say, "Oh, the Bible is a dreadful book. It says, 'There is no God'"? Somebody would very probably say to me, "How dare you make such a statement as that? The Bible says, 'The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.' You have quoted only part of the verse." That is just what these objectors have done. The whole verse says—

"Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing,
'Doing' ends in death."

That is true. But if you cut off the first two lines, you have not quoted fairly and you have made the poet say what he did *not* say—and then you go on to say that teaching people to sing like that is teaching them to sing against good works. I am sick of this canting, hypocritical talk on the part of worldlings! They say that there is cant in the Church and among Christians. Well, perhaps there is a little, but not half as much as there is among those who quote half a verse and then go on to rail at Evangelical preachers as if that were all that they taught! Yet there is

much of that kind of evil in many unrenewed hearts—they want to get some good thing, first, and then they will come to Christ. They want to get the tender grass without coming to Christ, but they never will, for the fruits of holiness will never be produced in any man's soul until he comes to Jesus, for Jesus is "as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Come to Jesus Christ *for* fruit, not *with* fruit! Come to Him for all good things and, poor Sinners, He will give them to you—

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

We preach good works with all our hearts, but they can only be worked by and through Jesus Christ! And we never dare tell sinners to do good works and *then* come to Christ. That would be putting the cart before the horse, planting the stem instead of planting the root and reversing the natural order of things, which, God forbid, that we should ever do! Come, you guilty! Come, you lost! Come, you ruined! My Lord Jesus loves such as you are. He has not come to heal the healthy, but the sick! He came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." May He call you and bring you, for His own name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—716, 711, 30.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—39.

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RAILINGS
NO. 2999

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 1906.

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

"When you build a new house, then you shall make a railing for your roof that you bring not guilt of bloodshed on your household, if any man fall from it." Deuteronomy 22:8.

[This sermon was originally entitled BATTLEMENTS.]

THIS interesting law which, in its letter, was binding on the Jewish people, in its spirit furnishes an admirable rule for us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

It is not necessary to inform this audience that the roofs of Eastern dwellings were flat and that the inhabitants were accustomed to spend much of their time upon the tops of their houses, not only conversing there during the day, but sleeping there at night. If the roofs were without any fencing or protection around their edge, it might often happen that little children might fall over—and not infrequently grown-ups might inadvertently take a false step and suffer serious injury, if not death itself. Where there were no railings or low walls around the roof, accidents frequently occurred. But God commanded His people, while they were yet in the wilderness, that when they came into the promised land and proceeded to build houses, they should take care in every case to build a sufficient railing that life might not be lost through preventable casualty.

This careful command clearly shows us that God holds life to be very valuable and that as He would not permit us to kill by malice, so He would not allow us to kill by negligence, but would have us most tender of human lives. Such rules as the one before us are precedents for sanitary laws and give the weight of Divine sanction to every wise sanitary arrangement. No man has a right to be filthy in his person, or his house, or his trade, for even if he, himself, may flourish amid unhealthy accumulations of dirt, he has no right, by his unclean habits, to foster a deadly typhus, or afford a nest for cholera. Those whose houses are foul, whose rooms are unventilated, whose persons are disgusting, cannot be said to love their neighbor—and those who create nuisances in our crowded cities are guilty of wholesale murder. No man has a right to do anything which must inevitably lead to the death or to the injury of those by whom he is surrounded—he is bound to do all in his power to prevent any harm coming to his fellow men. That seems to be the moral teaching of this ordinance of making railings around the

housetops—teaching, mark you, that which I would like all housewives, workingmen, manufacturers and vestrymen to take practical note of.

But, if ordinary life is precious, much more is the life of the soul and, therefore, it is our Christian duty never to do that which imperils either our own or other men's souls. To us there is an imperative call from the great Master that we care for the eternal interests of others and that we, as far as we can, prevent their exposure to temptations which might lead to their fatal falling into sin.

We shall now lead you to a few meditations which have, in our mind, gathered around the text.

I. First, GOD HAS RAILINGS ON HIS OWN HOUSE. Let this serve as a great Truth with which to begin our contemplations. God takes care that all His children are safe. There are high places in His House and He does not deny His children the enjoyment of these high places, but He makes sure that they shall not be in danger there. He sets railings around them lest they should suffer harm when in a state of exaltation.

God, in His House, has given us *many high and sublime doctrines*. Timid minds are afraid of these, but the highest doctrine in Scripture is safe enough because God has railed it—and as no man in the East need be afraid to walk on the roof of his house when the railing is there, so no man need hesitate to believe the Doctrine of Election, the Doctrine of Eternal and Immutable Love, or any of the Divine teachings which circle around the Covenant of Grace—if he will at the same time see that God has guarded those Truths so that none may fall from them to their own destruction.

Take, for instance, the *Doctrine of Election*. What a high and glorious Truth of God this is, that God has, from the beginning, chosen His people unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the Truth! Yet that Doctrine has turned many simpletons dizzy through looking at it apart from kindred teachings. Some, I do not doubt, have willfully leaped over the railing which God has set about this Doctrine and have turned it into Antinomianism, degrading it into an excuse for evil living and reaping just damnation for their willful perversion! But God has been pleased to set around that Doctrine other Truths of God which shield it from misuse. It is true He has a chosen people, but "by their fruits you shall know them." Without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Though He has chosen His people, yet He has chosen them unto holiness—He has ordained them to be zealous for good works. His intention is not that they should be saved *in* their sins, but saved *from* their sins! Not that they should be carried to Heaven as they are, but that they should be cleansed and purged from all iniquities and so made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Then there is the sublime brush of the *Final Perseverance of the Saints*. What a noble height is that! A housetop Doctrine, indeed! What a Pisgah view is to be had from the summit of it—"The Lord will keep the feet of His saints." "The righteous also shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." It will be a great loss to us if we are unable to enjoy the comfort of this Truth. There is no reason

for fearing presumption through a firm conviction of the true Believer's safety. Mark well the railings which God has built around the edge of this Truth! He has declared that if these shall fall away, it is impossible "to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame." If those who are true saints should altogether lose the life of God that is within their souls, there would remain no other salvation! If the first salvation could have spent itself unavailingly, there would be no alternative but "a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." When we read warnings such as, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," and others of that kind, we see how God has made a railing around this tower-like Truth of God so that saints may ascend to its very summit and look abroad upon the land that flows with milk and honey—and yet their brains need not whirl, nor shall they fall into presumption and perish!

That wonderful *Doctrine of Justification by Faith* which we all hold to be a vital Truth of God, not only of Protestantism but of Christianity, itself, is quite as dangerous by itself as the Doctrine of Election, or the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints—in fact, if a man means to sin, he can break down every bulwark and turn any doctrine into an apology for transgression! Even the doctrine that God is merciful, simple as that is, may be made into an excuse for sin. To return to the doctrine that we are justified by faith and not by the works of the Law, Luther put it very grandly, very boldly and, for him, very properly. But there are some who use his phrase, not in Luther's way, and without Luther's reasons for unguarded speaking—and such persons have sometimes done serious damage to men's souls by not mentioning another Truth which is meant to be the railing to the Doctrine of Faith, namely, the necessity of sanctification. Where faith is genuine, through the Holy Spirit's power, it works a cleansing from sin, a hatred of evil, an anxious desire after holiness and it leads the soul to aspire after the image of God. Faith and holiness are inseparable. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." Good works are to be insisted on, for they have their necessary uses. James never contradicts Paul—it is because we do not understand him that we fancy he does so. Both the doctrinal Paul and the practical James spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Paul builds the tower and James puts the railing around it—Paul conducts us to the summit of God's House and bids us rejoice in what we see there. And then James points us to the railing that is built up to keep us from leaping over the Truth of God to our own destruction. Thus is each doctrine balanced, bulwarked and guarded, but time would fail us to enter into detail—let it suffice for us to know that the Palace of the Truth of God is railed with wisdom and prudence!

Take another view of the same thought. The Lord has guarded the position of His saints if endowed with wealth. Some of God's servants are, in His Providence, called to very prosperous conditions in life—and prosperity is filled with dangers. It is hard to carry a full cup without a spill. A man may travel on the ground well enough, and yet find it hard

work to walk on a high rope. A man may be an excellent servant who would make a bad master—and one may be a good tradesman in a small way who would make a terrible failure of it as a merchant. Yet be well assured that if God shall call any of you to be prosperous and give you much of this world's goods, and place you in an eminent position, He will see to it that His Grace is given suitable for your station and affliction necessary for your elevation!

The Lord will put railings around you, and it is most probable that these will not commend themselves to your carnal nature. You are going on right joyously, everything is "merry as a marriage bell," but, all of a sudden you are brought to a dead still. You kick against this hindering disappointment, but it will not move out of your way. You are vexed with it, but there it is. Oh, how anxious you are to go a step farther and then you think you will be supremely happy—but it is just that perfect happiness so nearly within reach that God will not permit you to attain, for then you would receive your portion in this life, forget your God and despise the better land! That bodily infirmity, that lack of favor with the great, that sick child, that suffering wife, that embarrassing partnership—any of these may be the railing which God has built around your success, lest you should be lifted up with pride and your soul should not be upright in you! Does not this remark cast a light upon the mystery of many a painful dispensation? "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." That experience may be read another way and you may confess, "Had I not been afflicted, I would have gone far astray. But now I have kept Your Word."

The same prudence is manifested by our Lord towards those whom He has seen fit to place in *positions of eminent service*. Those who express great concern for prominent ministers, because of their temptations, do well, but they will be even more in the path of duty if they have as much solicitude about *themselves*. I remember one whose pride was visible in his very manner. He was a person unknown, of little service in the church, but as proud of his little badly plowed, weedy half acre as ever a man could be! He informed me very pompously, on more than one occasion, that he trembled lest I should be unduly exalted and puffed up with pride! Now, from his lips, it sounded like comedy and reminded me of Satan reproving sin. God never honors His servants with success without effectually preventing their grasping the honor of their work. If we are tempted to boast, He soon lays us low. He always whips behind the door at home those whom He most honors in public. You may rest assured that if God honors you by enabling you to win many souls, you will have many stripes to bear—and stripes you would not like to tell another of, they will be so sharp and humbling. If the Lord loves you, He will never let you be lifted up in His service. We have to feel that we are but just the pen in the Master's hand so that if holiness is written on men's hearts, the credit will not be ours, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise—and this our Heavenly Father has effectual means of securing! Do not, therefore, start back from qualifying yourself for the most eminent position, or from occupying it when duty calls. Do not let

Satan deprive God's great cause of your best service through your unholy bashfulness and cowardly retirement. The Lord will give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. If God sets you on the housetop, He will place a railing around you. If He makes you to stand on the high places, He will make your feet like hind's feet, so that you shall not fall. If God commands you to dash against the enemy single-handed, still, "as your days, so shall your strength be." He will uphold you and on the pinnacle you are as secure as in the valley, if Jehovah set you there!

It is the same with regard to the high places of *spiritual enjoyment*. Paul was caught up to the third heavens and he heard words unlawful for a man to utter. This was a very, very high place for Paul's mind, mighty brain and heart as he had—but then, there was the railing—"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the Revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." Paul was not in love with this drawback. He besought the Lord to remove it three times, but still the thorn could not be taken away, for it was necessary as a railing around the eminent Revelations with which God had favored His Apostle! The temptation, if we are at all happy in the Lord, is to grow secure—"My mountain stands firm," we say, "I shall never be moved."

Even much communion with Christ, though in itself sanctifying, may be perverted through the folly of our flesh, into a cause of self-security. We may even dream that we are brought so near to Christ that common temptations are not likely to assail us—and by these very temptations we may fall. Hence it is that as sure as ever we have high seasons of enjoyment, we shall sooner or later endure periods of deep depression. Scarcely ever is there a profound calm on the soul's sea, but a storm is brewing! The sweet day so calm, so bright, shall have its fall and the dew of the succeeding night shall weep over its departure. The high hill must have its following valley and the flood-tide must retreat at ebb. Lest the soul should be beguiled to live upon itself and feed on its frames and feelings—and by neglect of watchfulness fall into presumptuous sins—railings are set around all hallowed joys, for which in eternity we shall bless the name of the Lord.

Too many of the Lord's servants feel as if they were always on the housetop—always afraid, always full of doubts and fears. They are fearful lest they shall, after all, perish, and of a thousand things besides. Satan sets up scarecrows to keep these timid birds from feeding upon the wheat which the great Husbandman grows on purpose for them! They scarcely ever reach the assurance of faith. They are stung by "if's and "buts," like Israel by the fiery serpents, and they can scarcely get beyond torturing fear which is as an adder biting their heel. To such we say, Beloved, you shall find, when your faith is weakest, when you are just about to fall, that there is a glorious railing all around you—a gracious promise, a gentle Word of the Holy Spirit shall be brought home to your soul so that you shall not utterly despair. Have you not felt, sometimes,

that if it had not been for a choice love-word heard in the past, your faith would have given up the ghost? Or if it had not been for that encouraging sermon which came with such power to your soul, your feet had almost gone, your steps had well-near slipped? Now, the Infinite Love of God, dear child of God, values you far too much to allow you to fall into despair—

"Mid all your fear, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let you go."

Railed by eternal Grace shall this roof of the house be—and when you are tremblingly pacing it, you shall have no cause for alarm!

II. From the fact of the Lord's carefulness over His people, we proceed, by an easy step, to the consideration that as imitators of God, we should exercise the same tenderness. In a word, WE OUGHT TO HAVE OUR HOUSES RAILED.

A man who had no railing to his house might himself fall from the roof in an unguarded moment. He might be startled in his sleep and in the dark mistake his way to the stairs, or, while day-dreaming, his steps might slip. Those who profess to be the children of God should, for their own sakes, see that every care is used to guard themselves against the perils of this tempted life. They should see to it that their house is carefully railed. If any ask, "How shall we do it?" we reply—

Every man ought to examine himself carefully, whether he is in the faith, lest professing too much, taking too much for granted, he should fall and perish. At times, we should close our spiritual warehouse and take stock. A tradesman who does not like to do that is generally in a bad way. A man who does not think it wise to sometimes sit down and give half a day, or such time as he can spare, to a solemn stocktaking of his soul, may be afraid that things are not going right with him. Lest we should be, after all, hypocrites, or self-deceivers! Lest, after all, we should not be born-again, but should be children of Nature, neatly dressed, but not the living children of God, we must prove ourselves whether we are in the faith. Let us protect our souls' interests with frequent self-examinations!

Better still, and safer by far, *go often to the Cross* as you think you went at first. Go every day to the Cross—still with empty hands and with a bleeding heart, go and receive everything from Christ and seek to have your wounds bound up with the healing ointment of His atoning Sacrifice. These are the best railings I can recommend you—self-examination on the one side of the house, and a simple faith in Jesus on the other.

Rail your soul about well with prayer. Go not out into the world to look upon the face of man till you have seen the face of God. Never rush down from your chamber with such unseemly haste that you have not time to buckle on your helmet and gird on your breastplate and your coat of mail.

Be sure and rail yourself about with much watchfulness and, especially, *watch most the temptation peculiar to your position and disposition*. You may not be inclined to be slothful. You may not be

fascinated by the silver of Demas into covetousness and yet you may be beguiled by pleasure. Watch, if you have a hasty temper, lest that should overthrow you. Or if yours is a high and haughty spirit, set a double watch to bring that demon down! If you are inclined to indolence, or, on the other hand, if hot passions and evil desires are most likely to attack you, cry to the Strong for strength! And as he who guards well sets a double guard where the wall is weakest, so do you the same.

There are some respects in which every man should rail his house by denying himself those indulgences which might be lawful to others, but which would prove fatal to himself. The individual who knows his weakness to be an appetite for drink should resolve to totally abstain. Every man, I believe, has a particular sin which is a sin to him, but may not be a sin to another. No man's conscience is to be a judge for another, but let no man violate his conscience. If you cannot perform a certain act in faith, you must not do it at all. I mean if you do not honestly and calmly believe it to be right, even if it is right in itself, it becomes wrong to you. Watch, therefore, watch at all points. Guard yourselves in company, lest you are carried away by the force of numbers. Guard yourselves in solitude, lest selfishness and pride creep in. Watch yourselves in poverty, lest you fall into envy of others. And in wealth, lest you become lofty in mind. Oh, that we may all keep our houses well-railed, lest we fall and grieve the Spirit of God and bring dishonor on Christ's name!

III. As each man ought to rail his house, in a spiritual sense, with regard to himself, SO OUGHT EACH MAN TO CARRY OUT THE RULE WITH REGARD TO HIS FAMILY.

Family religion was the strength of Protestantism at first. It was the glory of Puritanism and Non-Conformity. In the days of Cromwell it is said that you might have walked down Cheapside, at a certain hour in the morning, and you would have heard the morning hymns going up from every house and along the street. And at night, if you had glanced inside each home, you would have seen the whole household gathered, the big Bible opened and family devotion offered. There is no fear of this land ever becoming Popish if family prayer is maintained. But if family prayer is swept away, farewell to the strength of the Church! A man should rail his house for his children's sake, for his servants' sake, for his own sake, by maintaining the ordinance of family prayer. I may not dictate to you whether you should sing, or read, or pray—or whether you should do this every morning or evening, or how many times a day. I shall leave this to the free spirit that is in you, but do maintain family prayer and never let the fire on the altar of God burn low in your habitation.

So in the matter of discipline. If the child shall do everything it chooses to do. If it shall do wrong and there is no admonition. If there is no chastisement, if the reins are loosely held, if the father altogether neglects to be a priest and a king in his house—how can he wonder that his children grow up to break his heart? David had never chastised

Absalom, nor Adonijah—and remember what they became. And Eli's sons who never had more than a soft word or two from their father—how were his ears made to tingle with the news of God's judgments upon them! Rail your houses by godly discipline. See that obedience is maintained and that sin is not tolerated—and so shall your house be holiness unto the Lord—and peace shall dwell therein!

We ought to strictly rail our houses *as to many things which in this day are tolerated*. I am sometimes asked, "May not a Christian subscribe to a lottery? May not a Christian indulge in a game of cards? May not a Christian dance, or attend the opera?" Now, I shall not come down to debate upon the absolute right or wrong of debatable amusements and customs. The fact is that if professors do not stop till they are certainly in the wrong, they will stop nowhere! It is of little use to go on till you are over the edge of the roof and then cry, "STOP!" It would be a poor affair for a house to be without a railing, but to have a net to stop the falling person half-way down—you must stop before you get off the solid standing! There is need to draw the line somewhere and the line had better be drawn too soon than too late. And whereas the habit of gambling is the very curse of this land—ah, during the last Derby week, what blood it shed! How it has brought souls to Hell and men to an unripe grave!—as the habit of speculating seems to run through the land, and was doubtless the true cause of the great panic which shook our nation a few years ago—there is the more need that we should not tolerate anything that looks like it.

For another reason, we should carefully discern between places of public amusement. Some that are perfectly harmless, recreative and instructive—to deny these to our young people would be foolish. But certain amusements stand on the border between the openly profane and the really harmless. We say do not go to these—never darken the doors of such places. Why? Because it may be the edge of the house and though you may not break your neck if you walk along the railing, yet you are best on this side of the railing! You are least likely to fall into sin by staying away—and you cannot afford to run risks. We have all heard the old story of the good woman who required a coachman. Two or three young fellows came to seek for the situation. Each of them she saw and questioned alone. The first one had this question put to him, "How near could you drive to danger?" And he said, "I do not doubt but that I could drive within a yard of danger." "Well, well," the lady said, "you will not do for me." When the second came in, the good woman questioned him in like manner, "How near could you drive to danger?" "Within a hair's breath, Madam," he said. "Oh," she said, "that will not suit me at all." A third was asked the same question and he prudently replied, "If you please, Madam, that is one of the things I have never tried. I have always tried to drive as far from danger as I can." "You are the coachman for me," she said, and surely that is the kind of manager we all should have in our households! Oh, let us not so train up our children that in all probability they will run into sin! Let us, on the contrary, exhibit such an example in all things that they may safely follow us. Let us so walk that

they may go step by step where we go and not be cast out of the Church of God as a reproach, nor be cast away from the Presence of God. Rail your houses, then! Do not be afraid of being too strict and too Puritan! There is no fear of that in these days—there is a great deal more danger of bringing solemn judgments on our families through neglecting the worship of God in our households!

IV. THE PREACHER WOULD NOW REMIND HIMSELF THAT THIS CHURCH IS, AS IT WERE, HIS OWN HOUSE AND THAT HE IS BOUND TO RAIL IT.

Many come here, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the Gospel. The immense number and the constancy of it surprise me. I do not know why the multitudes come and crowd these aisles. When I preached yesterday in Worcestershire and saw the thronging crowds in every road, I could not help wondering to see them—and the more so because they listened as though I had some novel discovery to make—they listened with all their ears, eyes and mouths! I could but marvel and thank God. Ah, but it is a dreadful thing to remember that so many people hear the Gospel and yet perish under the sound of it! Alas, the Gospel becomes to them a savor of death unto death—and there is no lot so terrible as perishing under a pulpit from which the Gospel is preached!

Now, what shall I say to prevent any of my Hearers falling from this blessed Gospel? Falling from the house of mercy—dashing themselves from the roof of the temple to their ruin? What shall I say to you? I beseech you, do not be hearers only! Do not think that when you come here Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays it is all done! No, it is only begun then! Praying is the end of preaching and to be born-again is the great matter. It is very little to occupy your seat, unless you listen diligently, with willing hearts—looked upon as an end, sitting at services is a wretched waste of time! Dear Hearers, be dissatisfied with yourselves unless you are DOERS of the Word! Let your cry go up to God that you may be born-again. Rest not till you rest in Jesus!

Remember, and I hope this will be another railing, that if you hear the Gospel and it is not blessed to you, still it has a power. If the Sun of Grace does not soften you as it does wax, it will harden you as the sun does clay! If it is not a savor of life unto life, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it will be a savor of death unto death! Oh, do not be blind in the sunlight! Do not perish with hunger in the banqueting house! Do not die of thirst when the Water of Life is before you!

Let me remind you of *what the result of putting away the Gospel will be*. You will soon die. You cannot live forever. In the world to come, what awaits you? What did our Lord say, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." The righteous enter into life eternal, but the ungodly suffer everlasting punishment! I will not dwell upon the terrors of the world to come, but let me remind you that they are yours unless Christ is yours! Death is yours, judgment is yours and Hell will be yours—and all that dreadful wrath which God means when He says, "Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you." Oh, run

not on in sin, lest you fall into Hell! I would gladly set up this railing to keep you from a dreadful and fatal fall.

Once more, *remember the love of God in Christ Jesus*. I heard, the other day, of a bad boy whom his father had often rebuked and chastened, but the lad grew worse. One day he had been stealing and his father felt deeply humiliated. He talked to the boy, but his warning made no impression. And when he saw his child, so callous, the good man sat down in his chair and burst out crying as if his heart would break. The boy stood very indifferent for a time, but, at last, as he saw the tears falling on the floor and heard his father sobbing, he cried, "Father, don't! Father, don't do that! What do you cry for, Father?" "Ah, my Boy," he said, "I cannot help thinking what will become of you, growing up as you are. You will be a lost man and the thought of it breaks my heart." "O Father!" he said, "pray don't cry. I will be better. Only don't cry and I will not vex you again." Under God, that was the means of breaking down the boy's love of evil—and I hope it led to his salvation. Just like that is Christ to you. He cannot bear to see you die and He weeps over you, saying, "How often would I have blessed you, but you would not!" Oh, by the tears of Jesus, wept over you in effect when He wept over Jerusalem, turn to Him! Let that be a railing to keep you from ruin!

God bless you, and help you to trust in Jesus, and His shall be the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 6:1-14; 30-45.

Verses 1-6. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes and saw a great company come unto Him, He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to test him: for He Himself knew what He would do.* That verse is worth thinking over. How often does Christ seem to ask us riddles and place us in difficulties, so that we begin to say, "What will come of this? How shall we escape from this temptation, or how shall we stand under this trial?" He Himself knows what He will do and it is a very blessed thing when our faith, being tried, shows itself to be strong enough to leave the burden with Him who can bear it, and to leave the difficulty with Him who can meet it! "He Himself knew what He would do."

7. *Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may take a little.* That is our way. When our faith is little, we begin calculating the pennyworths that are needed, and we make them out to be so much more than we possess or can possibly scrape together. That is not faith, it is reason—poor, dim, shallow reason which forgets the Infinite and begins to calculate its own limited and insufficient forces!

8-10. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him, there is a lad here who has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.* When Christ bids men sit down, He has a dainty carpet for them to sit upon. "There was much grass in the place." One might have thought that some of those people would have refused to sit down, for it is not everybody who will sit at a table that has nothing on it—but God knows how to move the hearts of men, so these people, if they had not strong faith, yet had faith enough to do as they were told—I wish that we all had as much faith as that!

11. *And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.* "As much as they would." Note those words, for they are the rule at Christ's feasts. Of earthly things, He gives us as much as we need—and of heavenly things, as much as we would! "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." "According to your faith be it unto you."

12, 13. *When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.* "Waste not, want not." Heavenly economy is to be practiced in the things of God. Christ is not stingy, but He is no waster.

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.* They were convinced through their stomachs! They came to this conviction merely through eating and drinking—and that faith which comes by the senses is no faith at all, or it is a sensual faith which cannot save the soul! These people who came to this belief through eating, were very poor followers of Christ, as He said to them, "You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

30-32. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven.* Jesus did not say to them, "I gave that bread to your fathers in the wilderness," as He might truly have said. It was not Moses who fed their fathers in the wilderness, it was God who had fed them and if they would but think, they would clearly see that it was so. But the Master took them on to another tack and led their thoughts to a higher topic.

33, 34. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.* Not knowing the meaning of their own request.

35-39. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: He that comes to Me shall never hunger, and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That you also have seen Me, and believe not. 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.* Many want to pry between the closed leaves of God's secret purposes to see what His will is. Now this is it—"This is the Father's will."

39-44. *Which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the Bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven; Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.* Note how that Doctrine of Sovereign Grace is used by Christ. He seems to wave it, like a lighted torch, in the faces of His adversaries, as if He said to them, "I did not expect you to understand Me. I did not expect you to receive Me. Do not think that you surprise Me by your action. Imagine not that you frustrate My eternal purposes by rejecting Me. I knew that you would not receive Me and that, as you are, you could not come to Me, for 'no man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.'"

44, 45. *And I will raise Him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* May we so hear and so learn of the Father that we may come to Jesus Christ!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 533, 546.

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

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NO. 3000—
OR, COME AND WELCOME
NO. 3000

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1876.

"Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."
John 6:37.

[This Sermon is the 3000th that has been published in regular weekly succession since No. 1, "The Immutability of God," was issued in January, 1856. The Lord's-Day morning Sermons, with many of those preached in the evening, were published during Mr. Spurgeon's lifetime. The rest of the evening Sermons are now being issued and there are still sufficient unpublished manuscripts to last for some years. The whole of the 3000 Sermons are kept in stock, and any quantity of any of them can be obtained of the publishers, Messrs. Passmore a Alabaster, Paternoster Buildings, London, EC. No. 3000 has been especially selected in harmony with Mr. Spurgeon's custom of issuing, on such memorable occasions, a striking and simple Sermon that might be even more widely distributed than the ordinary issues. Those previously published have been as follows: Volume 17, NUMBER ONE THOUSAND—OR, "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE"; Volume 25, NUMBER 1500—OR, "LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT"; Volume 33, NUMBER 2000—OR, "HEALING BY THE STRIPES OF JESUS"; Volume 43, NUMBER 2500—OR, "ENTRANCE AND EXCLUSION." The publishers are always pleased to quote special terms for quantities, and to send post free to all applicants their Textual Index of over 2900 Sermons, and a full List of C. H. Spurgeon's books at reduced prices. It is almost needless to say that in the whole history of religious literature, there has never before been such an event as the issue of 3000 of one Preacher's Sermons in weekly numbers for nearly 52 years! It is a remarkable fact that more than 750 of these Sermons have been published since Dr. Spurgeon was "called Home" on January 31, 1892. Will all believing readers pray for the Lord's blessing upon the whole of the 3000 Sermons now issued?] [Thought you might enjoy this quote of the publishers—EOD]

WHILE I was trying to prepare a sermon for this evening, someone called at my door—I daresay the friend is here tonight, (I hope so)—and left this little note—"I entreat you to pray, especially this evening, for a most unhappy case—for one who is in great agony of mind, that God, in His Infinite Mercy, would send one ray of light into the dark soul. Please ask all the converted ones in your congregation to pray for me, that Grace may be restored to a most unhappy soul." Well, I am sure that all Christians here will earnestly pray that the light may break into the thick

darkness and that the troubled spirit may find rest, but, after all, there is a very strong temptation to a heart in trouble to rest in the prayers of others rather than to go immediately to Christ for relief. Yet all the prayers in the world cannot, by themselves, help a man who is in despair. The light can never come into that dungeon except through one window—and that is a window through which the tearful eyes may always look—the window of everlasting love as revealed in the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

I thought that the text which I have selected might, by the blessing of the Spirit of God, be made the means of comfort, not only to that person who wrote to me, but to many others who may be seeking the Savior. There was also another circumstance which led me to select this text. A gentleman who pressed my hand very earnestly one day, said to me, "Do you remember preaching at the sawmills in the Old Kent Road?" I replied, "Yes." "I also remember it," he said, "indeed, I can never forget it. You preached from this text, 'There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.' My comfort was that towards the close of the sermon, you said, 'I have preached upon this terrible no wise. Now, before I have done, I will preach upon a blessed no wise,' and then you began to talk to us about that text, 'Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,' and that message yielded me comfort which I have never lost."

Well, medicine that has worked so well in one case may, perhaps, be just as efficacious in another. And if the Holy Spirit blessed the text when it was only brought in at the end of a sermon, perhaps He will bless it even more, now that we set it in the very forefront of our discourse. No, we know that He will, for we have asked His blessing upon it and, therefore, we *expect* the blessing to come. Dear Friend in trouble of soul, I hope it will come to you!

I. I am going to make five brief observations upon this passage, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." The first observation is that OUR TEXT IS FROM THE LIPS OF JESUS HIMSELF.

And because Christ Himself said it, we dare not doubt that *it is absolutely true*. Imagine that you see Him standing here just now—that same Jesus who fed the multitude and loved the souls of men even unto death. And then imagine that you hear these words from His lips which are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. Oh, with what wondrous accents would He say, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out!" I can but feebly repeat what He must have uttered in the purest heavenly tones, yet I still pray you to remember that it is Jesus who still speaks to you, from His Word, even from Heaven! Do not dare to doubt this, or to question the truth of what He said. It was true before He died, but now that He has sealed His testimony with His most precious blood and proved His love to sinners by laying down His life for them, oh, do not

doubt the truth of His utterance, but confide fully in Him who thus speaks to you from Heaven!

The message, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," must be true, for it fell from the lips of Jesus! And next, it is eminently consistent with His Character. You cannot conceive of Him as casting out a soul that came to Him! The scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in the very act of adultery, yet He did not condemn her, but said to her, "Go, and sin no more."—

"His heart is made of tenderness;
His heart melts with love."

He was sometimes angry, but it was with self-sufficient Pharisees and self-righteous hypocrites who flaunted their lies before His face—but He wept over the doomed city of Jerusalem. He had a gentle word for the woman in the city who was a sinner, and tender compassion for the little ones that were brought to Him. To those who would have driven them away, He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God." Look up into His face and then look upon His hands and His feet which still bear the scars of His passion and ask yourselves, "Is it consistent with the Character of Christ—with the heart of Christ—with the Person of Christ—with the great objective for which He came to this earth—for Him to cast out any soul that comes to Him?" No, the words of our text must be true, for Jesus uttered them and His whole life tallies with them!

Remember, too, *that when Jesus spoke these words, He spoke as One who knew everything*. If you and I make a promise, or a statement concerning our future mode of procedure, we may not be aware of the position in which we may one day be placed—and it may become impossible for us to keep the promise. Or the course of action which we thought we would surely follow may become too difficult for us. But our Lord Jesus Christ knew all things—all things about Himself and all things about sinners—and when He said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," He included all possible contingencies with regard to Himself—if there can be any contingencies with Him—and all possible contingencies that have to do with those who come to Him. "He knew what was in man," and He also knew what was in His own heart and, therefore, when He spoke, He spoke deliberately and accurately—and with full knowledge of all the surroundings and circumstances of those who would come to Him!

Let me also remind you, Brothers and Sisters, *that this message has been true up to now*. What Jesus said to these Jews has stood fast for more than 18 Centuries. There is not a sinner, now living, who can bear testimony that he has come to Christ and that Christ has cast him out. There is not a soul in Hell that, with all the fully-developed sin of that dreadful place, dares, even in blasphemy, to say, "I came to Jesus and

He cast me out." Nor shall there ever live in the universe one soul, however guilty and defiled, that shall be able to truthfully say, "I came to Him, but He shut up His heart of compassion against me and cast me out."

Well, if it is so—that Jesus spoke this message and, therefore, it is true. If it is just, like He and exactly according to His whole method of procedure, then let us believe it and let us plead it! If you want to come to Him, but have the haunting fear that He may, perhaps, cast you out, oh, lay hold upon Him and say to Him, "Lord, You have said, 'Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.'" Remind Him of His own words! Plead His promise and you will never find Him run back from it, or revoke the word which has gone forth out of His lips! In your direst despair, when it seems as if He frowned upon you—when you call unto Him and yet receive no answer—when, as He spoke to the Syrophenician woman, He seems to give you harsh words instead of gracious promises—lay hold upon Him, grasp the hem of His garment and say to Him, "I will not let You go, for You have said, 'Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.' Lo, I come to You! I know You cannot lie—give me a welcome, or else I shall die. I know You cannot be false to Your word and here, if I perish, I will perish pleading the precious promise on which my soul would gladly stay herself!"

II. The next observation is this—THESE WORDS WERE SPOKEN IN THE SINGULAR. *"Him* that comes to Me."

This is all the more remarkable because the first part of the verse is in the plural—*"All* that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."And, naturally and grammatically, the second clause should run, "and those that come to Me I will in no wise cast out." But it is not so worded. There is a change from the plural to the singular and Jesus says, *"Him* that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." And, I think, with admirable reason, for the Lord is always wise even in the choice of numbers and there is a motive for this change.

It may be this—here is *personality recognized*. You have been one of a crowd before, but you are all alone now. You used to think of a sort of national Christianity and say, "Yes, we are all Christians because we are Englishmen." But you know better than that now. You used to reckon that you might consider yourself a Christian because your father and mother were godly people—you belonged to a Christian family. But you know better than that now. You know that the mere hereditary faith which comes to men by natural birth is of no spiritual value, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." "You must be born-again." You feel one by yourself—to use an old metaphor, you are like the wounded stag which retires into the glades of the forest to bleed and die alone. I daresay, when you now hear a sermon, if it is full of threats, you think that it is all meant for you. You have begun to read the Bible and to look

for texts that may speak to you. And though, as yet, you have not lighted on a promise that seems like a lone star to shine especially for you, yet you are looking for such a promise and you hope that you will find it. At any rate, you are now cut loose from everything and everybody else—you feel yourself to be a separate individual that is to be judged, before long, before the bar of God and, you fear to be cast away forever beneath His wrath. Think now—Jesus puts this message in the singular—"Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," and you, also, are in the singular! Does not this message just suit your personality?

It is very possible that there is also in you a *singularity suspected*. You think that there never was anybody exactly like you. If you were like others, you would have hope, but there are certain points about your sin, certain aspects of your character and certain doubts and fears with which you are assailed which set you apart as a lot out of all catalogs. You feel that you are quite alone—you are the odd man or the odd woman. You cannot think that even the most general promises can relate to you. You consider that the act of indemnity exempts you from its operations—even if it does not exempt anybody else, it exempts you. It is for this very reason that Jesus Christ puts the matter as He does. He speaks to you odd people, to you solitary people, to you singularities, to you odds and ends of the universe and He says, "Him that comes to Me"—though such a man as he has never lived before—though he is the one exception to all rules, yet, "Him that comes to me"—any "him" in all the world "that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." What a blessed thing it is that thus, by using the singular number, Christ seems to meet our suspicions of being singular and calls the singular ones, the odd ones, to come to Him!

And here, too, perhaps, there may be a kind of *desertion supposed*. You think you could come to Christ if the friends of your youth were with you. You could come if a beloved teacher or a godly parent could pray with you. But, possibly, you have sinned yourself out of society—your transgressions have made you to be like the leper whom they put outside the camp and they will not allow you to come in among the tribes of Israel lest you should pollute the rest. Well, poor leper, you that are set apart—you that feel yourself to be given up even by those who once had some sort of hope concerning you—you for whom good people scarcely venture to pray because you seem to have committed the sin which is unto death—you have staggered their faith and disappointed all their hopes yet here still stands the text and it is addressed to you, deserted and alone as you are! If nobody will help you, and nobody will pray for you—if your tears of repentance must fall in secret—if everyone who hears about you thinks you are only a hypocrite, trying to whine yourself into favor—yet, still come to Christ all alone, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out!"

Perhaps this message is put in the singular for one more reason—*emptiness confessed*. Some people, when they come to Christ, bring with them a great deal that is not worth bringing. That is a false coming. But there are others who are so destitute that they feel that if they do come to Christ, they will have to come alone because they have nothing to bring to Him. Yet Christ does not say, "If you come to Me with good feelings. If you come repenting. If you come with this, or that, or another Christian excellence, I will in no wise cast you out." No! If you come to Christ as naked as you were when you were born and as naked as you will have to be when you go back to the earth—if you come with nothing whatever—as long as you come—Christ puts the word in the singular that it may mean you, and only you—bringing with you nothing but that which is your own, namely, your sin and your misery, your emptiness, your needs, your inability, your spiritual death and everything else which now crushes you well-near to despair—if you come, you, you, you, you, whoever you may be—if you come to Him, He will in no wise cast you out! Thus have we tried to say something which God may bless to the comfort of the singular ones.

III. Notice, next, that THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE PERSON COMING TO CHRIST WITH VERY WONDERFUL SIMPLICITY. *"Him that comes to Me."* John Bunyan truly says, "That means any 'Him' in all the world." And I venture to say that it means anyone in all the world who does but come to Christ. In Christ's day there were some who came to Him doubtingly, like that man who said, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief," yet He did not cast them out! There were some who came to Jesus limping, for they were lame. There were some who came to Him with very great difficulty, for they were paralyzed in part of their bodies—but they did come to Him and He did not cast them out. And there were some who came blindly. They could not see who He was, nor what He was, but, nevertheless, they came to Him and He did not cast them out because they were blind. There were some who had to be carried to Him, yet, since it was with their own consent that they were carried, as long as they did but come, He did not cast them out! One man, you remember, came to Him through the ceiling—his friends had to take away the covering of the house to let him down into the Presence of Jesus. Well, if you get to Jesus over hedge or ditch, over the wall, or through the ceiling, or down the chimney—if you do but come to Him, it matters not how you come as long as you do but come!

IV. My fourth observation shall be this—THE TEXT CONTAINS AN ABSOLUTE NEGATIVE. "Him that comes to Me, I will in *no wise cast out.*"

Indeed, it is more than one negative, for it might be rendered "I will not, *not* cast out," or, "I will never, never cast out." In our language, one negative cancels another, but in the Greek language, negatives

strengthen one another. Indeed, we sometimes use similar expressions and do so very properly in order to make our meaning clear and forcible, as when we sing—

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not depart to his foes.
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
He will never, no never, no never forsake!"

The difficulty which many feel is this—*perhaps they are not elect*—and if they are not, then, even though they come to Jesus, He must cast them out. Now, that is supposing what never did occur, because no non-elect soul ever came to Jesus! But I need not go into that matter, for my text suffices without any explanation. Read the first part of the verse—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." There Christ is speaking about election and with that subject distinctly before His eyes, not forgetting the Predestination of God and His eternal will and Purpose, Jesus, knowing what He was saying, said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." So, Predestination and Election cannot be inconsistent with the Truth of God in this text and, though you may sometimes fear that your ship will split on that rock, it really is not a rock in the harbor's mouth when Christ is the harbor! If you come to Him, you need not trouble about the secret decrees and purposes of God. There are such decrees and purposes, but they cannot, any one of them, be contrary to the Truth which Christ so explicitly declares here, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." In the prophecy of Isaiah, the Lord says, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." I have often blessed the Lord for that text—it does not tell us what God has said, but it tells us what He has *not* said, and that is, that He said not unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek you Me in vain." He never tantalizes us! He never bids us seek Him with the reserve in His own mind that we shall not find Him. So, speaking broadly, yet truthfully, Christ says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." There is no secret purpose of God, nothing written in the great book of human destiny, nothing in the mysteries of eternity which can ever make this declaration of Christ untrue to you, or anyone else! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

"I am not troubled about that matter," says one. "My difficulty is of a more practical kind. I can leave the mysteries, but there is something that I cannot leave, and that is my past sin." Well, Friend, when the Lord Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," He looked right down the centuries to the end of time. He did not say, "Him that comes to me *today,* I will in no wise cast out." The declaration, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," is as true at this moment as it was when the words first fell from Christ's lips. He knew then, for He knew all things, what a sinner you would be and you were in His mind

then, for that mind of His is Infinite and Divine! And He knew that there would be such a man, or such a woman, as you are—and that you would sin just as you have done. Yet, taking all that into consideration, He said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

I do not know what your special sin may have been. Perhaps it would be wrong for me to try to guess, but this I do know, if you come to Christ, "though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It may be that you have to mourn over long years of aggravated transgression—sins against light and sins against knowledge. I cannot read your life story and I do not want to read it—it is sufficient for me that Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." If you came to Him and He cast you out because of these long years of sin, His declaration would not be true. If you had lived as long as Methuselah. If you had sinned as grossly as Manasseh. If you had lived a life of dishonesty and unchastity, yet, if you really came to Him, He could not, being a true Christ, cast you away! If all the sins that men have ever committed could be laid to the charge of one poor sinner, yet if that sinner came to Christ, He could not cast Him away! The phrase, "in no wise," has such a wonderful sweep that it comprehends the grossest of crimes and the most heinous transgressions.

"Ah," says another, "it is not my past sins which trouble me so much as *my present hardness of heart*. My heart is like the nether millstone. My eyes never weep for sin. No, I can even think of sin almost without alarm." So, dear Friend, you judge yourself, but probably your judgment is a great mistake. Yet, even were it true, remember that Christ has not said, "Him that comes to Me, I will only cast out because his heart is hard," or, "because he refuses to weep." He has not put in any exception! He met your case when He said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise—not even for that reason—cast out." If your heart is like iron, where will it ever be softened except in the furnace of His Love?

"Oh," says another, "I have been thinking of my sins and I have tried to repent." Yes, but you must remember that—

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.
'Tis a sense of blood-bought pardon
That dissolves the heart of stone."

When a soul comes to Christ, *then* it gets repentance, it gets tenderness of heart, it gets all that it really needs! And all attempts to get these things *before* you come to Christ are like trying to get the effect before you get the cause—to get the fruit before you get the root! O Soul, however old your condition may be, come to Christ, for He can cure you! A good deal of preaching has been addressed to persons of a certain character, and sinners who listen to that character-preaching, keep asking, "Is that our character?" In this way, their eyes are fixed upon

themselves and their own characters, instead of upon Christ! That is a gospel which will do them no good. But Christ's Gospel turns a man's eyes away from his own character. It says to him, "Admit, once and for all, that your character is incorrigibly bad and that you deserve to be sent to the lowest Hell. But, that being the case, the Gospel still says to you, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.'" Some gospels might help a man if he could get a certain distance on the way to Heaven, but the good Samaritan came just where the poor wounded traveler was—and Jesus Christ comes to sinners just where they are, and just *as* they are—hard-hearted, callous, thoughtless, careless, yet often conscious of all this and, strange to say, lamenting that they cannot lament, and crying, "I would feel if I could! I feel that it is a pain to think I cannot feel. I am sad to think I am not sad, and weary to think I am not weary." Well, then, Jesus says, "Just as you now are, come unto Me. Leave your care, just as it is, in My hands, and I will undertake it for you."

Did I hear somebody say, *"Oh, but I am so ignorant*"? Well, my dear Friend, so are all of us! The only difference between a very wise man and a very great fool is that the wise man knows that he is a fool, and the other does not. When all the knowledge of our wisest men is put together, it makes but a very small book compared with the vast volume that contains what they do *not* know. Why, the most highly-educated man, now living, has only just gone to an A. B. C. school as yet, and as for those very learned divines—the D. D.s and the LL. D.s, and those doctors who think they know so much that they know better than the Bible—well, after all, their knowledge, as compared with what is yet to be known, is only the information of an ant or a magpie—nothing more! We are all fools together and what a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus Christ does not require a lot of knowledge of us! It is to know Him that suffices us. To know yourself as a sinner and Christ as your Savior is all the knowledge you really need in order to find eternal life. Never let your ignorance stand in your way, for Christ virtually puts the matter thus, "Him that comes to Me—though He cannot read a letter in the Bible, and hardly knows that twice two are four—if he does but come to Me, I will in no wise cast him out."

"Ah, yes," says another, "but *I am so poor!*" Well, that is the very last thing that you should ever mention as a hindrance to your coming to Christ, for His Gospel is especially preached to the poor. One of the proofs that He gave of His Messiahship was this, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." And, oftentimes, He has "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith," to be the "heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him." So that you cannot truly say that you are too poor to come to Christ.

"Ah," says another, "but *I am so tried and troubled*." Suppose you are? You do not imagine that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Him that comes to me, I will not cast out unless he is tried and troubled," do you? Why, poor Soul, if there is one who could *not* be left out, it is just the one who is most troubled! What is it that moves the heart of Jesus towards us? Nothing but His pity and love. And the more trouble you have, the more cause there is for His pity to display itself upon you. Instead of keeping back from Christ because you have so many troubles, come to Him to find comfort under them!

"Everybody has been so unkind to me," says one. "My heart is broken." Well, the Savior, who uttered our text, could truly say, "Reproach has broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." So He understands all about you and He will bind up your broken heart! "Ah, but I am so despised, and slandered, and misrepresented." So was He. They called Him "a gluttonous man, and a winebibber." He is exactly the Savior you need. "Ah, but I have lost my husband and all my friends are dead and gone. I hardly know where to find my daily bread." Christ said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." He can sympathize with you in the deep affliction of your poverty, so go to Him! You should go, above all others—you who have not a comfortable home, before whom the whole earth seems a desert—you who seem to have been turned out of Paradise and there is nothing before you but the land which brings forth thorns and thistles—it is in your ears that I would especially repeat the ancient promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." You shall overcome all your enemies if you but come to Jesus Christ!

It is a sweet thing to think that the text is so comprehensive—"Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Have you ever read Mr. John Bunyan's *"Come and Welcome"*? He very wonderfully expounds this text and, if I remember rightly, he makes the sinner say, "But I am so great a sinner." "I will in no wise cast you out." "But I have sinned against knowledge." "I will in no wise cast you out." "But I have been a thief." "I will in no wise cast you out." "I have been a fornicator and adulterer." "I will in no wise cast you out." "But I have been a murderer." "I will in no wise cast you out." "But I cannot believe as I would." "I will in no wise cast you out." And he keeps on, page after page, supposing all things that he can well think of—but I will not keep on so long—I will just say this—Suppose what you like and though it is a fact, yet, still my text covers it—"Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out!"

V. My last observation is this, OUR TEXT PLEDGES OUR LORD'S PERSONAL ACTION. "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

He does not say anything here about what His servants will do. Some of them look with disapproval at big sinners. They have been known to do so before now and some of them are still a little like that elder brother who said, "As soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf." But Christ says to the prodigal, "I will not cast you out. Your brother may be unwilling to receive you, but I will welcome you."

Now, if the Lord Jesus Christ does not cast us out, it really does not matter who else wants to do so. So long as the Master of the feast does not reject us, we may keep our place at the table! It is a very suggestive thing that my text is in the very chapter which records the great feast when thousands sat down upon the grass and were fed by Christ. I daresay they were some very strange characters there that day. None of them were too good, but I expect that among that crowd of loafers around the Savior—for loafers many of them were, for they had followed for the sake of the loaves and that is just the meaning of the word, "loafer"—there were some fine gentlemen from Jerusalem who said, "Well, if that is the Messiah, He has a pretty following, indeed!" On another occasion they called Him "a friend of publicans and sinners." And they said, "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them." He never denied it, He rather gloried in it! He said that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that "they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He loved to have them about Him—loafers and vagabonds as they were. I do not read that He said to Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, "Now, look. We are going to give a feast, but it must be on the principle of the Charity Organization Society and we must not give anything to people who are undeserving." It is true that God gives to the unthankful and the unbelieving, but modern charity says, "That is wicked!" Well, I daresay there is a good deal to be said for that view of the matter, but Jesus Christ did not believe in that view. There were many undeserving people there and He fed them all! Christ did not feed any man there because he was good, but because he was hungry. He saw that they were tired and faint, so he multiplied the loaves and the fishes, and fed them till they were satisfied.

And today, Jesus Christ does not give His mercy to any man because he deserves it, or because there are any good qualities in the man that may merit the display of His Grace—He saves people because He loves to save the unworthy—and He would not have them perish. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." That is His only reason and, blessed be His name that it is His only reason for saving sinners, because you and I, who are among the most unworthy persons who have ever lived, may come and sit at the feet of His Grace and know that He has pledged

His personal honor and His own private Character for it that him that comes to Him, He will not cast out! If HE does not cast us out, who can? As He says, "I will in no wise cast you out," rest assured that all His servants and all His enemies, even if they wanted to cast us out, would be quite unable to accomplish the task!

When Jesus says, "I will not cast out Him that comes to Me," He means that He will let him stay with Him. If you get into Christ's family by simply trusting Him, you shall always be in His family. If you get into my Lord's house by simply trusting Him, you shall always be in His house! He will not cast you out, but He will receive you, pardon you, cleanse you, bless you. You shall have the power, the right, the authority to become a son of God—and you shall have the nature of a son, you shall receive the Spirit of adoption whereby you shall be able to cry, "Abba, Father." You shall have the blessings of a son—you shall be provided for, educated and trained for the skies. You shall not be denied any blessing or favor which is given to God's family. If you do but come to Christ, His Grace shall be free to you, His House shall be free for you, His city and His Kingdom shall cost you nothing, His heart shall be free for you and, by-and-by, His Heaven shall be free for you, for where He is, there shall you be also—and as He sits at His Father's right hand, so shall you sit down with Him upon His Throne!

I have known the time when if I had heard such a sermon as this, I think I would have leaped for joy to think that there was such mercy to be had by me! I would not have needed any fine speaking, or any display of oratory. I would only have needed to be assured that Jesus would receive me and I would at once have come to Him! And this I know—every truly hungry soul here will come and feed on this Truth of God tonight, and every thirsty soul will come and drink! But if there are any here who think they are good enough—if there are any who fancy that they have not sinned against God and so do not feel that they are in any great danger, or have any great needs—well, it will be according to the old rule, the full will loathe the loaded table, but to the hungry man even bitter things will be sweet!

I can only give you the Gospel invitation and leave it with the Lord to incline you to accept it. May you be led to come to Jesus by a spiritual act of faith this very hour!

—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 VISION OF THE FIELD
NO. 3001

**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.**

***"For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you,
and you shall be tilled and sown."
Ezekiel 36:9.***

THESE words were addressed to the mountains of Palestine. Albeit that they are now waste and barren, they are yet to be as fruitful and luxuriant as in the days of Israel's grandeur. God will turn to them—the vines shall then crown the summits and there shall be harvests again upon the mountaintops.

The mountains of Israel were a soil of glass in which you could see reflected, at a single glimpse, the condition and character of the people. While the Israelites were obedient to God, the mountains dripped with new wine and the little hills seemed to melt with fertility. Honey dripped from the rock and oil appeared to be distilled of the very flint. When the people sinned so that God gave them over to their enemies, irrigation being neglected and the culture of the soil no longer profitable, the mountains straightaway became as blank and barren as though they were a howling wilderness! And then, again, when the people repented and turned to God, the soil began to cover the mountains, carried up there by the industry of the people, the sides of the hills were terraced, the waste places began to blossom and the vines were once more filled with clusters. You could thus read the history of the people in the condition of their hills.

I intend to take the hills of Israel as a representation of our own state—the state of our own heart. As they really did mirror forth the condition of the people of old, the metaphor becomes peculiarly attractive. I shall divide the subject thus—first, *man's heart, by nature, is like a waste field.* Secondly, *there is no hope for that field unless God shall turn to it in mercy.* Thirdly, *when He does turn to it, He will have to till it,* for, lastly, *not until after tillage can it be sown with any hope of success.*

I. MAN'S HEART, BY NATURE, IS LIKE A WASTE FIELD.

A waste field produces no harvest. Reaper, you shall never fill your arms with sheaves, the axle of the wagon shall never creak beneath the load of harvest and the young men shall never dance with the maidens at the harvest home. Let the field lie waste and the fruit it will yield in a whole century will not be sufficient to feed a single individual!

Such is man, we say, by nature. He brings forth no fruit unto God. Leave him alone and he will live unto himself. Perhaps he will be a

respectable sinner and, if so, he will selfishly spend all his life in trying to provide for himself, alone, or for his family, which is but a part of himself. He will go through the world from his birth to his sepulcher without a thought of God. He will never do anything for God. His heart will never beat with love to Him. He may sometimes, out of sheer selfishness, go with others to worship, but he will not worship God, whatever difference he may show to the outward form. His heart will be in complete alienation from the God who made him. He will live and he will die a strange monstrosity in the world—a creature that has lived without love to his Creator!

Perhaps, however, he will be a disreputable sinner. He will live in sin, find his comfort in drunkenness, perhaps in lust, possibly in dishonesty—but regardless, he will bring forth nothing that God can accept. I think I see the great God coming to look at the man, even as a farmer might come to look upon his fallow field. What can God see? Is there a prayer? Yes, he says a few forms of prayer, but they are dead, lifeless things, and God cannot accept them. Does He see any praise? Perhaps a shriveled hymn growing up in the corner of the field, but since there is no heart in it, it rots and dies, and God abhors it. He looks the whole field through. There is no thought for God, no consecration of time to God, no desire to honor God, no longing to produce in the world fresh glory to God, no effort to raise up to Him fresh voices that shall praise His name. He lives unto himself, or to his fellow men and having so lived, he so dies.

Now you know that there are a great many people who say to themselves, "Well, if we do good to our neighbor, if we are kind to others, that is enough." And they expect to have some reward for this. But, mark you, every servant expects his master to pay his wages—surely then, if you serve your fellow men, *they* ought to reward you. Let them give you a statue, or let them emblazon your name on one of the rolls of fame. Let them sound down your exploits to future generations! Still, let your debtor and creditor account be fair. If you have not done anything distinctly and avowedly in the service of God, there is no remuneration that you can reasonably expect God to give you! What have you brought forth to Him? Nothing whatever! And we say it sincerely, for we know how sadly true it is—the natural heart of man never does and never can produce so much as one single grain that God can receive as being to His honor and glory. As for the natural children of men in all their generations—

"Like brutes they live, like brutes they die.
Like grass they flourish, till Your breath
Blasts them into everlasting death."

Alas for them! Unto You, great God, they render no prayer nor praise, no heart-felt love nor reverent adoration. They pass through this world as though there were no God!

Worse than this, *the field that has never been plowed or sown does produce something*. There is an activity about human nature that will not let us live without doing. Unless you should shut yourselves up in a cell like a monk, or live on the top of a pillar, like Simeon Stylites, you cannot

very well pass through life utterly inert—without any purpose of mind, without any movement of the limbs, without any stir of the passions! And I suppose that even Simeon Stylites did exert some influence, for he led other people to be as great fools as himself. And even monks do some mischief by losing the interest on talents for which they ought to have rendered a good account—and spending their time in laziness which they ought to have employed in useful service. "None of us lives to himself." Is there no wheat growing on that soil? No barley? No rye? Very well, then, there will be grass, and cockle, and stickers and all sorts of weeds. So it is with the unrenewed heart. It produces hard thoughts of God, enmity against the Most High. It is prolific of evil imaginations, wrong desires and bitter envying. As these ripen, they bring forth ill words—idle, or, it may be, lascivious words and perhaps atheistic, blasphemous words! And as these ripen, they come to actions—and the man becomes an offender in his deeds, perhaps against man, certainly against God. He lives to produce sour grapes. The apples of Gomorrah hang plentifully upon him.

I know I am describing some here present. There are many such persons to be found in all our assemblies. They have done no good in their lives. Measuring their lives by the standard of God, they have done nothing. On the other hand, they have been guilty of much evil—they have brought forth fruit unto sin. Nor is this the worst of it. The bad farmer, who lets his fields run to weeds, does mischief to the neighboring farm. Here comes the wind, willing to waft seed—good seed if it can find it—into other soil. It will take the down of the flower seed and bear it into a garden where it will be needed. Or, if it must, it will carry the seeds of the thistle and so, when it comes sweeping by the farmer's neglected field, it does damage to all the fields in the neighborhood.

It is so with the sinner. "One sinner destroys much good." Is he a father? His children grow up to be as ungodly as himself. Is he a master? Then his men, like him, break the Sabbath and neglect the ways of God. Is he a workman? Then his fellow workmen, who are younger than he, take encouragement from his evil example and they are led into sin while they blindly follow in his wake. Whatever station of life you put him into, he does mischief! The more eminent he is, the more eminently mischievous he is. I do not allude to those who are grave offenders against the laws of society. I mean those good, decent people who have no fear of God before their eyes. I think they do very much mischief, for the devil's cause gets respectable through having them on its side! Those who persistently live in violation of Divine Law and who do not bend their necks to the yoke of Christ, may be very amiable, very moral and very excellent. If so, in a certain sense, the more is the pity because they get an increase of power to do evil, for others say, "If such good men as these can live without religion and live despising it, why shouldn't we?" Thus a bad cause, which would be hissed off the stage if there were none but rascals to side with it, still walks respectably in the light of day because of these persons who back it up! God deliver you, my dear Hearers, from being like a field that does mischief unto others! Beware, you upas tree,

lest your poisonous influence should receive the reward of Hell fire! Beware, you cumberer of the ground, standing there and sucking nutriment out of the soil, and cursing the other trees of the vineyard, lest the sharp ax should soon cut you to the core and lay you level with the ground!

A barren field resembles the heart of man in that *all the good influences that fall upon it are wasted*. Comes there sunshine—it produces no harvest on the fallow land. Here are the precious drops of dew glistening in the morning, but they cannot produce an ear of corn. And here fall the sweet smiling showers of rain that make the new-mown fields all fragrant, but this field gets no good from it. It is even so with you who are still in a state of nature. You have the blessings of Providence, but they do not make you grateful. You even have the blessings of the outward means of Divine Grace, but they excite in you no longings towards God. Surely, my dear Friends, if this has been long the case with you, you must be near unto cursing!

Yet the waste field does produce something pleasant to the eyes, something worth looking at, for have you not seen the gorgeous poppy and the finest specimens of the ranunculus growing in the field that was never plowed and sown? And there is the dog-rose yonder and the foxglove, and the forget-me-not, all springing up and flourishing where there should have been furrows for wheat! And so a man may have a comely appearance and make a fair show in the flesh, although he does not live near to God. In his character and reputation, there may be many a gaudy flower—yes, as red and as conspicuous as the poppy. He may shine among men and men may talk much about him. But, as the Lord lives, if the Lord's plow has never gone over him, the bright blushing weeds are still just weeds! A poison and a pest, not a blessing or a balm—as the farmer right well knows. Let those of you who are in such a state see an apt emblem of yourselves every time you pass a piece of waste ground, and say, "That is just what we are, and what we shall be to the end of our lives, unless the Grace of God shall interfere to retrieve us from endless ruin."

II. THERE IS NO HOPE FOR THIS FIELD UNLESS GOD SHALL TURN TO IT IN MERCY.

Even so, unless the Lord shall turn to men, no good will ever come of them. The text says, "I am for you, and I will turn to you." Man never does of himself turn to God, and that for obvious reasons. We are sure he never can, for he is "dead in trespasses and sins." We are certain he never will, for by nature he hates anything like a new birth. And if he could make himself a new creature, he would not, for Christ has expressly said, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Man is unwilling to give up sin—he loves it too much—he is unwilling to be made holy for he has no time for spiritual things. God, then, must come to man, for how can man, being naturally dead, and naturally unwilling, ever come to God? Experience tells us that he will not. When did you ever find a man who had come to God—who would say that he came of his own natural inclination? All the saints on earth will tell you

that it was Almighty Grace that made them willing in the day of God's power. If there is any man who ever came to God of himself, I can only say that I know I am not that man—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God."

If any unconverted person here will tell me that he can turn to God when he likes, I ask him why he does not turn now? What measure of damnation must be his due, when, according to his own confession, he has a power which he will not use! Sinner, talk not vainly of what you can do! Man, you can burn in Hell and you can fit yourself for the flames, but this is about all you can do for yourself! You have destroyed yourself! For that inglorious deed, your will was free and your agency free likewise. But only in God is your help found. For this, be sure—you have neither might nor skill. If ever you are saved, it must be by another power than your own and by another faculty than that which dwells in your puny, wicked heart. God must do it! If you wait till your waste field plows itself, or brings forth a harvest, you may wait till doomsday! And if I wait until my Hearers save their own souls, and turn to God with full purpose of heart, I may wait till these hairs are gray, or till these bones are carried to the tomb! And even then they will not have saved themselves! If you have turned to God, my dear Hearers, you know that the Lord has done it, so give Him the glory! If you have not been converted, God help you to cry to Him instantly and earnestly, "Turn us, and we shall be turned." Look to Him who is exalted on high to "give repentance and remission of sins." Seek Him and you shall live!

Oh, that you could now see your wretched plight, that you could feel your imminent peril, that you could believe in the Sovereign operations of God's Grace! Then would I venture to prophesy that salvation had this day come to your house—yes, to your very heart!

III. WHEN THE FIELD IS TO BE PUT UNDER CULTIVATION, IT MUST BE TILLED.

So, when God turns to any man in His mercy, there has to be an operation, a tillage, performed upon his heart! The farmer, unless he is a fool, would never think of sowing his corn upon a field that remains just as it was when it lay fallow. He plows it first. Although we are to scatter the seed everywhere, upon the wayside as well as upon the good ground, God never does. Common calling is addressed to every man, but *effectual calling* comes only to prepared men, to those whom God makes "willing in the day of His power."

Now, what is the plow needed for? Why, it is needed, first of all, *to break up the soil and make it crumble*. It has gotten hard—perhaps it is a heavy clay and then it is all stuck together by the wet and all baked and caked together by the sun that shines on it. Or perhaps it is a light soil. Well, this may not need much plowing, but still, it will cake over, as we all see even in our little gardens. After the rain has gone, the sun comes, the ground cakes over and there will be no place for the seeds to thrust in their tender roots. The corn will not sink down into the earth unless the soil is broken up—and the more thoroughly pulverized it becomes,

the more like dust you get it—the more hope there is that the seed will take good root.

In such-like manner must human hearts be broken. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." The more thoroughly pulverized the heart becomes, the better. Hence, there needs to be the sharp plow of the Law of God driven right through the heart to break up its crust and split the clods. And then must come that blessed plow of the Cross, which is the best plow that yet ever went across a field—that blessed plow of the Cross, which, as it goes over it, turns up the soil, even the very heart of it, and makes the sinner feel his sin and hate it, too, because of the love of God which is shed abroad by Christ Jesus the Lord. Thus you must be tilled, then, that the heart may be broken, for the Seed of God will never get into an unbroken heart!

And the plow is also needed *to destroy the weeds*, for they must be killed. We cannot have them growing. To spare the weeds would be to kill the wheat. The plow comes and cuts some weeds in two. Others it turns over and throws the heavy clods on and leaves them to lie there and be buried. It turns the roots of others up to the sun, and the sun, by the brightness of its shining, scorches them and they die. Some soils need cross-plowing—they need to be plowed this way and the other way, and then they need someone to go through the furrows, afterwards, and pull up the weeds, or else they will not be all rooted out of the soil. And I am afraid that many of us who have been plowed still have divers weeds left in us! The field must not only be plowed, but the weeds must be killed! And so it must be with you, my dear Hearers. If the Lord really saves you, He must kill your drunkenness, He must kill your swearing, He must kill your whoredom, He must kill your lying, He must kill your dishonesty. These must all go! Every single weed must be torn up—there is no hope for you while there is a weed living!

True, I mean not those weeds which still exist, even in the regenerate, but even they must be doomed. John Wellman, a member of the Society of Friends, tells a strange story on himself. One night, after he had been reading the Scripture, as he lay awake, he heard a voice saying, "John Wellman is dead." And, being a Quaker, he was greatly struck therewith and wondered how it was that he could be dead. He asked his wife what his name was and she said, "John Wellman." Whereupon he perceived that he must be alive. At last he understood it to mean that he was dead to the world—that he was henceforth no longer what he formerly had been, but a new creature in Christ Jesus. And it will be a blessed thing for you, my dear Hearers, when the same thing may be said of you in the same sense, "He is dead." There is a man I used to know—I wish I did not still know him so well. I used to meet him every day, some years ago, but we parted company. He would not go with me to Christ, so I went without him. I became a new man and he is dead. Oh, how often I wish he were buried, for I have to drag his dead body about with me and, as it putrefies in my nostrils, I have to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That rascally old man bears my own name and once he was identical with myself. I could gladly

wish he were buried! In like manner, may it come to pass with you that you may die to the flesh and that henceforth you may live in the spirit unto God! And though the old man is still prone to corruption, what a blessed stroke is that which takes the life out of him so that he can no longer rule over you, but the new man reigns supreme!

Plowmen tell us that when they are plowing, if the plow jumps, the work is done badly. They must plow it all alike, from end to end, from headland to headland. If the plow jumps, it has gone over some weeds or knots and not torn them up. I would like always to preach so that my plow may never jump. I sometimes say a hard word because I do not want my plow to jump—I want to tear up all the knots and not leave one in the ground. If one sin is tolerated, or one malicious desire is spared, the life of God is not completely reigning in us! The Lord make a clean sweep of the weeds and burn them all!

Well, now, mark you, *in this tilling there are different soils*. There is the light soil and the heavy soil—and so there are different sorts of constitutions. There are some men who are naturally tender and sensitive. Many, too, of our sisters are like Lydia—they soon receive the Word. There are others who are like the heavy clay soil and you know that the farmer doe not plow both soils alike, or else he would make a sad mess of it! And so, God does not deal with all men alike. Some have, as it were, first a little plowing and then the seed is put in and all is done. But some have to be plowed and cross-plowed, and then there is the scarifier and the clod-crusher and I know not what, which have to be rolled over them before they are good for anything. And perhaps, after all, they produce very little fruit. Different constitutions need different modes of action. Let this comfort some of you who have not been so much alarmed as others have been. Different soils must have different methods. Christ does not deal with all men precisely in the same way in His heavenly tillage.

A farmer has a large variety of implements. Go into the shed of a man who is a high farmer and what a number of implements you may see! I mentioned some of them just now, but there are far more than I can talk about. So it is with our Heavenly Father—He has all kinds of implements. Sometimes it is a Providential trial. One man loses a child. Another has to bury his father. And yonder one has had to follow his wife to the grave. Some have temporal losses—business becomes bad—perhaps they are out of work and half starving. Others are stretched upon a bed of sickness and others are brought near to the grave. These circumstances are all so many different sort of plows with which God plows the soil of our hearts!

The laborers whom the Lord employs are dissimilar, likewise, by the diversity of their gifts. Ministers are some of one sort, and some of another. Even the same minister is not always engaged in the same sort of operation. There are some Sundays when I know some of you find me a terrible scarifier, for I have the terrors of the Lord on my conscience and there is very little comfort in the solemn warnings I am constrained to utter. But if, sometimes, I come down upon you like a clod-crusher, it

is necessary that with true Grace and good hope, I may at other times drill in the seed and nourish your hearts with the very essence of the Gospel. The faithful evangelist has to become all things to all men to accomplish his Master's work. But you must be tilled, for there is no sowing the ground until it has been first stirred about.

And, you know, *the farmer has his proper time for plowing*. Some soils will do better at one season and some at another. There are some soils that break up best after a shower of rain and some that do best when they are dry. There are some hearts, and I think almost all hearts—that are best plowed after a shower of heavenly love has fallen upon them. They are in a grateful frame of mind for mercies received and then the story of a dying Savior comes to them as just that which will touch the strings of their hearts. Anyway, dear Friends, I would like to pass the question around, Have you been tilled? Has your heart been tilled? Has the soil of your heart been turned up? Have the secret things of your heart been discovered and brought to light, just as the plow turns up the ants' nest? Have you been brought to know your own corruptions? Are there straight furrows right through you so that you can cry out, "O God, You have broken me in pieces, be pleased to come to my help"? Then I am glad of it. You are ready to despair of yourself, but I am not ready to despair for you. You tremble, but I am encouraged. I rejoice, not that you are made sorry, but that you sorrow to repentance after a godly manner! God has broken your heart and I know that He will bind it up. If He has plowed you, He will sow you, as He said to the mountains of Israel, "I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown."

IV. UNLESS GOD HAS TILLED THE HEART, IT CANNOT BE SOWN WITH ANY HOPE OF SUCCESS.

After plowing, there comes the sowing. When the heart is ready, God sows it—sows it with the best of wheat. The wise farmer does not sow tail corn but, as Isaiah says, he casts in "the principal wheat." The seed which God sows is living seed. If a farmer were to sow boiled seed that has lost its vitality, what would be the good of it? But he sows living seed. And so the Truth of God which Jesus Christ preaches and bids us to scatter, is living wheat—living seed—and when that drops into the soil, God watches over it. The grub may come and the crow may come, but none of these shall get the seed—

"For Grace insures the crop"—

and up it shall spring—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It shall grow, for God has prepared the soil for it!

Now, I want to scatter a handful of the good Seed of the Kingdom. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust Jesus, and you are saved. There—I saw a handful of that Seed go on the wayside and another handful went upon some of you who are choked with thorns. But if there is a broken heart here, the Seed has fallen upon good ground, for that broken heart says, "What? If I trust Christ, shall I be saved?" Yes, you will be saved in a moment! Every sin forgiven you in a moment, for Jesus Christ took your place and stood and suffered all the punishment of your sins! Therefore God having been just in punishing Christ instead of you, can let you go free, and yet be just as

though He had sent you to Hell! If you trust Christ, the merit of His suffering and the virtue of His righteousness shall be yours. You shall go your way rejoicing because you have peace with God through Jesus Christ! Will you believe or not, Sinner? God give you the Grace to trust Christ! Trust Him now. And if you do, then I shall know that God has plowed you, that God has prepared you before He bade me drop in the Seed! Let those of us who know the power of prayer drag the harrow across the field, for when the Seed is once in, it needs harrowing. Thus let us preach the Word, and thus let us pray that the Seed may take root, spring up, grow and bring forth a hundredfold! So sinners shall be saved and so God shall be glorified!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ECCLESIASTES 11:6-10; 12.

Ecclesiastes 11:6. *In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.* It is our business to sow the good Seed of the Kingdom, to sow it broadcast, to sow it at all times—"In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand." The result of our sowing does not rest with us, but with the great Lord of the Harvest. Some of the Seed may fall by the wayside, some among thorns, some upon a rock, or upon rocky ground with only a thin layer of earth; but if God has called us to be sowers, and we really sow Gospel Seed, some of it will fall into good ground and bring forth fruit, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or even a hundredfold!

7. *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.* And as it is so pleasant for the natural eyes to behold the natural sun, how much more pleasant is it for the *spiritual eyes* to behold the Sun of Righteousness! Sweet as the light of the sun is, the light of the Sun of Righteousness is far sweeter.

8, 9. *But if a man lives many years, and rejoices in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes: but know you that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.* Nobody in his senses supposes that Solomon exhorted young men to walk according to their own heart and according to the sight of their eyes! This is a common way of speaking—as we may say to a man who is going to excess in drink, "Well, drink your full, and be drunk; but you will have to suffer for it. It will certainly exact a penalty at your hands by-and-by." Nobody would be so foolish as to say that we had exhorted the man to drunkenness! On the contrary, we did, as it were, warn him not to continue in his evil course by reminding him of the penalty which would assuredly follow. So here Solomon seems to say, "Do this if you will. Do it if you dare. But remember that there is a Judgment Day coming and God will judge you for all these things—and according to these things will He measure out your doom."

10. *Therefore remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.* There is no doubt that if we were holy, we would be happy. So, if we advise men to put away sorrow from their heart, we must remind them that they cannot do it except by putting away sin. The roots of evil must be cleared away, otherwise, in the long run, to cut down the shoots and leave the roots may be but to strengthen the evil. The removal of sorrow can only be effected by going deeper and clearing the heart of sin—and this can only be accomplished by God's Grace.

Ecclesiastes 12:1. *Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw near, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them.* Do not give God the dregs of life. Do not offer in sacrifice to Him anything that is worn out. Remember that among the first fruits which the Jews were to bring to the priest to be offered on God's altar, there were to be "green ears of corn, dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears." The Lord delights to have the hearts of His people while they are yet children. The Lord said through Hosea the Prophet, "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," as if, while they were but little, God had taught them to take their first steps in walking. There is also that passage in the prophecy of Jeremiah, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." God delights in those early evidences of love in the morning of life, while the dew is upon everything and there is a sparkling freshness all around. I pray that you who are young will remember your Creator in the days of your youth!

2. *While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the star, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain.* As they do in old age, when troubles seem to multiply and the brightness of life seems to have gone.

3, 4. *In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the birds, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low.* This is a wonderfully vivid description of the failure of our natural powers. "The keepers of the house shall tremble"—these are our arms which are the guardians of the house of our body. We naturally thrust out our hands and arms to protect ourselves if we are likely to fall, so they are "the keepers of the house." "The strong men shall bow themselves," that is, our legs and knees begin to shake. "The grinders cease because they are few." Our teeth gradually decay and, at last, fall from their places. They are like the first falling stones of a decaying wall, tottering to show how the rest will soon follow. "Those that look out of the windows are darkened." The eyes begin to lose their quickness of sight and fresh windows—double windows—are sometimes needed to assist the failing sight. "The doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low." The voice fails. Then there comes sleeplessness, so that the first little bird that chirps in the morning wakes up the aged man. And as for music, his ears sometimes fail to

catch the sweetest melody and his own voice is unable to attune itself as once it did—"All the daughters of music shall be brought low."

5. *Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish.* This is one of the most beautiful pieces of poetic description that were ever penned! Here we have a true picture of the nervousness which creeps over men in the decline of life. Then there is the flourishing of the almond tree—there are many before me now whose white hair shows that the almond tree is flourishing!

5. *And the grasshopper shall be a burden.* Those things that we treated lightly in our youth become a very heavy burden in our later years. A little work wearies, a little care fatigues and a little trouble frets us as it never used to do.

5. *And desire shall fail.* The whole nature becomes more calm and less ambitious—and less ardent than it used to be.

5, 6. *Because man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.* "The silver cord" is the spinal marrow, which gradually relaxes, for the strength and power of it are gone. The whole frame begins to show symptoms of the paralysis which is creeping on. "The golden bowl" is the skull, which contains the brain, and whoever has seen a skull must see how appropriate the figure is. Then, in "the pitcher" and "the wheel" we have a reference to the circulation of the blood of which Solomon seems to have had at least some inklings. There have been writers who have affirmed that the entire system of anatomy might very well be gathered from these words. They are wonderful, not only because of the poetic imagery which is on the surface, but also because of the depth of meaning which lies beneath.

7. *Then shall the dust return to the Earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* Thus will it happen to us all unless Christ shall first come. The machinery of our being will stand still. The fountain of life will be dry; no longer will the living floods rush through their appointed courses as they used to do. Please remember that we are not merely talking about people in the street, of whom we know nothing, but about *ourselves,* also, for we are mortal—so we must die. Let us believe this and prepare for it.

8. *Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.* This seems to be the conclusion to which Solomon came by the experiment of his own life, as well as by the teaching of God. This Book of Ecclesiastes begins thus—"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

9. *And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.* That man is not fit to teach who does not give good heed and set his words in order. He who says whatever comes first into his mind, only gives out chaff which the wind drives away. But he who would scatter his seed broadcast must take care that he has in his seed-

basket good seed that is worth sowing in the broad furrows of the world-field.

10. *The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words.* The Hebrew expression means words of delight, for words that delight the ear may help to win the heart and so prove to be "acceptable words."

10, 11. *And that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and the words of scholars are as well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.* The true preacher's words pierce us like the sharp ox-goads pierce the cattle, but they are also like nails that are driven into the wood, and clinched so that they cannot come out. There must be something to stir our emotions, and something to retain in our memory. We need the goads, for we are like the ox that is slow at the plow. And we need to have the nails well driven into us for our memory is often like a rotten piece of wood which lets the nail slip out as soon as it has to bear any weight. May the Holy Spirit make all of us, who are preachers, to be wise so as to know how to use the goad and how to drive the nail!

12. *And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there in no end: and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* That is what Solomon said and he had never seen the British Museum, or the Bodleian and other noted libraries, for, if he had done so, he would have said with an emphasis, "*There is no end*," for the books of his day could scarcely have been one in a thousand, or one in a million, compared with those which are now produced! I should not wonder, however, if the one in a million was quite worth the million. There are many books made that may benefit the printer, the publisher, and the bookseller, but they are not likely to benefit anybody else!

13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.* Reverent walking before the Most High. Reconciliation to Him so that we can thus walk and thus live, and all this proved by a life of obedience to His commandments—"This is the whole duty of man."

14. *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.* Notice that expression, "every secret thing." It is not merely our public actions that God will judge, otherwise we might be more at our ease—but He takes account of our most private thoughts, words, deeds and intents. Who among us can endure that ordeal? Yet we must endure it if we are to stand before Him. O Lord, prepare us, by Your Infinite Grace, through faith in Your dear Son, and by the regenerating work of Your gracious Spirit, for this solemn testing time! 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 BEST THING IN THE BEST PLACE
NO. 3002

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."
Psalm 37:31.

THIS verse occurs in a Psalm in which the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is drawn in a very vivid fashion. The wicked are depicted as being very frequently rich and prosperous, yet no one who is truly wise would wish to change places with them. The Psalmist so plainly points out the brevity of their prosperity, the certainty of their ultimate fate if they continue unregenerate and the terror of their overthrow, that we are not tempted for a single minute to be envious of them. As for the righteous, David gives us abundant hints that they will be tried, persecuted, hated and so on, but he indulges us with such sweet promises from the mouth of the great Father, Himself, that we feel perfectly satisfied to share the lot of His children, however hard it may sometimes be. If we wish to share the lot of the righteous, we must be as they are and, among other things, this text must be realized in our experience as it is in theirs. The Law of our God must be in our heart that our steps may not slide.

I remember, when I was a lad, hearing a sermon from a text which is almost a parallel to the one before us—"Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You." The divisions of that discourse were so excellent and they fixed themselves so firmly upon my memory, that I shall borrow them for my own use on this occasion, for I cannot make any better ones for myself. The preacher said, "Here we have the best thing—'Your Word.' In the best place—'have I hid in my heart.' For the best of purposes—'that I might not sin against You.'" Those are to be the divisions of my text, only altered thus—*the best thing*—"the Law of his God." *In the best place*—"is in his heart." *With the best result*—"None of his steps shall slide."

I. So I am first to speak, for a few minutes, about THE BEST THING—"The Law of his God."

In these Gospel days we must use this expression in a wider sense than may have been originally intended by David and take it to mean *a great deal more than the moral Law*. If we are Christians, we delight in that Law, but we are not under it as a rule of condemnation and of judgment, but we rejoice to obey it. We could not suggest an alteration to it which would be an improvement. The Ten Commandments are very simple, but absolutely perfect for the purpose for which they were

intended. To add another to them, or to take one away from them would be to spoil the whole. We "delight in the Law of God after the inward man." Whoever may be Antinomians, that is, those who are "against the Law," we are not to be numbered among them, for we can say with Paul, "The Law is holy and the Commandments holy and just and good." And though we are carnal, and often feel ourselves "sold under sin," yet we cannot find any fault with the Law of God. If eternal life could have come by any law, it would have come by that Law—and even though that Law can now do nothing for us but condemn us, yet, as we hear its terrible sentence, we feel that the Law "is holy, and just, and good." We desire, then, to have even the moral Law in our hearts, and to have it written there, that none of our steps may slide.

But we cannot use David's expression in that limited sense only! *It must now include the whole Book of God, and all its teachings*, for it is often used in that sense. "The Law of his God is in his heart." Take this expression as referring to the *whole of Scripture*, and I may truly say that it is the best thing. O my Brothers and Sisters, what can be better for informing the understanding than the Word of God? Would you know God? Would you know yourself? Then search this Book! Would you know time and how to spend it? Would you know eternity and how to be prepared for it? Then, search this Book! Would you know the evil of sin and how to be delivered from it? Would you know the plan of salvation and how you can have a share in it? This is the Book which will instruct you in all these matters! There is nothing which a man needs to know for the affairs of his soul, between here and Heaven, of which this Book will not tell him. Blessed are they that read it both day and night—and especially blessed are they who read it with their eyes opened and illuminated by the Divine Spirit! If you want to be wise unto salvation, select the Word of God, and especially the Spirit of God, as your Teacher. There is nothing else that is equal to the Bible for inflaming, sanctifying and turning in the right direction all the passions of the soul.

Perhaps you are not satisfied with merely knowing. You want something or someone to love. You men and women with large hearts, whose one desire is to have a worthy object for your affections to fix upon, turn to this Word of God, this Law of God, this Gospel of His and you will see there how God Himself becomes the Object of His creatures' love, and how, in the Person of His Son, you have the loveliest Object upon which human eyes ever gazed! You have, in Him, One who is so lovely that a glance from His eyes is enough to set your soul on fire and to make your heart enamored of Him forever! You who have mighty founts of love welling up in your soul may come and let them flow most freely here, for here is One who is worthy of them all! And when you have loved Christ as much as you can, you have not loved Him half as much as He deserves to be loved! Here your passions may burn and blaze and glow with sacred ardor, without any fear of your being idolaters—and without any risk of your being deceived!

And if you want something more than enlightenment for the understanding and fullness of love to satisfy the heart—if you need

practical directions for your everyday life—this Book will supply you with them. In every part of the sea of life in which a man may be, if this is his chart, he will not miss his way or suffer spiritual shipwreck. If you were a king, you might learn your duty here—and if you are a beggar, or the poorest of the poor, you may find comfort and instruction here! Fathers, you may here learn how to manage your households. Children, you may learn here the duties of your position in your various relationships. Servants, masters, husbands, wives, sick folk, people in robust health, you who are poor and you who are rich—this Book is for you all and when you consult it in the right spirit, it will talk with you all! Into whatever condition you may happen to be cast, this Book will follow you. It is such a wonderful Book that it adapts itself to all sorts and conditions of men and women! It whispers softly by the sick man's bedside and it has often called aloud, as with a trumpet voice, amidst the fury of the storm. It has a message for you while you are yet in the heyday of your youth and a promise for you when you lean upon your staff and totter to your grave! It is *Biblos, The Book*, the everyday book, full of wisdom for every day in the week all year round. And when the circle of life is complete, you will see how the Book was equally adapted to the children and to the aged man whose life is just closing.

Perhaps, dear Friend, you say, "I know the path that I ought to take. I know whom I ought to love and I trust I am instructed as to what I ought to believe—for all this I prize the Bible very highly! But what I really need is the courage of my convictions, the force of character which shall enable me to tread in those ways which I know to be right." Yes, I know what you mean. But where else will you find Truths that have such power as those which glisten in the pages of this blessed Book? Where will you read any records so calculated to fire men with dauntless bravery as those that are contained in this Book? Above all, in Him who is the sum and substance of this Book, to whom all its pages point, you can see an example of disinterested love and perfect consecration to God and man which will suffice if the Holy Spirit shall bless it to you, to give you all the force of character and courageousness of spirit that you can possibly need. If young men would read their Bibles more, they would not be so easily turned aside as they now are. When a young man puts his foot down for the right and says, "I cannot and I will not tell a lie, or commit an act of dishonesty in business, or frequent places of amusement where I cannot go with a clear conscience," I believe that he has cleansed his way by taking heed thereto according to God's Word. I see here the treasure house of holy courage! Commune with God, commune with Christ Jesus, commune with saints, martyrs and Apostles as you read these pages, and you yourself will imbibe something of their determination and resolution, something of their zeal and energy for the right and the true!

It is here that true men are made! As they peruse these pages, the weak grow strong and dwarfs develop into giants. Yes, and if you say, "I often feel unhappy—there is an aching void within my spirit, a something which prevents me from being perfectly satisfied. I have a kind of horse-

leech somewhere within me which cries, 'Give, give,' and I have not yet found the food with which to stop its clamor." It is in this Book that you will find the comfort which your spirit craves! Here every grief may be allayed, every right desire satisfied and all wrong desires and evil lusting be ejected from the spirit. When the Holy Spirit applies this Book to the soul, it is food for man's hunger and medicine for man's disease! It lays its hand upon his fevered brow and cools him down to health. Or, if he is too cold, it warms him into holy energy. In fact, there is no end to the blessings which this Book bestows—

"This is the field where hidden lies
The pearl of price unknown!
That merchant is divinely wise
Who makes the pearl his own."

This is the best of books, as Christopher Harvey says—

"It is the Book of God. What if I should
Say, God of Books?
Let him that looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold—
His thoughts in silence smother
Till he find such another."

Its every page is a sheet of gold! No, rather let me say that Heaven's banknotes are here, to be cashed by them who have faith enough to bring them to the God that issued them, that He may make their souls rich to all the intents of bliss!

This, then, is the best thing—"The Law of his God."

II. Now, secondly, we have the best thing IN THE BEST PLACE—"The Law of his God is in his heart." What does this mean?

It means, first, that *he loves it*. That which we love is always said to be in our hearts, and the reason why he loves it is given in the text—"The law of his God"—not merely the Law of God, mark you—but, "The law of *his* God." Men do not love the Law of God until they know that He is their God. Blessed, indeed, is this precious possession which God gives us first, in Himself, and then in His Word! Do you not all like to read a book which has been written by a near and dear friend? It must have greater interest for you than the works of strangers ever can say. You may pass over a hundred books on a stall, or in a shop, but if you notice a volume which was written by one who was your play fellow, or perhaps by one who is still nearer and dearer, you take an interest in that book at once! So is it with this blessed Book which was written by our Heavenly Father—this Book which tells us of our elder Brother—this Book into which the Divine Spirit has breathed the breath of Life and upon which He always shines as the great Illuminator—this Book must always be indescribably dear to us! How dear has the Bible been to God's saints in past ages! They have even run the risk of losing their lives rather than part with it—and many of them have actually died as martyrs because they would translate it and pass its messages on to others! And this Book is equally dear to us. Sooner than give up the smallest jot or tittle of its Inspired teaching, I trust that we would be prepared to go to the stake as our brave forefathers did in cruel Queen Mary's day. Precious Bible, you are in our hearts because we love you!

But David meant more than that. The Law of his God was in his heart *to be remembered* as well as to be loved. We soon forget what we only learn in our head, so we tell our children to learn things "by heart." What is written in the head may be erased, but what is written in the heart abides there. Neither sickness, nor death, nor the devil, himself, can ever take from us what is in our hearts. We have known people in sore sickness suffer from loss of memory, and that is a very serious loss. But we have known them retain their recollections of *spiritual things* unimpaired when they have forgotten their own wives or husbands, so strangely does the mind or heart hold most firmly to that which is most deeply engraved upon it. If you have the Word of God in your hearts, it will not matter who may try to tear it from you. All the Jesuits in or out of Hell could not wrest from a man the Gospel that is written in his heart! They could easily turn some people from their creed because it is only a creed, lying loosely in their brain. But the Truth which has really entered the heart of a man, neither Satan nor all his hosts could ever take from him! See to it, then, that the Law of your God is in your heart so deeply affecting you and so powerfully moving you, that it abides so tenaciously in your memory that you can never give it up!

"The Law of his God is in his heart," has a third meaning, namely, that *he obeys it*, for the heart is the most influential organ of the body. What is done in the heart affects every part of the man. Disease there means that the man, as a whole, cannot be well. If the heart's affections are set on God, all is right, for the intent, the motive, sways the man. "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." If your heart's eyes are single, your whole body shall be full of light! But if your heart's eyes are evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If the Law of God is in the heart, then every pulsing of that cerebral organ will affect the entire man. If the man has led an evil life, he will be altogether changed by it. And if, through the restraining Grace of God, he has been somewhat better than others, the Law of his God will operate in his heart and life and do for him all that he could well desire to have done as he yields obedience to it.

To have the Law of God in your heart means, in fact, that *you live by it*—that you have the Gospel as the food of your soul and that you have the Christ of the Gospel as your hope for eternity. The heart is that by which we live, so, if the Law of God is in our heart, we shall live by it and draw our comfort, as well as our sustenance from it. Let each one judge how far this is true concerning himself. We are not perfect, but we wish we were—and this proves that the Law of our God is in our heart. We sin, but we grieve that we sin—and this proves that there is within us a longing for perfect holiness. We say, with the Apostle Paul, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not… When I would do good, evil is present with me." Yet that *will*ing and *would*ing prove that our heart has the Law of God within it! God looks upon you, dear Friends, very much according to what you desire to be. And if there is, in your soul, strong pangs of desire after that which is perfect, He accepts those desires and blesses you through Christ Jesus, His Son. John Bunyan used to put it in one of his simple allegories

something like this. He says, "you want a man to fetch a doctor, and you tell him to be quick. So he mounts his horse, but it is a sorry jade, and very lame, and cannot go fast, yet you see that your man would fly if he could, for he is whipping and spurring the creature with all his might to try to make it go. So," says Bunyan, "the Lord often sees that the spirit is willing—whipping and spurring, but the flesh is weak—like the lame horse. He sees what His servants would gladly be and accepts them as if they were really so." It is well for us that we have so gracious a Master who looks so favorably upon our imperfect service! Have the Law of God in your hearts, my Brothers and Sisters, and albeit that you are foolish today, you will conquer some of those follies tomorrow. And you will, by God's Grace, go on to conquer more and more, until the Law, written on your heart, shall also be written on all your members and you shall be presented spotless and faultless before the Throne of God!

III. Now I must pass on to the last point, namely, THE BEST RESULT—"None of his steps shall slide."

Here is a man who has God's Word in his heart and you notice that *he takes pains about his steps*. A step is a very little thing. We must take a good many hundreds of steps to walk a mile, but good men take notice of little things. The man who has the Law of God in his heart is scrupulous and conscientious about thoughts and imaginations, as well as about words and actions. Hence, the promise in the text is suited to him, for it is a promise about little things—"None of his steps shall slide." I recollect—no, I hope it is so with me still—but I recollect that just after my conversion, I used to be almost afraid to put one foot before the other lest I should put it down in the wrong place. And often have I paused, when I was speaking, for fear I would not say the right word. That holy caution is most commendable in all who have it. I wish that many more had it. What a hop, skip and jump some men's lives are! Not only do they not look before they leap, but they do not even seem to look *after* they have leaped! They rush on blindly and heedlessly, presuming where they ought to be praying and self-confident where they ought, with deep repentance, to be humbling themselves before God! Our old proverb says, "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves." And the same rule applies to our actions. If we are careful about our little actions, the great ones will be pretty sure to be right. Oh, that we were all very guarded about how we act at home! Oh, that we were careful about our speech as we sit around the tea table! Such a little thing as that may do almost infinite mischief. I believe the worst evils in the world arise out of little things. It is said that the seed of mischief is as small as a gnat's egg, and so it is. Then, look well to those gnat's eggs, lest they hatch out far greater evils.

I think, too, that *whenever Christians go wrong, it is concerning something about which they thought they were quite safe*, like the children of Israel with the Gibeonites. These people came to Gilgal wearing old garments, old shoes and clouted, and carrying bread that was dry and moldy. What need was there to ask counsel of God? It was as clear as the sun at noonday that they had come from a long distance,

wishing to make a league with the Israelites because of the wonders that God had worked for His people! So even Joshua did not pray about the matter—and he was deceived, for these Gibeonites were near neighbors and had thus tricked the Israelites into a league which was always an impediment to them in their campaign. Always suspect where you have no suspicion and be afraid where you are not afraid—be especially afraid of a man who tells you that you have no need to be afraid of him. There was a man who said to a friend of mine, "I need a loan of so much from you. You know that I am all right. I have been a member of a Christian Church for so many years. I am not like So-and-So, and So-and-So who lately failed. You can trust me, you know you can." "No," said my friend, "you are the sort of man I would not trust with a bad half-crown." And he was right, for those who did trust him lost everything! Be very cautious in such cases as that. If you are dealing with those who are known to be rogues, you hardly need to be put on your guard, but if you are dealing with rogues who pretend to be honest men, you must have all your wits about you or they will certainly take you in. They have covered up their wolf nature with sheepskin, so you had better see what is underneath the skin!

When David says, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide," what does he mean by that last clause? He means that *God will guide him*. As he has God's Law in his heart, he will have God's guidance for his steps! In the 23rd verse, David says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His way." When a man really carries God's Law in his heart, God will take care that he does not carry that Law into any evil place, for, as David goes on to say, "the Lord upholds him with His hand." There will come to every man, whoever or whatever he may be, sudden assaults of temptation—but if the Law of his God is in his heart, he will be forewarned and forearmed against them! There will also come the long sieges of temptation and many a man has fallen by little and little. But if the Law of his God is in his heart, he will be safe against even them. There will come, sometimes, the temptation which results from loneliness, when he will be urged by Satan to do evil. As no human eye is upon him, may he not do wrong? But, with the Law of his God in his heart, he will not do any wrong even though he might never be found out—that Law within his heart is a sufficient check to keep him from evil! Sometimes he will be perplexed. I wonder whether every businessman here is not, at some time or other, puzzled to know what he ought to do? He is most anxious to do the right thing, but he does not know which of two courses is right. Well, that is the time to let the Law of your God, which is in your heart, be like a compass to you—and to plead this promise and say, "O Lord, You have said that as Your Law is within my heart, none of my steps shall slide! Fulfill Your Word unto Your servant, whereon You have caused me to hope."

For your steps to slide would be for you to bring dishonor upon your character. How many men who have stood firm for a while, either in the Christian Church or in business life, have thus slid! I recollect reading,

some years ago, when there were some sad failures of this sort, that "neither the white cravats of Exeter Hall, nor the drab coats of Lombard Street could prevent some men from being great rascals." And there has, sometimes, been only too much reason to say that. But the Law of God in the heart is better than a white cravat at the throat or a drab coat on the back, for it does keep men's steps so that they do not dishonor their God. Trials may come to those who live nearest to God—possibly they will come all the more because these people have lived near to God—but there will not be the stain upon the character, or the casting down from integrity which causes so much sorrow. A true Christian would sooner die than that this should happen! And he may comfort himself with the assurance that if the Law of his God is in his heart, "none of his steps shall slide."

Nor shall he slide into despair. He may tremble, he may totter, he may be almost down, but as he has the Law of his God in his heart, he shall scramble to his feet again and shall still hold on his way! I hope all of you who have to fight the good fight of faith and to journey as pilgrims to Heaven, will take to yourselves all the comfort you can possibly get out of this text. You have asked to have the Law of your God in your heart and it is there. Well then, you shall be upheld! You are going to live, young man, where there are no other Christians, but your steps shall not slide, for the Law of your God is in your heart. You are going, my Brother, to occupy a position where a large number of people will be under your charge and you hardly know how you will manage them. But with the Law of your God in your heart, none of your steps shall slide. You are going, my young Sister, to live with ungodly relatives where you will scarcely get an opportunity for private prayer, yet, with the Law of your God in your heart, none of your steps shall slide! My young Brother, you are about to become the pastor of a large church and you tremble lest you should make some great mistake and bring dishonor upon God. But if His Law is in your heart, none of your steps shall slide. You need not mind about the slipperiness of the way if the Law of your God is in your heart! Many slip when the road is not slippery, and many a man, by God's Grace, stands fast where it seems a miracle that he stands at all. Men are not in danger in proportion to their position—they are in danger or in safety according to the measure of their Grace! If the Law of your God is in your heart, you might face a world in arms and not be afraid! If God should make you the leader of a thousand squadrons of the armies of Heaven on their white horses, you would be able to command them all if you had His Law in your heart and yielded yourself wholly to Him!

Note also that if you have the Law of your God in your hearts, *this implies that you also have the Lawgiver there*, for you cannot separate the Divine Lawgiver from His Law. Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Is His name melodious to your ears? Is it like ointment poured forth, for sweetness, to your spirit? If you love Him who gives you the Law, you must love the Law that He gives. We are under Law—the Law of Grace—to Jesus Christ. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light to those who

trust and love Him. If you trust and love Him, that proves that you have His Law in your hearts.

Again, if you have the Law of your God in your heart, *you also have there the great Teacher of the Law, namely, the Holy Spirit*. You are conscious of His comforts, sometimes of His rebukes and often of His encouragements. How is it with you in this respect? Do you know anything about the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart? Alas, there are many who do not know that there is a Holy Spirit, for they have never felt His power. But the Law of God is never in the heart until the Holy Spirit puts it there—and where He puts that Law, He abides with it, to open our understanding that we may receive the Scriptures and to open the Scriptures that our understanding may receive them. What do you know about God the Son? Is He your Savior?

What do you know about the Holy Spirit? Is He your Quickener and Comforter? If He is, be of good cheer, for none of your steps shall slide. But if He is not, and if you reject this Law of God, remember that solemn text, "Their feet shall slide in due time." They stand up in their prosperity. They are great, famous, happy, full of mirth—and we are apt to envy them as we see them upon their high places. But watch! They are standing upon an Alp of ice! The pathway which they tread is very narrow and, in a moment, when they do not expect it, their feet shall slide and they shall descend into the abyss which has no bottom! Down they go, lost, *lost*, LOST! The high places they once occupied only increase the depth of their fall. They go from their full wine cups to craving a drop of water to cool their parched tongues. They go from the dainties of Dives' table to the uttermost woes of Hell! Lazarus once begged for their crumbs and now they would gladly turn beggars and ask a blessing of Lazarus, himself! Their day is changed into night, their glory into shame, their banquets into miseries, their honors into everlasting shame and contempt! Be wise, men and women, and seek your Savior now, lest, as a dream when one awakes, the beauty of your present mortal life should all pass away and there should remain nothing but the ghastly form of a wasted existence to be visited forever with the strokes of Jehovah's awful wrath—

"You sinners seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there!
So shall that curse remove
By which the Savior bled
And the last awful day shall pour
His blessings on your head."

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 37.

This is one of the Psalms of David which have often cheered the saints of God when they have been perplexed because of the prosperity of the wicked and their own troubles.

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb.* What if their lot is sweet? Yet consider how short it is. No wise man envies the bull which is being fattened, for he knows that it is being fattened for the slaughter. None will envy the ungodly their pleasures when they remember how transient they must be. Let them have them and I would urge all Christians to do their best to make the ungodly happy. This is the only happy time they can ever have unless they repent and turn to the Lord. So do not make them unhappy, but contribute all you can to the little bliss they will ever know, for it will soon be over. Certainly, if you are a child of God, you have no cause to envy them.

3, 4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Here is a duty which is as much a pleasure as it is a duty—no, it is even more a pleasure than a duty—"Delight yourself also in the Lord." Here is a commandment to be happy in the safest conceivable way. Of all delights, the most delicious is delight in God, and to this we are commanded. But what a privilege is that which is annexed to it— "He shall give you the desires of your heart." Why is this? Because, when you delight in God, your desires will be such as He can safely grant. Delighting in Him, you will only desire that which is for His Glory and then, without any restrictions, He may promise to you and give to you the desires of your heart.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* Blindly, yet believingly, put your hand into His hand and follow wherever He may lead you.

5-7. *Trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD.* Oh, what sweet precepts these are!—easier to read and to hear than they are to practice, yet, if Grace is given to us, we shall find them blessedly easy to practice. Surely, if it is easy to rest anywhere, it must be easy to "rest in the Lord." There is no such resting place anywhere else like that where Omnipotence and eternal love are sweetly joined together—"Rest in the Lord."

7-9. *And wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* I believe that in a right sense, the child of God does get the best of both worlds. He may not get, in this world, what ungodly men think the best. And as far as worldly good is concerned, he often gets the worst, but God makes his dinner of herbs to be sweeter to him than the stalled ox is to the wicked. If I knew that I should die like a dog, I would still wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, no world to come and even if my lot, judged after the manner of men, should

be of all men's most miserable, yet to have had God to be my Friend, here, would have turned even that misery into happiness—

"O God of Love, how blest are they
Who in Your ways delight!
Your Presence guides them all the day
And cheers them all the night!"

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* How often even the place where he lived—his house—becomes a ruin. The very palace where the tyrant dwelt is burnt down, or destroyed in some other way! Decay seems to delight to work with the teeth of time upon the palaces of despots!

11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.* There is a great fulfillment of that prophecy yet to come in the latter days, but it is fulfilled even now. Who does not see that the man who really enjoys life and enjoys the world, is, after all, the meek, humble-minded Christian? That shepherd of Salisbury Plain, of whom we used to read in our childhood, when he was asked what he thought of the weather, said it was good weather, for God sent it—and any sort of weather pleased him if it pleased God. Anybody can see that a man of that kind is in a healthy state and that he inherits the earth and possesses far more of what is worth having—namely, ease and peace of mind—than the owner of broad acres who has no true rest of heart in the Lord.

12-19. *The wicked plot against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* Let me read that 19th verse again, so that any child of God here, who is in great straits, may be able to lay hold upon it—"They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

20-25. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth, and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* We have often remarked here that we, also, though we are not old, have never seen the righteous forsaken and we do not think that the oldest man or woman here has ever seen the righteous forsaken. David says that he had not seen the seed of the

righteous begging bread. Well, he was a king, so he was not likely to see very many poor people, but we have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread. It is not a common thing, but we have seen it—and when the seed of the righteous misbehave themselves—when they disgrace their father's name—they will have to beg bread the same as other people's children do. They will come to poverty through idleness and drink just as other people do. And it has been my unhappy lot, within these very walls, to have to minister relief to the unworthy and reprobate sons of Christian ministers about whose piety I could entertain no doubt, and some of whom are now in Heaven. These good men's children have walked contrary to God, so God has walked contrary to them! I have often hoped that the poverty I saw might be the means of bringing them to seek the God of their fathers!

You who fear the Lord may depend upon this—if the Lord helps you to train up your children rightly, He will take care of them. If they are truly the seed of the righteous by being themselves righteous, your children shall not beg bread, for the Lord will provide for them and you will find that God always takes care of the children of those who faithfully serve Him. He seems to say to them, "You mind My business, and I will mind your business. If you look after My children, I will look after yours." If we serve the Lord with all our hearts, we may fairly reckon that the God of the fathers will be the God of the children.

26-40. *He is ever merciful, and lends and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the Lord loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
107 (SONG 2), 119 (SONG 2), 652.

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

A VIVID CONTRAST
NO. 3003

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 1906.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 17, 1864.**

***"And every man went unto his own house."
John 7:53.***

***"Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives."
John 8:1.***

THESE verses furnish a striking illustration of the unwise way in which, in certain cases, the Bible has been divided into chapters. The meaning of many portions of Scripture would be much more manifest if Gospels, Epistles and even Prophecies were left in their undivided state. The two sentences which I have selected for my text ought never to have been separated—and we may rightly say of them, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." So we will consider them together as they should be considered—"Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives."

I. Here we have, in the first place, A FACT FOR OUR EARNEST CONSIDERATION. Let us turn it over in our mind under the Holy Spirit's gracious guidance. While Christ's friends and enemies had, everyone of them, a house to go to, He must go spend the night in the open air watching and praying on the Mount of Olives.

Observe, first, *His extreme poverty*. Among them all—friends or foes—there was not one without a house excepting Himself. No, more, among some of the meanest of His creatures, there was not one without a shelter. Foxes, though they were but worthy to be exterminated, had holes in which they could hide. And the birds of the air, though many ruthlessly sought to destroy them, had nests wherein they could rest—but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Possibly, in all Judaea, there was only that one houseless man! Certainly there was no other who was so voluntarily houseless as Himself. He had brought Himself down from the glories of His Father's court, from the majesty of reigning with His Father in Heaven to become dependent upon the bounty of His own disciples for His daily bread—and He had no house that He could call His own, no home to which He could retire when His day's work was done. Believers, admire His amazing condescension in that, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you,

through His poverty, might be rich." If any of you are poor in this world, be comforted, for you are not poorer than your Master was! Remember that every true Christian is the image of Christ but the godly poor man is the *express* image of Christ! He has one quality beyond those which other Christians have, that is, his poverty, which makes him even more like his Master than they are. He who was born in a stable and cradled in a manger. He who wore the homely garb of the peasantry of Palestine, the garment which was without seam, woven from the top throughout. He who made fishermen His chosen companions, was the poor man's Christ, poorer than the poorest of you and able, therefore, to sympathize with you in all the pangs and griefs which penury may bring upon you! And you great ones of the earth, despise not the unlettered and the poor, for "has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith," to be "heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him"? And has He not "exalted One chosen out of the people," even His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, to sit with Him on the Throne of His Glory?

Further, when "every man went unto his own house," Christ had no house to go to! And this denotes not only His extreme poverty, but *the forgetfulness and unkindness of His friends*. Each of us is apt to say, "Had I been there, He would not have spent that night amid the cold dews of the Mount of Olives. He would have had the best accommodation my house could have afforded. I would always have had a chamber prepared for the Lord's Prophet, like that of the Shunammite woman, with 'a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick,' and I would have entertained this Prince of Prophets with the greatest joy!" So you think, but had you lived in Christ's day, John might still have written, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And the Prophet's lamentation might again have become true, "He was despised, and we esteemed Him not"—even we, His own people, His blood-bought people, His beloved—"esteemed Him not."

Surely, never was such a friend used so terribly as the Lord Jesus Christ was used even by His friends and followers! His head must have been wet with the dew of Heaven and His locks with the drops of the night, yet no one gave Him shelter. Yet we must not blame His disciples for their neglect of their Master unless we are also willing to blame ourselves. He has often stood at our door and knocked! Perhaps He is knocking now, but we, in some form or other, refuse to give Him a lodging in our hearts and willingly keep in His place some darling sin. And so the Savior still has to stand outside, for He will not come into our hearts to dwell in peace with sin. He must remain outside until we expel the intruder, or call upon Him to do so.

Observe, too, in the fact of Christ having no home to go to, *the loneliness of His spirit*. If He had asked one of His friends to entertain Him, probably none would have refused His request. Had not His mother

Mary still a home? What had become of His reputed father, Joseph the carpenter? Were not His brothers with Him? Would not one of them entertain Him? There was James, who is called the Lord's brother—could not he find Him a shelter? Peter had a wife, for we read of his wife's mother lying sick of a fever and being cured by Christ—had he no place to which he could invite his Lord? The loving John had a home, for he took the mother of Jesus, after the Crucifixion, to his own home. Then there were the women who followed Jesus and ministered to Him of their substance. And Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus—would not they give Christ a shelter? Oh, yes, they would gladly have done so, but He was, just then, in the midst of trials—He was beset by the Pharisees. They were tempting Him on all sides and He needed something better than the companionship of men! He needed a place where He could rest, but there is not one disciple upon whose bosom He could lean His head. John may lean his head upon Christ's bosom, but Christ cannot lean His head upon John's bosom, so the Savior must go away by Himself to the Mount of Olives for He has a lonely spirit and no human being can fully enter into His grief and woes.

We sometime see a Christian minister of high spirit living in a country village. He is the only educated man in the place. There is no one to whom he can talk upon many themes that are interesting to him and his spirit often feels very lonely. His people seem to have nothing to think of but their farm, their milking, their plowing and their sowings. He cannot get them above all these things and there he stands with, perhaps, not a single companion with whom he can discuss his doubts and questions—and thoughts about Divine things. It is lonely to be a missionary engaged in Christian work in a heathen land—his loneliness may be even greater than that of such a man as I have been describing. But the Savior's loneliness was still greater! There was not one man upon the earth with whom He could talk at all times. Even in His hours of keenest conflict, Christ knew that His chosen followers would leave Him alone—all would forsake Him and flee. It is true that even then, He could say, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me," but apart from His Father's Presence, His whole life may be compressed into those two sentences—"I have trodden the winepress alone. And of the people there was none with Me." So, that night they could all go to their own houses, but God must go to the Mount of Olives, for He must be a lonely Man.

Thus, there are three things which are brought out by the text—Christ's extreme poverty, the unkindness of His friends and the loneliness of His spirit.

But there is another reason for His action—*the fond resolution of His heart*. Why does He go to the Mount of Olives and not somewhere else? He knew that it was near that saved retreat that He was to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, so He resolved to

familiarize Himself with the neighborhood which was to be the scene of His terrible conflict with Satan. Do you not think that if Wellington had known beforehand that the fate of nations would be decided on the field of Waterloo, he would have gone to see it, if it had been possible? I believe the great warrior would have gone to look at it and study it to observe the best positions for attack and defense. And the Savior went, with solemn interest, to look at the place where He was to stand foot to foot with the great enemy of souls! If you and I had to bear some terrible suffering, it is very likely, (for the flesh is so weak), that we would try to forget all about it—but it was not so with the Savior! He kept the fact of His atoning Sacrifice constantly before His own mind and spoke of it to others again and again. So intense was His love to His people that He seemed eagerly to anticipate the time when He would suffer even unto death for their sakes. Remember His remarkable saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" What? Was His death upon the Cross to be, in any sense, a relief to Him? Yes, it was even so. And He was "straitened" till it was accomplished. Oh, what wondrous love was that which impelled the Savior onward to Gethsemane—the olive press where He was to be pressed and crushed between the millstones of Jehovah's wrath in order that He might suffer the penalty due to our transgressions!

I am not going to thresh these thoughts out for you—I merely suggest them as themes for your devout meditation—and I think that there is abundant reason for such meditation in those seven words, "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives."

II. Now I want to take the text in another way. The second thing which it presents to us is A VIVID CONTRAST FOR SELF-EXAMINATION.

What a true description this first verse is of our own usual conduct! "Every man went unto his own house." We go, each one of us, to our own house *for ease*. That is right enough up to a certain point, but do we not often seek our own ease when we should be engaged in the service of our Lord? Christ goes to the mountain to pray, but we go to our beds to sleep, or to our tables to feast, to our friends to while away an hour in empty talk, or to our amusements to kill the time which hangs so heavily upon our hands. I doubt not that the greatest saint among us has some cause to reproach himself for having wasted time and disobeyed that solemn Apostolic injunction, "See, then, that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." I can, in imagination, see the Savior lifting up His hands in an agony of spirit on the mountain at midnight, while His disciples are all sleeping comfortably in their beds. As we think of our Savior thus agonizing in prayer for His people, can we not find more time for prayer than the most of us usually do? Might it not be profitable to ourselves to mortify the body a little more that we might have a greater advantage in spirit? I am

afraid we would have to present a very poor record if we gave a true account of the time we spend in prayer—yet we have no excuse to offer for being slow in this holy duty. It is not a bondage, a slavery—it is the highest privilege of the Believer's soul to be engaged in prayer to our Heavenly Father—yet we often prefer the disastrous ease of wasting our time instead of drawing near to God in prayer!

I heard someone say to a woman who had been converted, but whose husband kept a public house, "There is one room in your house which will keep all the other rooms there from injuring your spiritual life—that is the room where you retire for private prayer. If that room is kept right, the rest will do you little harm." Christian, imitate your Lord who often retired for prayer to the Mount of Olives, and it shall be well with your soul. At a certain missionary station in Africa, one of the Brothers was accustomed to go for private prayer to a little clump of trees and, to get there, he had to cross some long grass. He had gone so often that he had made a clear trail to the spot where he went to pray. Others had done the same and there were several trails across the grass. After a while, this professor began to grow lax in many ways. He could not enjoy the ministry as he used to do. His dealings in trade were not so exact as once they were. An elder Brother pointed out to him the cause of the change that had come over him. He took him aside to his trail and showed him that the grass was growing up—that it was not trodden down as it formerly had been—and then he said, "Brother, *there* is the cause of all the mischief—the grass is growing on the trail where you used to go for private prayer." If you and I, dear Friends, had to go to some place like that for prayer, I fear that the grass would not always be well trodden down and that we should often have cause to cry, "O Lord, give us the true spirit of prayer!" Like the people of whom the text speaks, we go to our houses for ease, but Christ goes to the mountain to pray in lonely solitude. We still have need to say to Him—

"Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer!
The desert Your temptation knew
Your conflict and Your victory, too.
Be You my Pattern—make me bear
More of Your gracious Image here
Then God the Judge shall own my name
Among the followers of the Lamb."

For what else do we go to our houses? We go there, very often, *to take counsel*. On the occasion mentioned here, Christ's enemies went home to talk together about how they might try to entrap Him. And we sometimes go to our homes to consult with flesh and blood about matters that concern us. We say to one friend, "What do you think I had better do?" And to another, "This is my condition—what do you advise in such a case as mine?" In this way, poor, erring, human judgments are made to

be our chart and our companions, our captain and our pilot! "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives" and took His case to His Father in prayer. He consulted not with flesh and blood, but with the Eternal, whose wisdom can make no mistake and whose love can never err. Beloved, may we not be blameworthy in having gone here and there, wasting our breath on our friends and fellow sinners, instead of going to the great High Priest, who wears the Urim and Thummim, and who would have told us what we ought to do? The lines of Cowper are still true—

"Have you no words? Ah to think again!
Words flow apace when you complain.
And fill your fellow creature's ears
With the sad tale of all your cares.
Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"

Again, we go to our houses, very properly, for *the enjoyment of sympathy*. We feel that if it is to be found anywhere, we shall find tender sympathy there and that if the whole outside world should misunderstand and misrepresent us, we shall be understood and not misrepresented at home. Whoever may slander us away from our home, no one will falsely accuse us there—all hearts there will beat in sympathy with us—so we go to our own homes. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. I say this not to blame you or myself for seeking sympathy here, for Christ, Himself, did the same. On that memorable night in Gethsemane when He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, He said to His disciples, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" He seemed to feel the need of sympathy in that dread hour, but He had to learn, as we also must learn, that there is a point where human sympathy cannot avail us. We must say, as Jesus did, "O My Father," for only in *His* heart can true sympathy be found. Yet this I may say, without any harshness, that while we prize the sympathy of beloved friends, let us not forget to go to God in prayer. Let us tell the sad tale of all our griefs into His ear and pour out the story of all our sorrows into His heart. He has a bottle for our tears and a book for our complaints. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the grief (as well as the death) of all His people. He counts the number of their wounds as well as the number of the stars. So, while we may seek sympathy from our friends at home, let us not forget to go to the Mercy Seat, that we may also secure the sympathy and help of the best Friend we have!

We go home, also, *for rest and refreshment*. We are toil-worn—it is not more ease that we need, but real repose. We go to our beds, not because of idleness, but that we may be ready for tomorrow's labor. There are times when the strongest men must turn aside from their toil and rest for a little while—and it is right for us to go to our homes for this purpose.

Yet Jesus went to the Mount of Olives when every man went to his own home—and this suggests to us that we are not to be so concerned for the health of the body as to neglect the requirements of the soul. We must cry with David, "Renew a right spirit within me," and go to our God in prayer in the hope that we may be quickened in His way. Prayer to God is a even better refreshment than sleep, just as the soul is better than the body. A certain amount of sleep is necessary for the body, but prayer is just as necessary for the soul. The bed will give rest to the tired limbs, but the Mercy Seat will give refreshment to the powers and passions of the spirit. Let us get strength for service, power for endurance and might for conflict by going to the Mount of Olives with the Savior and watching and praying with Him.

I think that I have said enough upon this point of contrast. To my mind there is a very suggestive line of thought in these two sentences—"Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives."

III. Just for a minute or so, dear Friends, I want to remind you that we also have here A COMPARISON FOR OUR INSTRUCTION.

Perhaps I shall startle and surprise you when I say that Jesus Christ did exactly what His disciples and the other people did. They went to their own houses and He went to His own house. They went home and He went home. They sought ease, and He sought ease. They sought counsel and He sought counsel. They sought sympathy and He sought sympathy. They sought refreshment and He sought refreshment. The Mount of Olives was, to all intents and purposes, Christ's home. It was there that He met with His Father. It was there that the Man, Christ Jesus, met with kindred spirits in the Father and the Holy Spirit. It was there that He cast off the cares of the day and unburdened Himself as a weary son does in his parent's presence. It was there that He told the tale of all the traps which had been laid to trap Him in speech, of all the ways that His enemies had tried to catch Him. It was there that He cried to Heaven for wisdom and it was there that, made strong by fresh contact with His Father, He girt on His golden armor to go forth once more fully protected from all the arrows of the Evil One. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that season of prayer upon the Mount of Olives was to Jesus what our going to our houses and to our loved ones is to us. We grieve that His body was wet with the dews of the night, yet we would gladly have some of those same drops upon our body if we could have communion with Him in spirit. We have sympathy with the members of His physical frame because they were tried by the cold of the mountains, and the loneliness of His night vigil, but we wish that our souls could be braced with something like the same vigor which He received upon the Mount of Olives, or in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yes, the cold mountain

was His home. There He *had* a place where He could lay His head, and rest, though only in a spiritual sense.

IV. There is just one other point for me to mention and then I will close. We have here A TYPE FOR OUR EDIFICATION.

We hope to go to our houses after this service, but Jesus is still, in a certain sense, on the Mount of Olives interceding for us. I suppose there are some people in their houses who are *plotting and scheming against the cause of God*. The Jesuit is seeking to spread his nets so that he may, with his many allurements, entice the unwary and extend the evil influence of the harlot of Babylon. The persecutor is planning with the view of tripping up a saint here and overthrowing another yonder. The devil is suggesting, in the minds of atheists and infidels, crafty arguments against the Inspiration of the Scriptures, new difficulties to startle youthful Believers, fresh blasphemies concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we could have the roofs taken off the houses in London, tonight, or if we could look into the many evil hearts in this modern Babylon, how many might we see taking counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed! Very many will be going to their houses tonight to plot, plan and imagine all sorts of evil! But, supposing they do, shall we sit down and be afraid? Shall we give way to despair? No! Verily there is still hope and more than hope for the true Church of Christ, for Jesus has gone to the Mount of Olives on high! There He stands, at the right hand of the Father, pleading the cause of His Church. Knowing her difficulties, foreseeing her perils, reading all that is in the hearts of her enemies and her own, He stretches out His hands, points to His wounds and, for Zion's sake, He will not hold His peace! For Jerusalem's sake He will not rest until her righteousness shall go forth as brightness and the salvation of His people shall be as a lamp that burns! There, Church of God, is your star of hope! The interceding Savior is our unfailing protection, our strong bulwarks and our munitions of war! Fear not, O Zion, for, while the Savior pleads, He that sits in the heavens does laugh at His enemies—the Lord has them in derision—

"Before the Throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea,
A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who always lives and pleads for me!
My name is engraved on His hands,
My name is written on His heart—
I know that, while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.
One with Himself I cannot die,
My soul is purchased by His blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ, my Savior and my God!"

But some will, I hope, go home in quite another mood. I trust that *some will go home to mourn over sin.* I hope that out of this company which I am now addressing, there are some who are going home to pray. As you, by your bedside, pour out your supplications to "Our Father who are in Heaven," do not forget that Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray—and remember that He is still praying for His people before His Father's face. Sinner, there will be two pleading for you while you are praying for yourself! As you plead with Christ, Christ pleads for you. When you put your case into His hands, every groan of yours is sprinkled with His precious blood and every penitent tear of yours is made acceptable to God through the merit of Christ's Sacrifice. Be not discouraged if your words will not come, if there are within you groans which cannot be uttered, or if you are half choked with emotion, so that you cannot speak out what you really feel within, for there is One who can speak for you as never man spoke! And if you cannot plead for yourself, He can plead for you according to that gracious assurance, "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Just as Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray for His people, He has now gone up to Heaven to continue pleading for them and also to make intercession for the transgressors.

It is very likely that *many will go to their houses simply to sleep*, as most of those probably did in our Savior's day. Many professing Christians come to God's House to sleep and then go home to sleep. They walk about sleeping, sleeping with their eyes open, spiritually sleeping while they are wide awake about mere secular matters. But it is a comfort to know that while professors sleep and lambs sleep, Jesus still goes, spiritually, to the Mount of Olives. The only hope for the slumbering Church is the wakeful Savior! Even if the earthly watchmen sleep, the best of all Watchmen keeps guard over the vineyard which He has planted. He says, "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

It may be that *some of you will go home to be tempted*. It is a sad thing to go from the House of God to meet with temptation, yet that happens to many of you. You come in here on Sabbath days or weeknights and try to get spiritual food for your soul and then, perhaps, the first word that you hear as you cross the threshold of your home is an oath. What a comfort it is that Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives to plead for you and that He knows, beforehand, the exact temptation which you will have to meet, even as He said to Simon Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fails not." Be satisfied, O Believer, that Christ will never put His gold into the furnace without Himself sitting at the mouth

of it to watch the whole purifying process! He never takes His eyes off the precious ingot as long as it is in the furnace—and only when He sees His own image reflected in the pure metal does He take it out of the fire! You can be sure of this, though the devil may come out against you and assail you in fashion which shall utterly stagger you, God has not forgotten you! Jesus has gone up on high and He is pleading for you that in this, your time of utmost weakness and need, the Grace of God shall be sufficient for you and make a way of escape for you out of all your troubles and temptations!

I might enlarge upon this fruitful theme, but I will not do so. And so I close by expressing the hope that some of us intend, from this day forth, to serve God better than we have ever done. I know that there are some members of this Church who feel stirred up to do more than they have ever yet done for Christ and, after all, the most of our members do not do much for Him. There are some in the Church who have no share in all that is done for Christ. It is not the many, but the few, who really do the work. If all the members of this Church felt such love for Christ as some do, and were all as ardently devoted to His cause as some are, I know not what we might not do for Christ, nor how rapidly His Kingdom might be extended by us! If any of us go to our homes solemnly praying that we may, from this day forth, be completely consecrated to the Lord, to serve Him with a perfect heart, we may rest assured that Jesus is praying a similar petition before His Father's face! He is praying that His people may be holy! That they may be happy! That they may love Him with their whole heart and bring forth much fruit to the praise and glory of His holy name! So, when you truly desire to serve God, Christ hears you and His prayer and your prayer agree well together!

Let us, therefore, go to our houses remembering that thought of Jesus retiring in secret to pray for His people—and before we close our eyes, let us go again to the Mercy Seat where Christ has often met with us. And as we close this service, let us for a few moments go in spirit to the Mount of Olives in prayer.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 7:30-63; 8:1.

John 7:30, 31. *Then they sought to take Him: but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ comes, will He do more miracles than these which this Man has done*? Well might they ask that question, for Jesus had worked such marvelous miracles that they could not imagine anything greater! Surely this must be the Christ or if He were not, when the Christ did come, could He and would He do any greater miracles than this Man had done?

32. *The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning Him.* Whispered these things, afraid to speak out boldly because of the Pharisees and, therefore, they quietly said it among themselves and, after all, there is no fire more to be dreaded than a smoldering fire.

32, 33. *And the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me.* That was a blessed way for Christ to describe His return to the heavenly world—"I go unto Him that sent Me." Possibly He said this to the very men who were sent to take Him.

34. *You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, there you cannot come.* No officers can arrest Him now that He has gone up into His Father's Glory. There is no fear of any of them being there to catch Him in His speech, or to drag Him before the ecclesiastical and secular judges, as they did when He was here.

35, 36. *Then said the Jews among themselves, "Where will He go, that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that He said, You shall seek Me and shall not find Me: and where I am, there you cannot come*? They appear to have had some intimation of that glorious love of Christ which was not to be confined within the bounds of the Jewish nation, yet they could not or would not understand His words.

37. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried.* Shouted, spoke with all His might! And He stood, although He usually sat to deliver His messages. But now, as if His whole being was awakened to its utmost energy, on account of the last day of the gathering having come, when perhaps the people would go home and He would be unable thus to speak with them again, "Jesus stood and cried."

37. *Saying, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink.* O blessed invitation! How sweet it should be to every thirsty soul! "If any man"—prince or pauper! "Any man"—moral or utterly debauched! "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me"—not to ordinances, nor to human priests, "let Him come unto *Me*, and drink," as much as He will "without money, and without price."

38. *He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water.* He will not only drink enough to satisfy his own thirst, but he will, himself, become a fountain—streams of Grace shall be communicated to his fellow men through him.

39. *(But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).* He was not given then, but later. On the day of Pentecost He was given—and He has never been withdrawn!

40-43. *Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But*

some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of Him. It is still true that Christ is a cause of division, as He, Himself, foretold that He would be.

44. *And some of them would have taken Him but no man laid hands on Him*. In the 30th verse of this chapter, and in the 20th verse of the next Chapter, we are told why they did not take Him—"His hour was not yet come." And, like their Lord, saints are immortal till their work is done!

45-48. *Then came the officers to the chief priest and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have you not brought Him? The officers answered, Never man spoke like this Man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him*? They professed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation and expected all to follow them.

49-51. *But the people who know not the Law are cursed. Nicodemus said unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them), Does our Law judge any man before it hears him and knows what he does*? Nicodemus asked a simple question, but they could not answer it without convicting themselves of disobeying that very Law of God of which they pretended to be the exponents.

52, 53. *They answered and said unto him, Are you also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee arises no Prophet. And every man went unto his own house.*

John 8:1. *Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.*

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE CHRISTIAN'S MANIFESTATION
NO. 3004

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1866.

"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."
1 John 3:2.

THE text mentions, "now," and then passes on to the future and speaks of, "yet." It does, however, speak of, "now" and, after all, despite our trials, there is much to make us happy in our present condition. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Our manifold temptations and infirmities cannot make us lose the blessings that come to us through our adoption into the family of God! "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?" Today, even today, we are the blessed of the Lord and we find in godliness the blessing of "the life that now is."

Yet, Beloved, for all that, we are still forced to cry—

"Alas for us if you were all,
And nothing beyond, O earth!"

If this were all our life, it would have been better for us not to have lived. Woe unto us if we had to live here always! Young says—

"Were there no death, even fools might wish to die"—

and, certainly, wise men would do so, for, Brothers and Sisters, this is a life of distractions, cares, anxieties, disappointments and, what is worse, it is a life of sins, sorrows and bitter repentances for wrong-doing! This life is to us a traveler's life with all the inconveniences that we meet with in travelling. We are here today and we are gone tomorrow! Sometimes the heat consumes us and at other times the cold bites us. We are like men at sea—we have not yet cast our anchor, nor furled our sails, nor reached the port where we are bound—and the sea in which we are sailing is rough, tempest-tossed and beset with rocks, shoals and quicksands. Our soul is often half a wreck and longs for the desired haven where, "the wicked cease from troubling" and, "the weary are at rest." Ours is a soldier's life—we have to be constantly fighting, or else continually upon our guard. Think not, you who have just buckled on your harness, that you have won the victory, for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ must fight from morn till evening, from youth's happy morning till the eve of gray old age!

I would not paint life in sadder colors than it needs, but I dare not shut my eyes to the fact that this is a sad world and that our path is one

of sorrow, for it is "through much tribulation" that we "enter into the Kingdom of God."—

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

It is to that other and better land that I would, for a little while, bear away your thoughts. We shall borrow the wings of our text and, like the eagle, soar towards Heaven!

I. We will begin with this sentence—IT DOES NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE.

What we are to be, we can scarcely guess. Indeed, we cannot guess at all by the use of our senses. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." But only to our spirits! Flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God and cannot even guess what that Kingdom is like. This is not the place where the Christian is to be seen. This is the place of his veiling—Heaven is the place of his manifestation. This is the place of his night. Yonder is the place of his day. Our portion is on the other side of the river—our days of feasting are not yet!

Some of the reasons why "it does not yet appear what we shall be" may be as follows. First, *our Master was, to a great extent, concealed and hidden, and we must expect to be as He was.* Is it not written, in this very Epistle, "as He is, as are we in this world?" Jesus said to His followers when He was here upon earth, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." My Brothers and Sisters, see that Man wearing a coat "without seam, woven from the top throughout"—the carpenter's son, the heir of poverty, the Companion of the humblest classes of mankind? Can you see in Him God over all, blessed forever? If you can, you are not looking with the eyes of your flesh, I am sure, for in that manner, you cannot detect the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ beneath so humble a garb. The veil which the Savior cast about Himself was not so thick but that some rays of His Glory burst through when He trod the waves, rebuked the winds and raised the dead, but still, it was sufficiently dense, for He cried, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." You will see that Christ was concealed as you remember that.

But, as Dr. Watts says—

"All riches are His native right"—

yet, when He had to pay the Temple tax, He had to work a miracle that Peter might be able to catch the fish which had the exact amount required in its mouth. He was so poor that He had to live upon the charity of His followers. Would you have believed that He was the Lord of all creation if you had seen Him up on yonder lonely mountain's side without a bed to rest upon, or sitting wearily upon Jacob's well at Sychar and asking a sinful woman to give Him a little water to drink? The Savior was, indeed, masked and hidden so that the vulgar eye could not detect His Glory. Only such eagle-eyed men as John were able to say, "We

beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." Our Lord's wisdom, Grace, power and all His other illustrious attributes were concealed beneath the veil of our inferior clay. Dr. Watts was right, as I reminded you just now, when he wrote—

"Worthy is He that once was slain
The Prince of Peace that groaned and died—
Worthy to rise, and live, and reign
At His almighty Father's side!
Power and dominion are His due
Who stood condemned at Pilate's bar.
Wisdom belongs to Jesus, too,
Though He was charged with madness here.
All riches are His native right,
Yet He sustained amazing loss!
To Him ascribe eternal might
Who left His weakness on the Cross."

So fully did He veil His Glory that some even ventured to call Him Beelzebub and to say that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber!

Now, Christian, as you think of all this, do you wonder if worldlings do not know you and only speak of you to slander you? Do you wonder if your integrity is questioned and your most manifest virtue is misrepresented? And if the Grace which really is within you is laughed at and despised? How could the world know you when the Savior, Himself, was not discovered? As the bright gleams of His Divine Glory were almost wholly concealed, surely the weaker gleams of your earthly and human glory must be altogether hidden! That, perhaps, is the first reason why "it does not yet appear what we shall be."

I think I may also remark, Brothers and Sisters, that *we are not yet fit to let it appear what we shall be*. "The son in the house," says one, "is treated as if he were a servant—and even worse than if he were a servant. A servant is not chastised—he may do many wrong things and yet escape without a stripe—yet it is not as with the son. Why does not his father give him the honor and dignity which belong to his sonship?" Simply because he is at present only a child and he must be treated as a child for a time, in order that he may be fitted to adorn his sonship. It would spoil him to receive at once all that is to be his when he enters upon his inheritance. He is the heir to all his father's estates, yet he has to be thankful to his father for even a penny—and he receives his pittance week by week, as though he were a poor pensioner upon his father's bounty or a beggar at his door. Why does not the father give this heir to large estates a thousand pounds? Why does he not entrust him with a great store of wealth? Because he is in his nonage and if he were trusted with a large sum of money at so early an age, he might grow profligate and so be unfit to use his wealth rightly if he should reach riper years.

Brothers and Sisters, you and I, if we are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are kings—not only sons of God, but kings who are to reign with Him forever! Then why are we not treated like kings? You know that in some earthly royal families, it is thought best for the prince, the heir-

apparent to the throne, that he should be a soldier or a sailor and serve his country in that capacity, so that, when he comes to the throne, he may understand how to wield his scepter for the good of all classes of his subjects. So, Christian, is it with you. You are so childish at present—you have just lately begun to learn the nature of Divine things. You are uninstructed—you know but in part and you know that part so badly that it would not be fitting that your greatness should be revealed to you at present! You must be held back for a while till you have been better trained in the Holy Spirit's school—and *then* it shall appear what you shall be!

A third reason why it does not yet appear what we shall be is, I think, because *this is not the world in which the Christian is to appear in his glory,* for, if he did, his glory would be lost in this world. The multitude climbed to the tops of the trees, or the roofs of the houses, from where they might see Caesar or Pompey returning with the spoils of war. And the multitudes still clap their hands when a warrior has overcome his country's enemies and so become a great man. But the world cares little or nothing about self-denial, about Christian love, about consecration and devotion to Christ and His cause—yet these things are the glory of a Christian! That morel excellence, that spiritual worth which flashes from the eyes of the holy angels and the saints in Glory is almost unappreciated here. Your Master has had this Glory, though it was usually veiled while He was here below, yet the people cried out, "away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" And if you had here, to its full extent, the glory which will be revealed in you in Heaven, people would say the same concerning you! This is not the world in which you are to display your full honors. When a king is journeying through a foreign country, he does not wear his crown, nor the rest of his regal clothes—he often travels *incognito* and even when he reaches his own country, he does not put on his royal robe for fools to admire at every village wake and fair! He is not a puppet-king, strutting upon the stage to show himself to the common people—he reserves his grandeur for great public occasions and grand court ceremonies. In this poor sinful world, you Christians would be out of place if you could be what you shall yet be! You, also, must go incognito through this world to a large extent. But, by-and-by, you shall take off the travel-worn garments that you have worn during your earthly pilgrimage and put on your beautiful array and be manifested to the whole universe as a son or a daughter of "the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible!"

And to close this part of the subject, "It does not yet appear what we shall be," because *this is not the time for the display of the Christian's glory*. If I may use such an expression, time is not the time for the manifestation of a Christian's glory. Eternity is to be the period for the Christian's full development and for the sinless display of his God-given glory. Here he must expect to be unknown—it is in the hereafter that he is to be discovered as a son of the great King. At present it is with us as it is with the world during winter. If you had not seen the miracle worked again and again, you would not guess, when you look upon those black

beds in the garden, or when you walk over that snowy and frosty covering, crisp and hard beneath your feet, that the earth will yet be sown with all the colors of the rainbow and that it will be gemmed with flowers of unspeakable beauty! No, the winter is not the time when the beauty of the earth is to be best seen. And, Christian, you, also, must pass through your winter season. Yes, but let that wintry weather once be over, let the bleak December winds howl into your ears, let the cold and cheerless January come and go, let February also pass and, behold, the springtime comes! I might also say that gray hairs come upon your head like the snowflakes appear upon the earth—as the forerunner of spring and of summer—and your soul shall yet blossom "with unspeakable joy and full of glory," and all the graces and excellence of the Christian shall be revealed in you! It is winter with you now, but the summer comes!

If you stand, as many of you have often done, at the seaside, you have noticed that at certain hours of the day there is a long expanse of mud, or of dry sand, and it may not seem to one who sees it for the first time as though the sea had ever rolled over it, or that it ever would. Ah, but "it does not yet appear" what it will be! It is ebb-tide now, but wait till the flood comes and then you will see the whole of that black mire or that yellow sand glistening in the sunshine! So, the flood of glory is rising, Christian! Can you not see the breakers in the distance, the white crests of the incoming waves? God's great sea of eternity draws nearer and nearer! Can you not hear the booming of that mighty flood? Soon shall your ransomed spirit float and bathe in that sea of Glory where not a single wave shall cause you a moment's grief or pain! This is not the time, Christian, in which you are to be fully revealed. You are, today, like that ugly shriveled seed—there is no beauty in it that you should desire it. Yes, but wait a little while and the sweetly-perfumed flower shall shed its fragrance in the air and make the gazer pause to admire the matchless colors with which God has been pleased to paint it! Then shall its full glory be known and seen! At present you are in your seed stage and your sowing time is coming. Tremble not that it is so. There will be a time for your poor flesh to sleep in the silent grave, but, at the voice of the archangel and the blast of the trumpet of the Resurrection, you shall arise! Just as the flower rises in spring, the dead body, which was put into the tomb, shall rise incorruptible in the image of the Savior!

So, you see, "it does not yet appear what we shall be," because the Lord Jesus Christ was not fully revealed here, because we are not fit to appear in Glory, because we are not here in the midst of the men and women who should see us in *our glory* and because it is not yet the right time for us thus to appear. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens," but this is not the time for the full manifestation of Christians and, therefore, "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."

II. Having spent so much time over the previous clause, we will merely hint at the teaching of the next words of the text—"BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR."

So, then, *it is quite certain that Christ will appear*. John does not stop to prove it. He speaks of it as though it were perfectly understood that Christ would again appear and he mentions what is to be the nature of that appearing.

Christ will appear in Person. This is what the two angels declared to the disciples after His Ascension, "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." That is, as the Incarnate God He will come back from Heaven.

When He comes, *He will appear full of happiness*. There will be no more sorrow to winkle His brow, no more furrows to be plowed on His back, no fresh wounds to be made in His hands or his feet, no more offering of a Sacrifice for sin—He will come to forever rejoice with His people!

Further, when He comes, *He will appear in His Glory*—not as the Man of Nazareth to be despised and spit upon—but as "The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." If any of you are tempted to ask, "When will He come?" I give you His own assurance, "Surely I come quickly." So go your way and pray, as John did, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," yet do not forget Paul's Inspired sentence, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Christ is coming, Beloved, literally coming—not figuratively and by His Spirit, but literally, actually, really—

"Lo! He comes with clouds descending
Once for favored sinners slain."

He is coming in Glory to dwell in the midst of His saints forever. This is our blessed hope, "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

III. Now, passing on, "We know that when He shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.

There are other passages in His Word where we are distinctly told that His manifestation will be coincident with our manifestation. Here we are told that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." And the reason given for this is, "for we shall see Him as He is."

Let us, while pondering the text, then, meditate upon this great Truth of God—"We shall be like Him." This afternoon, meditating upon this glorious assurance that I shall be like Christ—and I fully believe that I shall be like Him—it did seem to me as if it were almost too good to be true!

Yet it is true that *we are to be like Christ, first, as to our body*. Here we are like the first Adam of the earth, earthy. But we shall, one day, have a body like that of the second Adam, a heavenly body! Like the first Adam, we are now mortal. Like the second Adam, we shall, by-and-by, be immortal! Christ's body is not now subject to any pains, or to any decay or disease—neither shall our body be. It is quite true that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," yet it will be this very body of ours that *will* inherit the Kingdom of God, only that which is corruptible in it, that which is mere flesh and blood, will then have been removed! As the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians in that wonderful chapter about the Resurrection, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." It is "a spiritual body" which the Lord Jesus Christ has today. I cannot imagine how glorious the Savior is in Heaven, but I always think of Him, even when He was upon this earth, as being far fairer than any artist ever depicted Him. I have gazed a long while upon many paintings of Christ, both in England and abroad, but I have never yet seen one which appeared to me to be equal even to my ideal of the Savior! I have looked and I have said, "Oh, no! He was far fairer than that! There must have been more beauty in His face than even that great master has portrayed." Well, Brothers and Sisters, if that is true concerning Him as He was when among the sons of men, how true it must be concerning Him as He is now! He is fairer than all the fair spirits that surround the heavenly Throne! He is "the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys." Among the shining seraphim and cherubim, none can be compared with Him and, Christian, you are to be like Him! Whatever are the Characteristics of the Savior's glorified body, they are to be the characteristics of your body, also! You are to have an immortal body, a spiritual body, a body incapable of pain, suffering, decay—a body which shall be suited to your emancipated spirit, a body having a wider range than this limited earthly sphere, having greater powers at locomotion, perhaps flying, swiftly as light, from world to world, or possibly having the power even to outrun the lightning's flash! I do not know how wondrous Christ's glorified body is, but I do know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him (even in body); for we shall see Him as He is."

But, far more important than that, *we shall also be like Christ in soul*. Have the eyes of your spiritual understanding or sanctified imagination ever looked upon Christ's spotless, perfectly-developed soul—that equably-adjusted spirit, in which no one power or passion was too prominent or predominant—but in which His whole Being was beautifully molded and rounded according to the perfect pattern of moral excellence and beauty? Now, Beloved, you are to be just like that—not quick in temper, as perhaps you now are, but meek and lowly as He was—not haughty and prone to pride, but humble and gentle as He was—not selfish and self-seeking, but as disinterested and as tender to others as He was—in fact, perfection's own self! It was said of Harry the Eighth that if all the histories of all the tyrants who ever lived had been

lost, you might have composed them all with the material from the life of that execrable monster! And I will venture to say that if all the biographies of all the good men and holy angels that have ever existed could be blotted out of existence or memory, they might all be written again with the material from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in Him dwells all excellence and all goodness! What a joy it is to us to know that we shall be like Him! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this blessed Truth of God is enough to make you stand up or even leap in the exuberance of your joy! I have heard of our enthusiastic Welsh friends dancing during some of their preachers' sermons—and if it is this or a similar Truth which makes them dance, who can wonder at it? "We shall be like Him"—like Him in soul, with no more infirmities of temper, or sloth, or undue haste. Our human nature shall be rid of all its rags and we shall be perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect! Oh, that the blessed day had already come and that we were like our Lord! But "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."—

"Nor does it yet appear
How great we must be made!
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

Time fails me to say what I should have liked to have said, yet I ought to add that *we shall be like Christ* not only in body and in soul, but *also in condition*. We shall be with Him where He is and we shall be as happy as He is, as far as our capacity for happiness goes. We shall be crowned even as He is crowned and we will sit upon thrones even as He sits upon His Father's Throne. He shall lead us to living fountains of water and be our constant Companion, never going away from us again. He shall call us His brethren and we shall share in His honor and Glory. The joy of which we shall partake shall be His joy, and it will be in us that our joy may be full. O Christian, think lofty thoughts concerning the Lord in Glory and remember that you shall be like Him! I cannot help repeating that quaint little ditty which Rowland Hill was so fond of humming in his old age—

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

IV. So, "we shall be like Him." And the reason why we shall be like Him is thus given by John, "FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS."

How is it that we shall be like Him because of that? Partly, *by reflection*. Perhaps you are aware that in the olden time, looking-glasses (if I may use an Irishism), were not looking-glasses at all, for they were made of polished brass. If a person looked into such a mirror when the sun was shining upon that mirror, not only would the mirror itself be bright, but it would also throw a reflection on the face of the person who was looking into it. This is only according to the laws of light. When a man looks into a bright mirror, it makes him, also, bright, for it throws its own light upon his face and, in a much more wonderful fashion, when we look at Christ, who is all brightness, He throws some of His

brightness upon us! When Moses went up into the mountain to commune with God, his face shone because he had received a reflection of God's Glory upon his face. He had looked into the blazing light of Deity, as far as a created eye could look there and, therefore, that light was so brilliantly reflected in his own face that Aaron and the people were afraid to draw near him—and he had to cover his face with a veil while he spoke to them.

Further, Beloved, we get to be like Christ by seeing Him *in type and symbol*, as through a glass darkly. The Lord's Supper is one of the glasses. Believer's Baptism is another. The preaching of the Word is another. The Bible, itself, is another of these glasses. It is only a partial reflection of Christ that we get from all these glasses yet, as we look at it, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," or, "by the Lord, the Spirit."

But, Brothers and Sisters, if there is such a sanctifying influence about the very reflection of Jesus Christ, *what a wondrous power it must have upon us when we see Him as He is*! When we shall gaze upon Him with unveiled vision and see Him as He is, do you wonder that John says that then, "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is"? Oh, that amazing sight, that unique sight of Jesus as He is! It would be worthwhile to die a thousand painful deaths in order to get one brief glimpse of Him as He is! I do not think that Rutherford exaggerated when he talked of swimming through seven Hells to get at Christ if he could not get at Him any other way. A distant view of Him, as we have seen Him "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills," has so ravished our souls that we have scarcely known whether we have been in the body or out of our body. When we have heard His voice, we have longed to be with Him. The very thought of Him has made us like the dove separated for a while from her mate, long to cleave the air with rapid wing and fly home to our dovecote and to our blessed Noah. What must it be to be there? What must it be to see our Savior as He is?

In some of the houses not far from here, I noticed some finches in cages in which there were tufts of grass, or small branches of trees as perches for the poor prisoners—yet they were singing away right merrily. I suppose that grass and those fragments of trees were meant to remind them, in this great, dirty, smoky Babylon, that there are green fields and wide forests somewhere. I thought, as I looked upon them, "Ah, you poor birds are like what I myself am! My Master has put me in a little cage and bid me bide here for a while—and He has given me my little tuft of grass as an earnest of my inheritance in the—

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."

He graciously sends me a few comforts on the way. Ah, but that poor little tuft of grass, what is it in comparison with the fields and the hedges which are the proper home of the singing birds which have their liberty? And, Christian, you do not know what it will be for you to have your cage door opened that you may fly away to that blessed land where the true birds of Paradise forever warble, from their joyful throats, the loudest

praises to the great King who has set them free forever! Let us begin the music here! Let us try, even now, to anticipate that happy day as we sing of—

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest—

where—

"The daylight is serene."—

And where—

"The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen."

I leave my text with you who love the Lord. As for you who do not love Him, I dare not give it to you. Oh, that you did love Him and that you did trust Him! He waits to be gracious. Seek His face and He will be found of you. Fly to Him and He will not reject you. Trust in Him and He will wash you from all your sins and bring you to His Presence in eternal Glory, to go no more out forever! May He give you this unspeakable blessing, for His love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 JOHN 2; 3:1, 2.

1 John 2:1. *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not.* This is one of the great objectives of all that is written by Inspiration—that we may be kept from sin. O child of God, as you would fear to drink poison, as you would flee from a serpent, dread sin!

1. *And if any man sins.* Is it a hopeless case then? Far from it! "If any man sins."

1-3. *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 we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.* Holiness of life is the best proof that we know God. It matters not how readily we can speak about God, nor how much we suppose that we love Him—the great test is, do we keep His commandments? What a heart-searching test this is! How it should humble us before the Mercy Seat!

4-6. *He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.* When we try to be, in every respect, what God's Word tells us we ought to be, then may we know that we are in God. But if we walk carelessly, if we take no account of our actions, but do, after a random fashion, whatever comes into our foolish hearts, then have we no evidence at all that we are in God!

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which we had from the beginning.* The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. "From the time when Christ first began to preach, or when the Gospel was first preached in your ears."

8. *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.* That which is new in the Gospel, in one sense, is not new in another, for, though John was about to write what he called a new commandment, yet, at the same time, he was writing something which was not novel, something which was not grafted upon the Gospel, but which grows naturally out of it, namely, the Law of Love.

9. *He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness, even until now.* God is Love and God is Light. Therefore, love is light, and the Light of God is Love. Where enmity and hatred are still in the heart, it is proof positive that the Grace of God is not there.

10-15. *He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. 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. 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 this sinful world is directly opposed to the Father. You cannot send your heart at the same time in two opposite ways—towards evil and towards good. You must make a choice between the two.

16, 17. *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.* It ought not, then, to be difficult to make a choice between these fleeting shadows and the everlasting substance.

18. *Little children, it is the last time.* You may read the passage, "It is the last hour," as if John wanted to show how late it was and how soon Christ would come. "It is the last hour."

18. *And as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* How much more emphatically John might write this verse if he were writing today!

19. *They went out from us.* For, alas, many of the antichrists came out of the Church. They sprang up from among the followers of Christ. "They went out from us."

19, 20. *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 who know God—and even the little children, the babes in Christ, know the Father—know all things.

And you will not be led astray and deceived by these antichrists who have gone out into the world."

21. *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.* The truth is all of a piece, and a lie cannot be a part of the truth. Christ does not teach us a Jesuitical system in which error and falsehood are mixed up with truth—the Gospel is all truth—and to those who believe it we may say, "You know the truth, and you also know that no lie is of the truth."

22, 23. *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.* They who deny the Deity of Christ practically deny the Divine Fatherhood of God. It is not possible for us to understand the rest of the Truth of God if we do not believe in Christ, who is the Truth. As the poet says—

"You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him."

23-28. *[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 that is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and in truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, we shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him.* That which is the subject of promise is also the subject of precept. And the precepts of the Gospel are given to Christians because, in this way, God keeps His own promise and so leads me to obey His precepts.

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.*

1 John 3:1, 2. *Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. 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.*

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

SILKEN CORDS
NO. 3005

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1906.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."
Hosea 11:4.

No man ever comes to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly "dead in trespasses and sins" that the same Divine Power which provided a Savior must make him willing to accept a Savior, or else he will never be saved. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot, however, move herself into the water. You see a tree. It is growing—it brings forth branches, leaves and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now, if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log! And if the tree, which has life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone! Christ's declaration, "Without Me you can do nothing," is true of Believers, but it is just as true, and with a more profound emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come.

But many make a mistake about Divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads and drags them to Heaven, whether they will or not and that when the time comes, they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God, for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled—

"Convince a man against his will.
He's of the same opinion still"

As the old proverb says, "One man may bring a horse to water, but 20 men cannot make him drink." So, a man may be brought to know what repentance is and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. No, God Himself does not do it by compulsion. He has respect unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acts with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, He does not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify Himself, He uses means to show forth His Glory—not such as are fit for beasts, or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this, "I drew them with cords"—not the cords that are fit for bulls, but, "with cords of a man"—not the cart ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man and, as if to explain Himself, the Lord puts it, "I drew them with bands of

love." Love is that mighty Power which acts upon man! There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by Sovereign Grace.

Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn—but it is equally true that God draws no man contrary to the constitution of man. His methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is and He acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that He uses, are "cords of a man." The bands He employs are "bands of love."

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try—and may the Lord enable me—to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens around the hearts of sinners. I may be the means in His hands of putting these cords around you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all one's might at that rope. So it may be that I shall introduce the arguments and, by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in His Infinite Mercy, to pull these cords and that your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will to come and lay hold upon eternal life!

I. First, *some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true Believers*.

A true Believer is the happiest being out of Heaven. In some respects, he is superior to an angel, for he has a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son of God and has the Spirit of Adoption within him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them and you will always find them cheerful. If, for a moment, a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment—and soon they rejoice again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their path. Wherever they go, they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when they may, it is always for the comfort of others—with kindness upon their lips and the law of love within their hearts! Many a young person, watching such Christians as these, is led to say, "I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful as they are. They always have a smile upon their face." And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus through being drawn by that band of love!

And let me say to you, dear Friend, that this is a most fitting cord with which to draw you, for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning and go with you into your business—that shall be with you at night and close your eyes in tranquil slumber—a peace that shall enable you to live and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death—no, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream—be a Christian! My testimony is that if I had to die like a dog. If this life were all and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian for the

joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." It has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. You would be happy, young man? Then do not kill your happiness. You would have a bright eye? Then do not put it out. You would rejoice with unspeakable joy? Then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow your every act. Would you be happy? Come to Jesus! Let this band of love sweetly draw you.

Another band of love—it was the one which brought me to the Savior—*is the sense of the security of God's people, as a desire to be as secure as they are*. I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but I have always loved safe things. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things—things that I can see to be made of rock and that will bear the test of time—I lay hold on with eagerness. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit—Scripture tells me that he that believes in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity, too! There will be no fear of my ever being in Hell. I shall run no risk as to my eternal state—that will be secure forever. I shall have the certainty that when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ and behold Him in Glory. Whenever I heard the Doctrine of the Final Preservation of the Saints preached, my mouth used to water and I used to long to be a child of God! When I heard the old saints sing that hymn—

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

my heart was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, "Oh, that I had a part and lot in such a salvation as that!" Now, young man, what do you think of this band of love? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it—to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin and that, by the Grace of God, in a moment? "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "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." What do you say to this? Does not this Truth of God attract you? Does not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner by the sweet allurement of security, and let him say, "I will lay hold on Christ tonight."

Certain Christians will tell you that *they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives*—not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighboring dovecotes into his own, took a dove and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew and all her fellow doves observed her and, attracted by the sweet incense, flew after

her and the dovecote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus—and wherever they go, such is their kindness and their consistency, their gentleness and yet their honesty, their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus—that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus! And they say, "Where does He dwell, for I would gladly see Him and love Him, too? I am afraid I cannot attract you, Sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men. Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be. What her life of devotedness to God was. And I charge you, by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul and the yearning of her heart towards you, let your mother's example be one of the bands of love to draw you towards God! Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord is around you and the Lord will pull at it, I shall have good hope that you will close with Christ tonight!

You see, I only show you the cord and then leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. Now for another. I believe *that not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received.* The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps, even in the River Thames he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand and yet he has been unharmed. The traveler has escaped from a terrific railway crash—himself picked out of the debris of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared. Or he, himself, has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come—but just then God interposed in a gracious Providence and a strong tide of prosperity set in! Some have thought over these things and said, "Is God so good to us, and shall we not love Him? Shall we live every day despising Him who thus tenderly watches over us and graciously provides for our needs?" O Sirs, I think this band of love ought to fall about some of you! How good God has been to you, dear Hearer! I will not tell your case out in public, but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, "How graciously has Providence dealt with me!" Give the Lord your heart, young man! Surely you can do no less for such favor as He has shown you! Mother, give Jesus your heart! He well deserves it, for He has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate—may the Lord help you to do it!—consecrate your heart's warmest affections to Him who has thus generously dealt with you in Providence. He deserves it, does He not? Will you be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something within you that says, "Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a Friend, but be reconciled to Him. Be reconciled to God by the death of His Son." May that cord lay hold of some of you—and may God draw it and so attract you to Himself!

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be your mode of thinking of things, but it strikes me that if I had not laid hold of Christ, if

anybody should meet me and say, "*The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world*," I should lend him my ear for a little time and ask him to prove it to me. I have frequently caught the ears of travelers and held them fast bound when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just, that is taken for granted. If God is just, sin must be punished—that is clear. Then, how can God be just and yet not punish the sinner? That is the question and the Gospel answers that question! It declares that Christ, the Son of God, became a Man. That He stood in the place of such men as were chosen of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place and of those whom I will now call Believers. He suffered at God's hand everything that was due to God from them. No, He did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God's Law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ to save them. Christ's sufferings are put in the place of their being sent to Hell and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ's righteousness is put in the place of their keeping the Law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in Paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy!

Now, it strikes me that this looks reasonable enough. In everyday life we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia—he pays for a substitute and he goes free. A man owes a debt. Some friend comes in and discharges the bill for him—and he is clear. The ends of justice are answered through *substitution*. There seems to me to be something so unique about the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God's suffering in man's form for man, that Justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery, and cries, "I would have an interest in it! Lord, let me be one of those for whom Jesus died! Let me have the peace which springs from a complete Atonement worked out by Jesus Christ!" My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could draw you with this cord, but I cannot. I can only show you this cord and tell you how well it would draw you. If you reject it, your blood shall be upon your own head. I know too well you *will* reject it unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love and draw you to Jesus!

Far larger numbers, however, are doubtless *attracted to Jesus by a sense of His exceeding great love*. It is not so much the reasonableness of the Atonement, as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived, in the city of London, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fines, imprisonment and even death for the Truth's sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler—a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler and was in the habit of giving him all his work to do and recommending him to many friends. And as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus—

had often advanced him sums of money and had acted with great kindness—a reward was offered to anyone who would betray a Lollard, or would point out such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skillful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave—freely forgave the cobbler and never said a word to him about it. But in the streets the cobbler would always turn his head the other way and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still, the merchant never altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before, but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him.

One day, in a very narrow lane in the city—for the streets were narrow and still narrower were the lanes—the merchant saw the cobbler coming. And he thought, "Now is my time. He cannot pass me, now, without facing me." Of course, the cobbler grew very red in the face and made up his mind that if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, "I am very sorry that you shun me. I have no ill-will towards you. I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you." The cobbler stopped and presently a moisture suffused his eyes and, soon a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said, "I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you would never forgive me. I have always shunned you, but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, Sir, assure me of your forgiveness." Forthwith, he began to fall upon his knees.

That was the way to draw him with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love! And, in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy. He has proclaimed to you eternal life and you reject it. Every day He gives you of His bounties, makes you to feed at the table of His Providence and clothes you with the livery of His generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse Him! You break His Sabbaths. You despise His name. You are His enemies. Yet, what does He say to you? He loves you still—He follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo you and to entreat you to come to Him and have Him for your Friend. Can you hold out against my Master's wounds? Can you stand out against His bloody sweat? Can you resist His passion? Oh, by the name of Him who bowed His head upon the tree, who cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" can you hold out against Him? If He had not died for me, I think I must love Him for dying for other people. But He has died for you—you may know this if so you trust Him, now, with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that He died for you! Oh, may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man!

II. There are many more cords, but my strength fails me and, therefore, I will mention but one more. *The privileges which a Christian*

enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ. Do you know what will take place in these aisles tonight if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. There he stands, he is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it. He is wretched. He has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ tonight, his sins will roll off from him at once! They will roll into the sepulcher of Jesus and be buried and never have a resurrection. In a moment, he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment! The kiss of a Father's love shall be upon his cheek and the seal of the Spirit's witness shall be fixed upon his brow. He shall be made, tonight, a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. His feet shall be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home! And when he gets home, it may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for, while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a Hell upon earth, will live a life like Heaven begun below—and all this shall take place in an instant!

No, that is not all! The effect of this night's work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus so that, when the time shall come that his hair is gray and he lies stretched upon his bed and breathes out his life, he shall, in his last moments, look back upon a path that has been lit with the Grace of God—and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the Glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fullness as a creature can endure! This is enough, surely, to tempt a sinner to come to Jesus! This must be a strong cord to draw him! O Man, Jesus will accept you! He will accept you now, just as you are! He has received millions like you already! Let Heaven's music witness to the fact. Millions more like you He is still willing to receive—some of us can bear our testimony to them. Come and welcome, then, come and welcome! Never mind your rags, prodigal, a Father's hand will take them off! Never mind your filth! Never mind having fed the swine. Come as you are! Just come now!

I hear somebody saying, "Well, I am inclined to come, but I do not know what it means to come to Christ." To come to Christ is to trust Him. You have been trying to save yourself—do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the Commandments, but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them and no man ever will keep them! You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has been sentenced to hard labor—you have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars and you are not an inch higher! After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off—have done with it. Christ kept the Law! Let His keeping it stand in the place of your keeping it. Christ suffered the anger of God—let His sufferings stand to you in the place of your sufferings. Take Him now, just as you are, and believe that He can save you—no, that He WILL save

you and trust Him to do it! This is all the Gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who enquire for something new. I cannot give it to you—I have not got anything new, but only the same old story over and over again! Trust Christ, and you are saved!

We have heard, in our church meetings, that on several occasions when, at the close of the sermon, I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace and, therefore, I will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ tonight, but I know not what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment! But damned you must be unless you lay hold on Christ. Does not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in Heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter, but you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ! Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fear, suspense, doubt and anxiety. It would be a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow and say, "I do not care whether I wake or not." To go to sea and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whenever you reach land or not. No, sometimes the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here! Do you not wish for that? But you can never have it except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you?

My dear Hearers, you whose face I look upon every Sabbath, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that to some of you, this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you move to other towns, it gives me pain to miss your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved Friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years, you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship's company should meet on the other side of the sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss any of you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near—neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in Heaven unless we meet in Jesus Christ! We cannot meet father, mother, pastor and friends unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord! Will not that band of love draw you? Mother, from the railings of Heaven, a little angel-child is looking down tonight, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you and he is saying, "Mother, follow your baby to Heaven." Father, your daughter charged you, as she died, to give your heart to Christ—and from her seat in Heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick-bed, I trust, "Follow me, follow me to Heaven!" Friends who have gone before—godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus—in one chorus, say to you, "Come up here! Come up here for we, without you, cannot be made perfect." Will not this band of love draw you? Oh, will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you

and bring you to the Savior's feet? The Lord grant that it may, but, as I have said, I can only show you the cords. It is God's work to pull them—and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord grant it, for His love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 11; 14.

Hosea 11:1. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.* God's love was very early love. He began with the nation of Israel when it was a mere handful of men in Egypt. There He multiplied them and, in due time, He called them out from among the heathen. God's love to some of us manifested itself at a very early period of our lives when we were yet children. It is among our most joyous memories that we have known the Lord from our youth up. Happy man, happy woman, of whom God can say, as He said concerning His ancient people, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt."

2. *As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.* The nation of Israel did not fulfill the promise of its youth. It was not faithful to God. The people heard from the lips of Moses the command, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord," yet they continually turned aside to the idols of the nations. Have not some of us, also, although we have been loved by God, been faithless to Him? Can we not look back, with great regret and sorrow, upon our many stumbling and backslidings? If it is so, let us repent of our sin and never repeat it.

3. *I taught Ephraim also to go.* Just as nurses teach children to walk—"I taught Ephraim also to go."

3. *Taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.* God has done great things for many of us who, possibly, have never noticed His hand at work on our behalf. Lives which were in great peril have been saved, yet the goodness of God has never been acknowledged by those whom He has delivered. Men have been raised up from beds of sickness, yet the great and good Healer has never been thanked for what He has done for them. Oh, how sad it is that God should do so much for us, and yet that we should not even thank Him for doing it!

4. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.* As men do with the bulls that have been plowing, lifting the yoke from them, and giving them rest and food before they have to begin plowing again. So did God to Israel, and so has He done to us. He lifted from us the heavy burden of our sin and He gave us rest and heavenly food. But oh, what a poor return we have made for all the thoughtful kindness of our God! If any man here imagines that he can boast of his conduct towards his God, he does not feel as I do. Rather dear Friends, I think that we all ought to humble ourselves in the Lord's Presence when

we remember what ill returns we have made for all that He has done for us.

5, 6. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. All the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.* If men will sin, they shall suffer. And God's people will be the first to suffer for their sins against the Lord, as He said by the mouth of the Prophet Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If a man lets other men's children go unchastened, he will chastise his own children, if he is worthy of the name of a father. And God will do the same. He will not destroy us, but He will chasten us if we backslide from Him.

7, 8. *And My people are bent to backsliding from Me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. How shall I give you up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver you, Israel*? There seems to be a contest in the heart of God. At least that is how He describes it Himself, as though Mercy pleaded with Justice, and Love contended with Wrath—"How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel?

8. *How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim*? "I cannot destroy you, as I destroyed the guilty cities of the plain in the days of old."

8. *My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.* O Backsliders, if God's repentings are kindled, will not yours also be kindled? If you have left Him and yet He will not give you up, will you give Him up? Will you not return to Him? Listen to His own words.

9. *I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.* What a mercy this is for us! If the Lord had been man, He would have cast us off long ago. But, as He is God, He is infinitely patient and He loves to forgive. "I am God, and not man."

9, 10. *The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the LORD.* See what His almighty Grace will do to make these wanderers come back to Him.

10. *He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.* Even His roaring like a lion will only make them tremblingly come back to Him.

11, 12. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses Me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints.*

Hosea 14:1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* Let anyone here who has turned aside from the Lord, hear these tender pleading words and then yield to Him who utters them! God speaks, not to condemn, but to comfort. He would gladly allure you back to Him with His gracious words of love! "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity."

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* But the poor penitent cries, "Alas, Lord, I do not know what to say. So God puts in the sinner's mouth the very words he is to utter.

2. *Say unto Him. Take away all iniquity.* That is where the mischief lies, in your inequity, your turning aside from the path of truth and equity. Say to the Lord, "I do not want to keep any of my iniquity. I desire to be delivered from it altogether." "Take away all iniquity."

2. *And receive us graciously.* "Lord, take us back again! According to the greatness of Your Grace, restore us to Your heart of love and let us dwell where Your children dwell. 'Receive us graciously.'"

2. *So will we render the calves of our lips.* That is to say, "We will give You the sacrifice of our praises. We will speak well of Your name. If we have the calves of the stall, we will give them to You, but, in any case, we will give you the calves of our lips."

3. *Asshur shall not save us.* They had been accustomed to rely either upon Assyria or upon Egypt. And one of the first signs of their real repentance was that they had given up their false dependences. So, Sinner, you must give up your self-righteousness, your ceremonialism—anything and everything in which you have trusted in place of trusting in the Lord! "Asshur shall not save us."

3. *We will not ride upon horses.* In the day of battle, they had trusted in their cavalry. But now, in the time of their repentance, they cry, "We will not ride upon horses."

3. *Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, you are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy.* What a beautiful ending there is to this verse! If any of you are full of sin and full of needs, and have become like orphans who have lost everything and are utterly destitute—if you have none to provide for you, and none to care for you—come to the God of the fatherless and put your trust in Him! "For in You the fatherless finds mercy." Then follows this gracious promise.

4. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.* Listen to the heavenly music! "I will." "I will." When God says, "I will," you may depend upon it that He will do what He says He will. If you or I say, "I will," it must be with the proviso, "If it is God's will, I will do so-and-so." But God is the almighty King whose least word is a sovereign mandate—"I will heal their backsliding: I will love them freely."

4. *For My anger is turned away from him.* If you have come back to the Lord with true penance of heart, He is no longer angry with you, but He is ready to welcome you again.

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* "Not as fire, not as tempest, but in gentle, yet effectual Grace, I will visit them. I will be as the dew unto Israel."

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* "He shall be as beautiful and fair as the lily, though just now he was black as night."

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* "He shall be as stable as he is beautiful. Like old Lebanon, the mighty mountain which none can shake, so shall this poor sinner be when I have visited him with My love."

6. *His branches shall spread.* "I will endow him with usefulness and influence.

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree*. "I will load him with fruit. He shall have the beauty that belongs to that fat and oily tree, the olive."

6. *And his smell as Lebanon.* God can make the foul, polluted sinner to become fragrant to Him. "His smell shall be as Lebanon"

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return*. His family, his workers, his neighbors who wandered from the Lord because he wandered, shall get good from his holy influence. His restoration shall be a benediction to them! "They that dwell under his shadow shall return."

7. *They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon*. All good things come to a man when God comes to him and he comes to God. Get right with God and you shall get right with all things around you—and you shall be the means of helping to put other people right.

8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols*? "He will spontaneously purge himself from the evil things which he once loved. I shall not need to send the hammer to break his idols, but he shall say, out of the fullness of his own heart, 'What have I to do any more with idols?'"

8, 9. *I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he should understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressor shall fall therein*. Yes, they shall fall even when they are in the right ways—and I know of no falling that is worse than for men to be in the ways of religion and yet to stumble and fall even there! For, if they fall there, where will they *not* fall?

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

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

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"
NO. 3006

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"The LORD is my shepherd."
Psalm23:1.

I CANNOT say anything that is new upon this text. I have not even the desire to do so, but if I can remind you of old and precious Truths of God and also put you in remembrance of sweet experiences which are past, this will not be an unprofitable topic for our meditation.

I like to recall the fact that this Psalm was probably written by David when he was a king. He had been a shepherd and he was not ashamed of his former occupation. When he had to wear a crown, he remembered the time when he had handled the shepherd's crook and, as a lad, with his sling and stone, had kept watch over his father's sheep in the wilderness. Some persons are too proud to remember their early employments, though such pride is both their folly and their shame. Many persons would not like, in their public devotions, to make use of expressions which would have any reference to their secular calling, but it seems to be perfectly natural, in David's case, to hear him say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," for he had, himself, been a shepherd and knew just what the word implied.

By the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, let us see what we can get out of the metaphor used in our text. We must, of course, remind ourselves that we are not in the country where these words were written. We must, in thought, go to the East in order to get the full meaning of them. It is a great mercy that the Bible was not written according to the fashion of the West, for everything has changed in our part of the world. If this Book had been written, for instance, in the style of the earliest literature known in England, probably we would not have fully understood it, and other nations would have been altogether puzzled by it. But, in the East there has been little or no change for centuries. Oriental manners and customs are almost the same today as they were in the days of David, so that if we could go to Palestine at the present moment, we might find just such a shepherd as David was and, in examining his habits and actions, we would learn the meaning of the metaphor that David used when he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

We shall notice three things about the text. First, *this sentence, if it is true to us, guarantees us certain privileges.* Secondly, *it involves us in duties.* And thirdly, *it suggests to us enquiries.*

I. First, if this sentence is, indeed, true of each one of us, "The Lord is my Shepherd," then THIS GUARANTEES US CERTAIN PRIVILEGES.

And first, *the Eastern shepherd was the guide of his flock*. The sheep never thought of going before him—it would have been an anomaly in nature for the sheep to go first and for the shepherd to follow. They had no need whatever to know the way across the trackless dessert—it was enough for them that the shepherd knew it. They need not know where the green pastures still remained throughout the droughts of summer, or where there were quiet resting places where they might lie down at noon. It was sufficient for the sheep that the shepherd knew—all that they had to do was patiently to follow where he led the way. David had, no doubt, often gone on in front of his flock, thinking with an anxious heart of the place where he would lead them. And as he looked back at them, he could see that they were patiently following him, with no distraction to trouble their poor brains and no vexations to worry their quiet minds. Happy that they were provided for, they grazed as they went along the way, not knowing and not needing to know where they were going, but quite content because their shepherd led the way.

Transfer this thought, Christian Brother or Sister, to yourself, and see how the Lord is your Guide. Look at the past and note how He has guided you. How very little you and I have had to do with it, after all! We have struggled. We have fretted. We have repined and we have fumed against the working of Providence, but, after all, I do not know that we have had much more to do with it than the sheep in the stream has had to do with the way in which it has floated to the other side! There is far more of the hand of God in our life than there is of our own hand—if our life is what it ought to be. Think of our childhood, of the home where our lot was cast, of our youth, of the place where we were bound as apprentices, or where we first learned the rudiments of our various callings. And since then, what strange paths some of us have trod! If we had been told, years ago, that we should be found here today, in the circumstances in which we are now found, we could not have believed it. There have been times, in our past history, when it has seemed as if a single straw might decide our destiny. We were at the crossroads and the left road might have led us into endless sins and sorrows, but we were guided in the opposite direction, and so we were made to walk beside the still waters and to lie down in green pastures. There have been many times when only a word was needed—no, when a weight no heavier than a feather from the wing of a butterfly was all that was needed to turn the scale against us and to send us into quite a different orbit from that in which we now move! We can truly say that we have been Divinely led until now and, although the journey has been like that of the children of Israel in the wilderness—in and out, backwards and forwards, progressing and then retrograding and often standing still—yet the Lord has led us by a right way up to this present moment and we can truthfully say—

"Still have we found that promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood!

Still is He faithful, wise, and just,
And still in Him let Israel trust."

It is easy to say that the Lord has been our Shepherd in the past. It may not be so easy to say that He is our Shepherd in the present and will be our Shepherd in the future. Yet we have nothing to do with the future except to follow in the path of humble trust in the Lord and of obedience to His Word. It is not for me to sit down and make a plan of all I mean to do next week, or next month and so on through all my life. I have no right to forestall my troubles, or to begin to calculate my future needs. I am bound to live in simple dependence upon God, who sends just enough manna for each day, but no more. If I am in any dilemma, if I am in any difficulty, if I do not know which way I should take, had I not better go and tell my Heavenly Father and ask Him to direct me? I must remember that I am not my own shepherd and that I am not to guide myself any more than the sheep is to guide itself—but that I am to look to my great Shepherd, to watch for indications of His will and to receive those indications either from His Word, or from His Providential dealings with me, or from the operations of His gracious Spirit within my heart. And then I am to follow where God leads me, having nothing to do with the making of the road, but only following the Lord, my Shepherd, wherever He leads me.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I wish we remembered this Truth more than we do. I mean, in all things. For instance, in the matter of doctrinal opinions, some people have a certain minister as their shepherd. You know that there are certain people who will not go an inch beyond the point to which Mr. A____ leads them. Then Mr. B____ is the Prophet of somebody else. Mr. C____ is the very pope of another and Mr. D____ is the perfection of doctrine to a fourth! And beyond these earthly leaders none of them will go. Let us, however, all follow the Lord as our Shepherd! I am to make my appeal to this blessed Book and to ask His gracious Spirit to teach me what is here revealed—and when His Spirit has taught it to me, I am to let that be sufficient and to believe it. Even if I am the only person who so believes it, that shall make no difference to me. If God has guided me, I must follow!

So is it with regard to all the various stages of our life. The young Christian ought to seek God's guidance in the important matter of marriage. And the young tradesman should seek Divine guidance as to where he shall set up his business, or commence his daily labor. In emigrating to another land, in moving from one house to another, in every step of life, we act wisely when we say, "O Lord, let everything be as You will. We bring here the ephod that we may enquire what is Your will even as they did of old." There ought to be a distinct recognition on our part that we desire that God should guide us—and we should constantly come to Him to consult with Him, for, if we do not, we shall be constantly making mistakes and getting into confusion. And, then, who but ourselves shall bear the blame in that we went before the fiery-cloudy pillar, chose our own path and so fell into the ditch? One of the Puritans said, "He who carves for himself will cut his fingers and get an empty

plate." And it is so, in the order of God's Providence. And another said, "He who runs before the cloud goes on a fool's errand and will have to come back again." And so it shall be. The sheep before the Shepherd is out of place and out of order—but the sheep *behind* the Shepherd—quietly, patiently and humbly following him, is both according to the order of Nature and the order of Grace. Let us, then, as the Lord's sheep, learn to take that position and not attempt to usurp the prerogative of our great Shepherd!

Another great privilege which naturally comes to us through this relationship is that *we have provisions for our needs*. An Eastern shepherd, of course, provides for his flock as far as he can. This may not be a very difficult matter in England, but it is exceedingly difficult in countries where fodder is not so readily obtainable as it is here. In the summer droughts, the shepherd will have to go on foraging afar. And when those droughts have continued a long while, there will be only a few places, by the banks of the deep rivers, where grass can still be found. Then the prudent shepherd, as soon as he finds that the winter is coming on, will seek to shelter his flock in those secluded pastures which still remain green. And then, as spring returns, he conducts them to the spot where the young grass is waiting for them. He has to be always thoughtful and they have to be *never* thoughtful, at least with regard to their daily provender. He thinks of autumn while it is still springtime and he has his eyes upon the winter even in the midst of the summer. As for the sheep, it is enough for them if they lie down in the grass that is nearest to them, or walk gently by the still waters just where they are.

Now certainly, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as the Eastern shepherd thus provides for his sheep, so will God provide for us! We have a double set of needs, yet we shall find that God is as all-sufficient for us as He would be if we had a sevenfold set of needs! I say that we have a double set of needs. There are, first, our bodily needs, and these are many and they are constantly recurring. I am not quite certain that to have a sure provision for this life is the most excellent thing for our spirituality. It is, of course, the most comfortable thing and, in many respects, the most desirable and gives the most opportunities for usefulness. But I am not sure whether fullness of bread is not always a very great temptation. Certainly, if I have need to find deep, robust, vigorous piety, I must confess—though I have no preference for one class over another—that I have usually found it among those who have had to live from hand to mouth and to struggle hard for their daily bread—for this experience brings men and women into real and palpable contact with the God of Providence and, as I appeal to these children of poverty and ask them whether God supplies their needs, they take out their little diaries or, if they do not carry them in their pockets, they carry them in their hearts—and they begin to tell of instance after instance in which the God of Abraham has revealed Himself to them as Jehovah-Jireh and, as they look forward to the future, they confidently cry, "The Lord will provide!" Sometimes, such a promise as this, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure," is very sweet to me, but when I have heard it

from the lips of some poor bedridden old woman who has long been depending upon the charity of others—and she has told me of remarkable interpositions of the Lord's hand in her times of need—then the promise has seemed to glisten and glitter with unusual and extraordinary radiance! Are not some of you, dear Friends, sometimes in such a plight that you have to say, in the morning, "Where shall I get bread for this evening's meal?" This must be a choice text for you, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Remember that ancient promise, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

Our greater need, however, is our *spiritual* need—and there are often moans among God's people because they are not spiritually fed as they ought to be. It is the crying sin of some ministries that they are not *feeding* ministries. If I am to believe what I am told by many of God's people, they do not find the service of the sanctuary to be satisfactory to their souls. Brothers, if we profess to preach the Gospel and this is the case with us, it is a grievous fault on our part and we must mend our manners in this respect! But far oftener, I think, the Lord's people are not fed because of their own folly. They look up to the pulpit, but they do not see much there—if they looked up to the hills, from where comes their help, they would never be disappointed! When we look to the pastor, but not to the Master, the Master says, "They are looking to the wrong person, so they shall get nothing." But when we look to the Master, He often supplies our needs *through* the pastor! Let us esteem the Divinely-chosen channel as far as we should, but let us never forget that it is the Fountain that yields the supply! Though you may be tempted to say, when such-and-such a man is taken Home, "I shall never be able to enjoy any other ministry as I have enjoyed that man's," you must check yourself and say, "It is the same living Truth of God that survives, it is the same God who still lives, whoever else may die." "The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you" and, therefore, you shall still be fed, for the Lord is your Shepherd!

He, who can truly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," may make sure of a third blessing, namely, that of *constant keeping and safe protection.* How many are our enemies! Brethren and Sisters, we are exposed to attack on all sides. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." A cold shiver has often gone through me when I have witnessed or heard of the fall of some whom I have honored and respected—and of whom I would have said that it was more likely that the stars would fall from their orbits than that these people should fall from their integrity! But, alas, the best of men are but men at the best and some brightly shining objects in the Church's sky have proved to be only meteors—"wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." It is pitiable and it is also humbling—and it should lead to great heart-searching and make each one of us ask, "Shall I forsake Him too?" And

why should you not do so? What is there in you, dear Friend, more than there is in any other professor? Why should you not prove to be an apostate after all? What is there about me that I should stand where so many others have fallen? There is nothing to hold me up if I am left to myself—but if, confessing my liability to fall, confessing my liability to be seized by the lion, the bear and the wolf, I can still say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," I am safe! The sheep is not safe because it says, "I am stronger than the lion," or, "I am able to escape from the bear," or, "I shall always be able to avoid the wolf." Silly sheep, what can you do to protect yourself from your foes? Yet the sheep might feel safe enough if it knew that David was near, to snatch it out of the jaws of the lion, or to rescue it from the paws of the bear and, Beloved, we know that our Shepherd will never let any of His sheep perish! He has owned us too long and bought us too dearly—and loved us too well to ever let us go. You remember that He said to His disciples, even concerning the children who believed in Him, "It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." He also said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any (man or devil) pluck them out of My hand."

So, if you are the Lord's sheep, you shall be protected, provided for and guided till you reach the upper fold on the hilltop of Glory!

You all know that the meaning of the text has not been even half brought out by these three thoughts, for, *to shepherdize, to pastorize, to exercise the pastoral office is a very great and important work*. The work of a true shepherd is not restricted to guiding, supplying and protecting the sheep—there are a thousand other things that he has to do. I think I have heard that there is no animal (except a man) that has so many forms of sickness as a sheep has. It may be afflicted in any part of its body, from its feet up to its head. There is not a single portion of a sheep but seems to be subject either to internal or to external ailments—it almost always seems to need doctoring. A shepherd requires to be to his flock all that a father is to his family, only that he has 50 families instead of one! At certain seasons, he must be up all night looking after the lambs and yet be all day watching over the sheep. Then, in addition to their sicknesses, sheep have a great number of follies. If there is a hole in the hedge, they are sure to find it out and press through it. If there is the richest clover in the field and nothing but dry sand outside, they will get through the hedge! And if but one leads the way, all the rest will follow it in its folly! If one should leap over the railing of a bridge into a river, they would all follow, even though they should all be drowned. They are prone to wander and ready for all sorts of mischief—but they never assist the shepherd in the slightest degree. In this respect, we are just like the silly sheep, yet, our good Shepherd supplies all the needs, pities all the infirmities and pardons all the wanderings of His poor wayward flock. We may indeed say that like as a shepherd pities his flock, and cares for them, so our Heavenly Father pities them that fear Him, and lovingly tends them day and night with constant care. Just as Jacob told Laban

that in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night, so that his sleep departed from his eyes, Christ can say that He watches over His blood-bought flock and keeps everyone of the sheep with meticulous care!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I feel as if I could not say any more about these privileges of the Lord's sheep, but as if I needed to stop and sing about them. What music there is here—"The Lord is my Shepherd." That little word, "is," puts the whole matter beyond all question. "The Lord is my Shepherd." Then I shall be safely guided right up to the hilltop of Heaven! I shall always be amply provided for! My fortune is made and I shall be no loser, come what may. My bank is good and its wealth can never be diminished. While as to all other matters—protection from my foes, or whatever else I shall need between here and Heaven—all is secured to me because Jehovah is my Shepherd!

II. Now, in the second place, I must speak more briefly upon THE DUTIES WHICH ARE INVOLVED IN THIS RELATIONSHIP.

As a shepherd has duties appertaining to his office, so also have the sheep. The first duty of a sheep—that which naturally comes to a sheep—is *confidence in the shepherd*. When I have heard people talk of silly sheep, I have often wondered whether, if the sheep could speak, they might not talk of more silly men, for, of all the foolish things that a sheep never did, surely this is one—as it was in the meadow, eating the grass, it never did stop all of a sudden and say to itself, "I do not know what will become of me in the winter! There will be deep snow on the ground and I shall not be able to get at the grass. I cannot really see how I shall be provided for!" I never heard, even in a fable, of a sheep's woolly head being disturbed in that fashion—it has a shepherd to provide for it and it relies upon him to provide for all its needs! Yet you and I dear Friends, sometimes do this silly thing which a sheep would not do! We say, "we cannot imagine what we shall do if we are ever in such-and-such circumstances!" We probably shall never be in such circumstances, yet we keep on supposing what we would do if that were our lot! Some persons have a little factory in their house for making trouble. When God does not send them any, they make some for themselves! And I have heard that homemade troubles are just like homemade clothes—they never fit properly and they always last longer than any others! The trouble that I make for myself is sure to be a far greater trouble than any that God sends me!

You smiled at what I said just now, but it is a fact that many Christians who might be happy and who ought to sing all day long, begin foretelling tomorrow's sorrow and, as God will not give them tomorrow's strength until tomorrow comes, they find their imaginary burden too heavy for their backs to bear! You know how the brave little band of warriors fought at Thermopylae. Bravery alone would have been of small service to them, so they took their stand in a narrow pass, where their foes could only advance one at a time and, consequently, Leonidas and his brave followers, though very weary, could hold the pass against the

Persian host! Now, Beloved, you are at the narrow pass of "today." Therefore, meet your troubles one by one and, as they come, God's Grace will make you more than equal to them and enable you to overcome them! But when you get into the broad field of months and years and begin to think of a month's troubles, and a year's trials, you will fear that you will never be able to conquer them! Get into your proper place and stand there like a sentinel who is willing, if necessary, to die at his post.

Our first duty, then, as the Lord's sheep, is confidence in our Shepherd. And, next, *we must love our Shepherd*. Dr. Thomson, in his admirable work, *The Land and the Book*, tells us that in the East, there often springs up an intimate affection between the shepherd and his sheep. There are some sheep which will keep at a distance from the shepherd. If he sits down at one end of a field, they are pretty sure to be at the other end! But there are others which keep closer to him and there are some which are so fond of the shepherd that you never see him without also seeing them close by his side. If he stops, they stop. If he moves, they move. They love the pasture, but they love the shepherd still better. Dr. Thomson tells us that these sheep are generally the fattest of the flock because the shepherd is sure to give them the best of the food. They love him and he loves them. He loves all the sheep, but he loves these with a very special kind of love and, Beloved, if we loved Christ more, we would have more true happiness, more real spiritual enjoyment. I am afraid that some of us who love our Lord are like Peter when he followed Christ afar off. We would be far happier if we could take John's position and lean our heads upon Christ's bosom.

There is an election inside the Election of Grace. You know that Christ had many disciples, but that out of them He chose 12 to be His Apostles. Out of those 12 Apostles, He chose three favorites, Peter, James and John—and out of that select band of three—He chose one who was called "that disciple whom Jesus loved." They were all the sheep of the Good Shepherd and all of us who believe in Jesus are God's children, but there are some who seem to be more dutiful and more obedient children than others are—and who walk in closer communion with their Lord. And these have the best of the Christian life and the highest degree of spiritual enjoyment. I hope that you and I, who call Christ our Shepherd, love Him much and feel that the love of Christ constrains us to yield to Him our heart's deepest affection.

Another duty of the sheep is that of *following the shepherd*. It is a fractious, wandering, troublesome sheep that is always wanting to have its own way and to go where it pleases. It is true that the shepherd still loves the wandering sheep and that he seeks it until he finds it. But there is another thing that he does which the parables do not tell us, and that is he punishes the wandering sheep. When the shepherd finds his wandering sheep, he rejoices over it, but he takes care that the sheep shall not rejoice, and he makes it sorrow for having wandered from him. We are told, by those who have watched Syrian sheep, that they are often lame. A shepherd who was asked by a gentleman what made a certain sheep lame, replied, "I lamed that sheep. I did it on purpose." "Why did

you do that?" asked the gentleman, and the shepherd answered, "It was always wandering and I could not afford the time to go after it, so I lamed it, and it cannot wander away now." Sometimes when the sheep have been wandering, they get such a stroke from the shepherd's crook that you would think it would break their backs. Certainly, this is what you and I will get if we are Christ's sheep and yet persist in wandering. Like the Eastern shepherd does, He will lame us because He will not lose us. He will even beat us because He loves us. Whether obedient children will escape the rod, or not, it is certain that those who are disobedient shall be made to smart for it as surely as their father loves them!

There is one other thing that ought to be true of me if the Lord is my Shepherd, and that is, *I ought to recognize His rights over me and His property in me*. The Eastern shepherd is usually the owner of his sheep. He may sell it, or kill it, or do what he likes with it—and no one can dispute his right to do so. And a genuine Christian feels that Christ has an absolute right in him. Whether he is to live or to die, to sorrow or to rejoice, should be no matter of choice to a Christian. He should feel that whatever is his Master's will is also his will. The seal of an American Missionary Society is an ax standing between an altar and a plow, with the motto, "Ready for either"—ready to work in God's field yoked to the plow, or ready to fall beneath God's sacrificial axe and to smoke upon God's altar—ready, with Paul, to be offered up when the time of our departure is at hand! We have not a true idea of the rights of God over us, or even of our own condition before Him unless we feel that we are the sheep of His pasture and that He may do with us exactly as He wills.

III. Now I want, just for a few minutes, to speak upon the third point, which is this—THE TEXT SUGGESTS A GREAT MANY ENQUIRIES.

We must not flippantly talk as if all the promises in Scripture belonged to all of us! For, my dear Friend, it may be that the Lord is *not* your Shepherd—and if that is the case, the sheep's portion is not yours. We ought to be very careful not to put God's promises into the hands of those to whom they do not belong. The other day I saw a little tract bearing this title, "It is certain that God loves you." And I burned it, for I was afraid that somebody who had no right to it, might see it and believe that it was true. I do not believe that God loves every individual who might pick that tract up in the sense in which such an individual would understand the expression. I know that God loves, in a certain sense, all the creatures that He has made. But such love as that gives me no comfort as long as I am an unreconciled sinner under condemnation because I have not believed in God's dear Son! I dare not say to everyone of you, "The Lord is your Shepherd," for I do not think that all of you are His sheep. I cannot help fearing that there are some here who have no part nor lot in this matter, for they are still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity."

I am going to put a few questions to you, or to point out some of the characteristics of one who can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." If I am the Lord's sheep, *I shall have something of the sheep's disposition*. I shall

perceive that His Spirit has worked in me, at any rate, some Divine gentleness. I know some professors who seem to me to be more like wolves than sheep. They snap their jaws like wolves do and their very speech seems to be like a wolf's howl. They dislike this and they hate that, and they cannot endure the other—in fact, nothing pleases them. A sheep has its likes and its dislikes, but it does not snarl, snap, howl, or growl—it is the wolf that does that—the sheep is of a gentler disposition. A man who cannot bear an insult is surely not a Christian. A man who always revenges an injury done to him is surely not a Christian—that is, one who is like Christ—"who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." He could truly say, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." The giving up of what is our right—the giving up of what we may fairly claim as our own—is the very mark of Christ's sheep!

Again, *sheep are known by being gregarious in their habits*. They always like to be in flocks and "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Many a time have I blessed the Holy Spirit for having inspired John to write that verse! And it is quite possible that some of you, dear Friends, when you could not find any other evidence of Grace, have been glad of such a mouse-hole as this into which your poor, tried, timid soul might creep and hide—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." A genuine love to the true children of God is a sure sign that we are Christ's sheep, just as the fact that the sheep flock together helps to prove that they are sheep! May we have more of this love to all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ—not merely a love to some saints because they happen to be our own relations, or because they belong to our denomination, or because they agree precisely with us in sentiments!—but a love to all the saints, as saints, for Christ's sake—yes, a love even to the bad-tempered ones, the irritating ones, the unsaint-like "saints." It is very hard work to love some of these "saints." I have often said that I know same good people with whom I would sooner live in Heaven forever than live for half an hour on earth, for they always seem to look at things at so curious an angle that I cannot possibly agree with them. Yet I must love them for Christ's sake, for, if I do not love them, I must question whether I really am myself one of Christ's sheep.

Another evidence of being a sheep is that *they are very particular in their feeding*. A wolf can eat what the sheep would not touch, for the sheep must have nothing but that which is sweet and clean to feed upon. We have heard of some professors who can enjoy very questionable food. Mr. Rowland Hill had a man in his church who used to go to theatres and when Mr. Hill questioned him as to how he could make a Christian profession and yet frequent such places, he said, "Well, you see, Mr. Hill, I do not often go there. I only go occasionally just for a treat." "Ah," said the good minister, "then you are worse than I thought you were." And then he used this illustration. "Suppose somebody should spread a report that Mr. Hill was accustomed to eat carrion? Well, it would be a

horrible story, but suppose I should say, 'Oh, no! I do not eat carrion every day as a common article of diet—I only have a little now and then for a treat'? People would say, and say truly, 'What a filthy taste he must have! What a horrible appetite to call that a treat which is so foul!' So, my Friend, when you say that you do not go into evil company except sometimes for a treat, that proves which way the wind blows in your soul—and proves the direction in which your heart is set. It proves that you really love sin, or you would not roll it as a choice morsel under your tongue."

Oh, that God would teach us, by His Grace, to estimate the true value of our actions, not by their outward appearance, but by the desire of our heart that prompts us to them. For, if we are kept back from sin merely by motives of respectability, or because our fellows are looking upon us, we are as guilty before God as if we had actually committed the sin because our heart still goes after its filthy idols!

We may also judge whether we are Christ's sheep by one or two texts which Christ Himself has given us. I quoted to you, just now, our Lord's own words, "My sheep hear My voice." Did you ever hear *Christ's* voice? I did not ask whether you ever heard your minister's voice, but whether you ever heard Christ's voice. Did He, Himself, ever speak to you so that you recognized that it was Christ's voice that you heard? Besides that hearing of their Savior's voice, Christ's sheep have a wonderful discriminating power by which they recognize Him. I heard a gentleman who had traveled in the East say that he thought the sheep must know their shepherd because of the clothes which he wore, so he put on a shepherd's garments and went up to some sheep, but not one of the sheep mistook him for their shepherd. Then he called one of the sheep by its proper name, but it took no notice of him—and that reminded him of our Savior's declaration, "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." The sheep have such a keen ear that they can detect the tones of their own shepherd's voice and can distinguish it from all others.

So is it with Christ's sheep—they are not deceived by the voice of strangers, though others are deceived. I venture to prophesy that within 10 years from this date, the whole of this country will be permeated by Popery. The advance that Romanism has made during the last 10 years is so terrible that if it continues to increase at only half that rate, my prophecy will prove to be a true one. The very name of Protestantism will die out unless God sends us a revival of Evangelical religion, for the fashion of the age is so set towards that which is gaudy, sensuous and sensational—and the whole trend of ecclesiasticism is so directly towards ceremonialism, that if we who love the old faith, do not bestir ourselves, we and our fellow countrymen will plunge into the Stygian bog of Popish superstition! Some of you will hardly believe what I am saying, but if you will only turn your mind's eye in the direction to which I am pointing, you will see that the advance of Romanism and Ritualism in this land is quite extraordinary. The only people who will not be swept away by this

tidal wave of ceremonialism, are those who have heard the voice of Christ and so have the first mark of His sheep! If you have ever been justified by faith in Jesus, you will not be cajoled by a so-called "priest." If you have ever spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, you will never degrade your Christian manhood by munching the man-made wafer-god! If you have ever really known Jesus Christ as your Savior, what will you care for the so-called "sacrifice of the mass"? You will know that it is only a Satanic invention to delude souls! If you have ever been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the fiction of "baptismal regeneration" will be an abomination to you! If you have ever been vitally united to Christ, the living Vine, all the false and foolish talk about being saved by the power of sacramental efficacy will be as a stench in your nostrils which you cannot endure!

So I come back to the question I asked just now—Have you heard the voice of Christ? Do you know the meaning of the whispering of His Spirit? Have you passed from death unto life? Have you been transformed from a wolf into a sheep? Have you been translated out of the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son? If so, relying upon the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood has redeemed every one of His chosen flock, you can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." But if not, and you continue to follow your own devices, they will lead you to destruction! God grant that this may not be the lot of any one of us, but may we all come, with childlike confidence, and put our trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the one and only Savior of sinners. And then shall each one of us be able to say, with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

May God bless each one of you, 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.

GADDING ABOUT
NO. 3007

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Why do you gad about so much to change your way?
Jeremiah 2:36.

GOD'S ancient people were very prone to forget Him and to worship the false deities of the neighboring heathen. Other nations were faithful to their blocks of wood and stone, and adhered as closely to their graven images as though they really had helped them, or could in future deliver them. Only the nation which avowed its belief in the true God forsook its God and left the fountain of Living Water, to hew out for itself broken cisterns which could hold no water!

There seems to have been speaking after the manner of men, astonishment in the Divine Mind concerning this, for the Lord says, in verses 10 and 11 of this Chapter, "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. Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate." In the 32nd verse of this same Chapter, the Lord addresses His people thus, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number." And here, in our text, the same astonishment appears, "Why do you gad about so much to change your way?" It certainly was a most unreasonable thing that a people with such a God, who had dealt out to them so graciously the riches of His love and had worked such wonders on their behalf, should turn from Him to the worship of Baal or Ashtaroth—mimic gods which had ears but heard not, eyes but saw not—and did but mock the worshippers who were deluded by them!

As in a mirror, I see myself in these people. The spiritual people of God are well imaged in the typical nation, for, alas, waywardness and wandering of heart are the diseases, not only of the Israelites of old, but also of the true Israel now. The same expostulations may be addressed to us as to that erring nation of old, for we as perpetually backslide and as constantly forget the Almighty One and put our trust in an arm of flesh. He says to us, also, "Why do you gad about so much?" For we are, alas, too often false to Him, forgetting Him and wandering here and there, rather than abiding in close and constant fellowship with God, our exceeding joy.

I desire to put this question first to Believers and then to the unconverted. May the Holy Spirit bless it to each class!

I. If you read this question, taking it in its context, you will see, in the first place, that there is A RELATIONSHIP MENTIONED. The question is asked, "Why do you gad about so much?"

The enquiry is not made of a traveler, nor of one whose business it is to journey from pole to pole and to investigate distant lands. It is not asked of a wayfarer lodging for a night, nor of a homeless vagrant who finds a poor shelter beneath every bush! It is asked by God of His people Israel, describing them under the character of a married wife. He represents the nation of Israel as being married to Him, Himself the Husband of Israel, and Israel His bride. To persons bearing that character, the question comes with great force, "Why do you gad about so much?" Let others wander who have no central object of attraction, who have no house and no "houseband" to bind them to the spot, but you, a married wife, how can you wander? What have you to do in traversing strange ways? How can you excuse yourself? If you were not false to your relationship, you could not do so! No, Beloved, we strain no metaphor when we say that there exists between the soul of every Believer and Jesus Christ, a relationship admirably imaged in the conjugal tie. We are married to Christ. He has betrothed our souls unto Himself. He paid our dowry on the Cross. He espoused Himself unto us in righteousness in the Covenant of Grace. We have accepted Him as our Lord and Husband. We have given ourselves up to Him and under the sweet Law of His Love we ought to dwell evermore in His house. He is the Bridegroom of our souls, and He has arrayed us in the wedding dress of His own righteousness. Now it is to us who acknowledge this marriage union and who are allied to the Lord Jesus by ties so tender that the Well-Beloved says, "Why do you gad about so much?"

Observe that the wife's place may be described as a threefold one. In the first place, *she should abide in dependence upon her husband's care*. It would be looked upon as a very strange thing if a wife should be overheard to speak to another man and say, "Come and assist in providing for me." If she should cross the street to another's house and say to a stranger, "I have a difficulty and a trouble—will you relieve me from it? I feel myself in great need but I shall not ask my husband to help me, though he is rich enough to give me anything I require and wise enough to direct me. I come to you, a stranger, in whom I have no right to confide and from whom I have no right to look for love—and I trust myself with you and confide in you rather than in my husband." This would be a very wicked violation of the chastity of the wife's heart! Her dependence, as a married woman with a worthy husband, must be solely fixed on him to whom she is bound in wedlock.

Transfer the figure, for it is even so with us and the Lord Jesus. It is a tender topic. Let it tenderly touch your heart and mine. What right have I, when I am in trouble, to seek an arm of flesh to lean upon, or to pour my grief into an earthborn ear in preference to casting my care on God and telling Jesus all my sorrows? If a human friend has the best intentions, yet he is not like my Lord—he never died for me, he never shed his blood for me and even if he loves me, he cannot love me as the

Husband of my soul loves me. My Lord's love is ancient as eternity, deeper than the sea, firmer than the hills, changeless as His own Deity! How can I seek another friend in preference to Him? What a slight I put upon the affection of my Savior! What a slur upon His condescending sympathy towards me! How I impugn His generosity and mistrust His power if, in my hour of need, I cry out, "Alas, I have no friend." No friend while Jesus lives? Dare I say I have no helper? No helper while the Almighty One, upon whom God has laid help, still exists with strong arms and unchanged heart? Can I murmur and lament that there is no escape for me from my tribulations? No escape while my Almighty Savior lives and feels my every grief?

Do you see my point? Put it in that shape and the question, "Why do you gad about so much to look after creatures as grounds of dependence?" becomes a very deep and searching one. Why, O Believer, do you look after things which are seen, heard, handled and recognized by the senses, instead of trusting in your unseen but not unknown Redeemer? Oh, why, why, you spouse of the Lord Jesus, why do you gad about so much?

Have we not even fallen into this evil with regard to our own salvation? After a time of spiritual enjoyment it sometimes happens that our graces decline and we lose our joy. And as we are very apt to depend upon our own experience, our faith also droops. Is not this unfaithfulness to the finished work and perfect merit of our great Substitute? We knew, at the first, when we were under conviction of sin, that we could not rest on anything within ourselves, yet that Truth of God is always slipping away from our memories and we try to build upon past experiences, or to rely upon present enjoyments, or some form or other of personal attainment. Do we really wish to exchange the sure Rock of our salvation for the unstable sand of our own feelings? Can it be that having once walked by faith, we now choose to walk by sight? Are graces, frames, feelings and enjoyments to be preferred to the tried foundation of the Redeemer's Atonement? Be it remembered that even the work of the Holy Spirit, if it is depended upon as a ground of acceptance with God, becomes as much an antichrist as though it were not the work of the Holy Spirit at all! Dare we so blaspheme the Holy Spirit as to make His work in us a rival to the Savior's work for us? Shame on us that we should thus doubly sin! The best things are mischievous when put in the wrong place! Good works have "necessary uses," but they must not be joined to the work of Christ as the groundwork of our hope! Even precious gold may be made into an idol calf and that which the Lord, Himself, bestows may be made to be a polluted thing, like that bronze serpent which once was used to heal, but when it was idolized, came to be styled by no better name than a piece of brass—and was broken and put away. Do not continually harp upon what you are, and what you are not—your salvation does not rest in these things, but in your Lord! Go and stand at the foot of the Cross—still an empty-handed sinner to be filled with the riches of Christ—a

sinner black as the tents of Kedar in yourself and comely only through your Lord.

Again, the wife's position is not only one of sole dependence upon her husband's care, but it should be and is *a position of sole delight on her husband's love*. To be suspected of desiring anything of man's affection beyond that would be the most serious imputation that could be cast upon a wife's character. We are again upon very tender ground and I beseech each of you who are now thinking of your Lord to consider yourselves to be on very tender ground, too, for you know what our God has said—"I the Lord your God am a jealous God." That is a very wonderful and suggestive expression—"a jealous God." See that it is engraved on your hearts. Jesus will not endure it that those of us who love Him should divide our hearts between Him and something else. The love which is strong as death is linked with a jealousy which is cruel as the grave, "the coals thereof are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame." The royal word to the spouse is, "Forget also your own people, and your father's house and so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for he is your Lord; and you must worship him."

Of course, Beloved, the Master never condemns that proper natural affection which we are bound to give and which it is a part of our sanctification to give in its due and proper proportion to those who are related to us. Besides, we are bound to love all the saints and all mankind in their proper place and measure. But there is a love which is only for the Master. Inside the heart there must be a *sanctum sanctorum*, within the veil, where He, Himself, alone must shine like the Shekinah, and reign on the Mercy Seat. There must be a glorious high throne within our spirits where the true Solomon alone must sit, the lions of watchful zeal must guard each step of it. There must He, the King in His beauty, sit enthroned, sole Monarch of the heart's affections. But, alas, alas, how often have we gone far to provoke His anger? We have set up the altars of strange gods hard by the Holy Place. Sometimes a favorite child has been idolized! Another time, perhaps, our own persons have been admired and pampered. We have been unwilling to suffer though we know it to be the Lord's will—we were determined to make provision for the flesh. We have not been willing to hazard our substance for Christ, thus making our worldly comfort our chief delight instead of feeling that wealth to be well lost which is lost as the result of Jehovah's will. Oh, how soon we make idols! Idol-making was not only the trade of Ephesus, but it is a trade all the world over! Making shrines for Diana, no, shrines for *self*, we are all master-craftsmen at this work in some form or another! We have set up images of jealousy which become abominations of desolation!

We may even exalt some good pursuit into an idol! Even work for the Master may sometimes take *His* place, as was the case with Martha. We are cumbered with much serving and often think more about the serving than of *Him* who is to be served. The problem being that we are too mindful of how *we* may look in the serving, and not enough considerate of *Him* and of how He may be honored by our service. It is so very easy

for our busy spirits to gad about, and so very difficult to sit at the Master's feet. Now, Christian, if you have been looking after this and after that secondary matter—if your mind has been set too much upon worldly business, or upon any form of earthly love, the Master says to you, "My spouse, My beloved, why do you gad about so much?" Let us confess our fault and return unto our rest. Let each one sing plaintively, in the chamber of his heart, some such song as this—

"Why should my foolish passions rove?
Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?
Wretch that I am, to wander thus
In chase of false delight—
Let me be fastened to Your Cross,
Rather than lose Your sight."

But a third position, which I think will be recognized by every wife as being correct, is not simply dependence upon her husband's care and delight in her husband's love, but also *diligence in her husband's house*. The good housewife, as Solomon tells us, "looks well to the ways of her household and eats not the bread of idleness." She is not a servant—her position is very different from that, but, for that very reason she uses the more diligence. A servant's work may sometimes be finished, but a wife's never is. "She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." She rejoices willingly to labor as no servant could be expected to do. "She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands." "She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." All through the night she watches her sick child and then through the work day, as well, the child is still tended, and the household cares are still heavy upon her. She never relaxes. She counts that her house is her kingdom and she cares for it with incessant care. The making of her husband happy, and the training up of her children in the fear of God—that is her business. The good housewife is like Sarah, of whom it is written that when the angels asked Abraham, "Where is Sarah, your wife?" he answered, "Behold, in the tent." It would have been well for some of her descendants had they been "in the tent, too, for Dinah's going forth "to see the daughters of the land" cost her dearly!

Now this is the position, the exact position of the chaste lover of Jesus—he dwells at home with Jesus, among his own people. The Christian's place with regard to Christ is to be diligently engaged in Christ's house. Some of us can say, I trust, that we do naturally care for the souls of men. We were born, by God's Grace, to care for them, and could not be happy—any more than some nurses can be happy without the care of children—unless we have converts to look after and weaklings to cherish. It is well for the Church when there are many of her members, beside her pastors and deacons, who care for the souls of those who are born in the Church. The Church is Christ's family mansion. It should be the home of newborn souls, where they are fed

with food convenient for them, flourished, comforted and educated for the better land. You have all something to do—you who are married to Christ have all a part assigned you in the household of God. He has given you each a happy task. It may be that you have to suffer in secret for Him, or you have to talk to two or three, or perhaps in a little village station, or at the corner of a street you have to preach, or possibly it is the distribution of a handful of tracts, or it is looking after the souls of a few women in your district, or teaching a class of children.

Whatever it is, if we have been growing at all negligent, if we have not thrown our full strength into our work and have been expending our vigor somewhere else, may not the question come very pertinently home to us, "Why do you gad about so much?" Why that party of pleasure, that political meeting, that late rising, that waste of time? Have you nothing better to do? You have enough to do for your Husband and His Church if you do it well. You have not a minute to spare—the King's business requires haste. Our charge is too weighty and too dear to our hearts to admit of sloth. The Lord has given us as much to do as we shall have strength and time to accomplish, by His Grace, and we have no energies to spare, no talents to wrap up in napkins, no hours to idle away in the marketplace. One thing we have to do and that one thing should absorb all our powers. To neglect our holy life-work is to wrong our heavenly Bridegroom. Put this matter in a clear light, my Brothers and Sisters, and do not shut your eyes to it. Have you any right to mind earthly things? Can you serve two masters? What do you think would any kind husband here think if, when he came home, the children had been neglected all day, if there was no meal for him after his day's work and no care whatever taken of his house? Might he not well give a gentle rebuke, or turn away with a tear in his eye? And if it were long continued, might he not almost be justified if he should say, "My house yields me no comfort. This woman acts not as a wife to me"?

And yet, Soul, is not this what you have done with your Lord? When He has come into His house, has He not found it in sad disorder, the morning prayer neglected, the evening supplication but poorly offered, those little children but badly taught and many other works of love forgotten? It is your business as well as His, for you are one with Him, and yet you have failed in it. Might He not justly say to you, "I have little comfort in your fellowship. I will leave until you treat Me better. And when you long for Me and are willing to treat Me as I should be treated, then I will return to you. But you shall see My face no more till you have a truer heart towards Me"?

Thus, in personal sadness, have I put this question. The Lord give us tender hearts while answering it!

II. Painful as the enquiry is, let us turn to it again. A REASON IS REQUESTED—what shall we give? "Why do you gad about so much?"

I am at a loss to give any answer. I can suppose that without beating about the bush, an honest heart, convinced of its ingratitude to Christ, would say, "My Lord, all I can say for myself is to *make a confession of the wrong.* And if I might make any excuse, which after all is no excuse,

it is this—I find myself so fickle at heart, so frail, so changeable—I am like Reuben, unstable as water and, therefore, I do not excel." But I can well conceive that the Master, without being severe, would not allow such an extenuation even as that because there are many of us who could not fairly urge it. We are not fickle in *other things*! We are not unstable in minor matters. Where we love, we love most firmly, and a resolve once taken by us is determinedly carried out. Some of us know what it is to put our foot down and declare that, having taken a right step, we will not retrace it and, then, no mortal power can move us. Now, if we possess this resolute character in other things, it can never be allowable for us to use the excuse of instability! Resolved elsewhere, how can you be fickle here? Firm everywhere else, and yet frail here? O Soul, what are you doing? This is gratuitous sin, wanton fickleness! Surely you have worked folly in Israel if you give the world your best, and Christ your worst! The world your decision, and Christ your wavering? This is but to make your sin worse! The excuse becomes an aggravation. It is not true that you are thus unavoidably fickle. You are not a feather blown with every wind, but a man of purpose and will! Ah, why, then, are you so soon removed from your Best-Beloved One?

I will ask you a few questions, not so much by way of answering the enquiry, as to show how difficult it is to answer it. "Why do you gad about so much?" *Has your Lord given you any cause of offense*? Has He been unkind to you? Has the Lord Jesus spoken to you like a tyrant and played the despot over you? Must you not confess that in all His dealings with you in the past—love, unmingled love has been His rule? He has borne patiently with your ill-manners when you have been foolish. He has given you wisdom and He has not upbraided you, though He might have availed Himself of the opportunity of that gift, as men so often do, to give a word of upbraiding at the same time. He has not turned against you, or been your enemy. Why, then, are you so cold to Him? Is this the way to deal with One so tender and so good? Let me ask you, has your Savior changed? Will you dare to think He is untrue to you? Is He not, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever?" That cannot, then, be an excuse for your unfaithfulness! Has He been unmindful of His promise? He has told you to call upon Him in the day of trouble and He will deliver you—has He failed to do so? It is written, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Has He withheld a really good thing from you when you have walked uprightly? If, indeed, He had played you falsely, your excuse for deserting Him might claim a hearing, but you dare not say this! You know that He is faithful and true.

"Why do you gad about so much?" *Have you found any happiness in gadding about*? I confess, sorrowfully, to wandering often and wandering much, but I am ready enough to acknowledge that I get no peace, no comfort by my wanderings, but, like a forlorn spirit, I traverse dry places, seeking rest and finding none. If, for a day, or a part of a day, my thoughts are not upon my Lord, the hour is dreary and my time hangs heavily. And if my thought is spent upon other topics even connected

with my work in the Church of God, if I do not soon come back to Him—if I have no dealings with Him in prayer and praise—I find the wheels of my chariot taken off and it drags along heavily, while I cry to my Lord—

"The day is dark, the night is long,
Unblessed with thoughts of You
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme is You."

The soul that has once learned to swim in the river of Christ, will, when His Presence is withdrawn, be like a fish laid by the fisherman on the sandy shore—it begins to palpitate in dire distress and, before long, it will die, if not again restored to its vital element. You cannot get the flavor of the Bread of Heaven in your mouth and afterwards contentedly feed on ashes! He who has never tasted anything but the brown, gritty cakes of this world may be very well satisfied with them, but he who has once tasted the pure white Bread of Heaven can never be content with the old diet. It spoils a man for satisfaction with this world to have had heart-ravishing dealings with the world to come. I mean not that it spoils him for practical activity in it, for the heavenly life is the truest life even for earth, but it spoils him for the sinful pleasures of this world—it prevents his feeding his soul upon anything but the Lord Jesus Christ's sweet love. Jesus is the chief ingredient of all his joy and he finds that no other enjoyment beneath the sky is worth a moment's comparison with the King's wines on the lees, well refined!

"Why then do you gad about so much?" For what? Oh, for what reason do you wander? When a child runs away from its home because it has a brutal parent, it is excused. But when the child leaves a tender mother and an affectionate father, what shall we say? If the sheep quits a barren field to seek after needed pasturage, who shall blame it? But if it leaves the green pastures and forsakes the still waters to roam over the arid sand, or to go bleating in the forest among the wolves, in the midst of danger, how foolish a creature it proves itself! Such has been our folly. We have left gold for dross! We have forsaken a throne for a dunghill! We have quitted scarlet and fine linen for rags and beggary! We have left a palace for a hovel! We have turned from sunlight into darkness! We have forsaken the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, the sweet summer weather of communion, the singing of the birds of promise, the turtle voice of the Divine Spirit and the blossoming of the roses and the fair lilies of Divine Love to shiver in frozen regions among the ice caves and snow of absence from the Lord's Presence. God forgive us, for we have no excuse for this folly!

"Why do you gad about so much?" *Have you not always had to pay for your gadding*? O Pilgrim, it is hard getting back again to the right road! Every Believer knows how wise John Bunyan was when he depicted Christian as bemoaning himself bitterly when he had to go back to the arbor where he had slept and lost his roll. He had to do a triple journey—first to go on, and then to go back, and then to go on again! The back step is weary marching. Remember, also, Bypath Meadow, and Doubting Castle and Giant Despair. 'Twas an ill day when the pilgrims left the narrow way. No gain, but untold loss comes of forsaking the way of

holiness and fellowship. What is there in such a prospect to attract you from the happy way of communion with Christ? Perhaps the last time you wandered, you fell into sin, or you met with a grief which overwhelmed you—ought not these mishaps to teach you? Having been already burned, will you not dread the fire? Having before been assaulted when in forbidden paths, will you not now keep to the King's Highway, wherein no lion or any other ravenous beast shall be found?

"Why do you gad about so much?" *Do you not even now feel the drawings of His love attracting you to Himself*? This heavenly impulse should make the question altogether unanswerable. You sometimes feel a holy impulse to pray, and yet do not pray. You feel, even now, as if you wished to behold the face of your Beloved and yet you will go forth into the world without Him—is this as it should be? The Holy Spirit is saying in your soul, "Arise from the bed of your sloth and seek Him whom your soul loves." If your sloth prevents your rising, how will you excuse yourself? Even now, I hear the Beloved knocking at your door. Will you not hasten to admit Him? Are you too idle? Dare you say to Him, "I have taken off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" If you keep Him outside in the cold and darkness, while His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night, what cruelty is this? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Can you hear Him say, "Open to Me, My Love, My Dove, My Undefiled," and yet be deaf to His appeals? Oh, that He may gently make for Himself an entrance! May He put in His hand by the hole of the door and may your heart be moved towards Him! May you rise up and open to Him and then your hands will drop with myrrh, and your fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. But remember, if you neglect Him now, it will cost you much to find Him when you do arise, for He will make you traverse the streets after Him and the watchmen will smite you, and take away your veil. So rise, and admit Him now—

"Behold! Your Bridegroom's at the door!
He gently knocks, has knocked before.
Has waited long; is waiting still—
You treat no other friend so ill!
Oh lovely attitude! He stands
With melting heart and laden hands!
Delay no more, lest He depart.
Admit Him to your inmost heart."

He calls you yet again, even now! Run after Him, for He draws you. Approach Him, for He invites you. God grant that it may be so!

I wish I had the power to handle a topic like this as Rutherford, or Herbert, or Hawker would have done, so as to touch all your hearts if you are at this hour without enjoyment of fellowship with Jesus. But, indeed, I am so much one of yourselves, so much one who has to seek the Master's face, myself, that I can scarcely press the question upon you, but must rather press it upon myself—"Why do you gad about so much to change your way?" Blessed shall be the time when our wanderings shall cease—when we shall see Him face to face and rest in His bosom! Till then, if we are to know anything of Heaven here below, it must be by

living close to Jesus, abiding at the foot of the Cross, depending on His Atonement, looking for His coming—that glorious hope—preparing to meet Him with lamps well trimmed, watching for the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes"—standing always in His Presence, looking up to Him as we see Him pleading before the Throne of God and believing that He is always with us, even unto the end of the world. May we be, in future, so fixed in heart that the question need not again be asked of us, "Why do you gad about so much?"

And now I have to use the text, for a few minutes, in addressing those who are not converted.

I trust that some of you who are not yet saved, nevertheless have a degree of desire towards Christ. It is well when, like the climbing plant, the heart throws out tendrils, trying to grasp something by the help of which it may mount higher. I hope that desire of yours after better things and after Jesus, is something more than Nature could have imparted. Divine Grace is the source of gracious desires. But that is not the point. Your desires may be right and yet your method of action mistaken. You have been trying after peace, but you have been gadding about to find it. The context says that the Israelites would soon be as weary of Egypt as they had been of Assyria. Read the whole passage, "Why do you gad about so much to change your way? You also shall be ashamed of Egypt, as you were ashamed of Assyria. Yes, you shall go forth from him and your hands upon your head: for the Lord has rejected your confidences, and you shall not prosper in them" (Jer 2:36, 37). Their gadding about would end in their being confounded at last as they were at first. Once they trusted in Assyria and the Assyrians carried them away captive, that was the end of their former false confidence. Then they trusted in Egypt—and met with equal disappointment.

When a man is first alarmed about his soul, he will do anything rather than come to Christ. Christ is a harbor that no ship ever enters except under stress of weather. Mariners on the sea of life steer for any port except the fair haven of Free Grace. When a man first finds comfort in his own good works, he thinks he has done well. "Why," he says, "this must be the way of salvation! I am no longer a drunkard. I have taken the pledge. I am no longer a Sabbath-breaker. I have taken a seat at a place of worship. Go in and look at my house, Sir, you will see that it is as different as possible from what it was before! There is a moral change in me of a most wonderful kind and surely this will suffice!" Now, if God is dealing with that man in a way of Grace, he will soon be ashamed of his false confidence. He will be thankful, of course, that he has been led to morality, but he will find that bed too short to stretch himself upon. He will discover that the past still lives—that his old sins are buried only in imagination—the ghosts of them will haunt him, they will alarm his conscience. He will be compelled to feel that sin is a scarlet stain, not to be so readily washed out as he fondly dreamed. His self-righteous refuge will prove to be a bowing wall and a tottering fence! Driven to extremities by the fall of his tower of Babel, the top of which was to reach to Heaven, he grows weary of his former hopes. He finds that all the outward religion

he can muster will not suffice, that even the purest morality is not enough, for, over and above the thundering of conscience, there comes clear and shrill as the voice of a trumpet, "You must be born-again!" "Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Well, then, what does he do? He resolves to find another shelter to exchange Assyria for Egypt. That is to say, as works will not do, he will try feelings! And the poor soul will labor to pump up repentance out of a rocky heart and, failing to do so, will mistake despair for contrition! He will try as much as possible to feel legal convictions. He will sit down and read the books of Job and Jeremiah till he half hopes that, by becoming a companion of dragons and an associate of owls, he may find rest. He seeks the living among the dead, comfort from the Law, healing from a sword. He conceives that if he can feel up to a certain point, he can be saved! If he can repent to a certain degree—if he can be alarmed with fears of Hell up to fever heat then he may be saved. But, before long, if God is dealing with him, he gets to be as much ashamed of his feelings as of his works. He is thankful for them as far as they are good, but he feels that he could not depend upon them and he remembers that if feelings were the way of salvation, he deserves to feel Hell, itself, and that to feel anything short of eternal wrath would not meet the Law's demands! The question may fitly be put to one who thus goes the round of works, feelings and, perhaps, of ceremonies and mortifications, "Why do you gad about so much?" It will all end in nothing.

You may gad about as long as you will, but you will never gain peace except by simple faith in Jesus! All the while you are roaming so far, the Gospel is near you, where you now are, in your present state, available to you in your present condition, now, for, "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." O Sinner, you are thinking to bring something to the Most High God and yet He bids you come "without money and without price." Your Father says to you, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He declares to you the way of salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." He calls to you in His gracious Word and says, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He bids you trust in His Son, who is the appointed Savior, for He has laid help upon One that is mighty! He thus addresses you, "Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." You want pardon and Jesus cries from the Cross, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." You want justification and the Father points you to His Son, and says, "By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." You want salvation and He directs you to Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and

remission of sins. The God of Heaven bids you look to His dear Son and trust Him!

Though I preach this Gospel almost every day of the week—and scarcely a day passes without my telling the old, old story—yet it is always new. If you who hear me so often, grow weary of it, it is the fault of my style of putting it, for, to myself, it seems fresher every day! To think that the tender Father should say to the prodigal son, "I ask nothing of you. I am willing to receive you, sinful, guilty, vile as you are—though you have injured Me and spent My substance with harlots. Though you have fed swine and though you are fit to be nothing but a swine-feeder all your days, yet come, just as you are, to My loving bosom—I will rejoice over you and kiss you, and say, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet!'" Sinner, God grant you Grace to end all your roamings in your Father's bosom! "Why do you gad about so much?" Renounce all other hopes and fly away to the wounds of Jesus. "Why do you gad about so much to change your way?" Listen and obey these closing lines—

"Weary souls who wander wide
From the central point of bliss
Turn to Jesus crucified,
Fly to those dear wounds of His!
Sink into the purple flood
Rise into the life of God.
Find in Christ the way of peace,
Peace unspeakable, unknown!
By His pain He gives you ease,
Life by His expiring groan.
Rise, exalted by His fall—
Find in Christ your All in All."

—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 ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION
NO. 3008

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 13, 1867.

"Do you believe in the Son of God?"
John 9:35.

THE man to whom our Savior addressed this question had been born blind, but he had been the subject of one of the Master's mightiest miracles and was rejoicing in the possession of his newly-found sight! Our Lord is not accustomed to doing things by halves, so, having given to this poor man natural sight, He intended to also give him *spiritual* sight. Having delivered him from the misery of living in this world in darkness, He would also deliver him from the dense darkness that brooded within his soul. "Blessed be the name of the Lord, we are never straitened in Him, but only in ourselves; and when we receive not, it is either because we ask not, or because we ask amiss." Our Lord had given to this man His left hand full of minor mercies and now He finds him out with His right hand full of yet richer treasures—giving to him exceeding abundantly above what he had asked or even thought!

In order to effect this man's salvation, our Lord asked him a question upon a most vital point—"Do you believe in the Son of God?" That question I will try to press home upon all my Hearers, asking you, dear Friends, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, learned and ignorant to listen to the question, to give it an honest and earnest consideration and to endeavor, as in the sight of God, to answer it from your inmost heart.

I. In the first place, the question of the text, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" IS A MOST NECESSARY QUESTION.

I believe it *is a question which ought to be asked from the pulpit far more often than it is*. I have been frequently pained, in reading sermons and on the rare occasions when I have had the opportunity of *hearing* sermons, to note that they have been addressed to the whole congregation just as though all were Christians. It is too much the custom for ministers to address the whole assembly as "Brothers and Sisters" and to speak to a mixed multitude of men and women as if they all had a part and lot in spiritual things. It seems that if anywhere, certainly in the pulpit, there should be a wise and constant use of discrimination. The preacher should make his hearers clearly understand that there are some who fear God and some who fear Him not—some who are still dead in trespasses and sins—and others who are alive unto God through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. It would

be a very wicked thing for me to delude you with the notion that you are all saved, for I cannot help fearing that some of you are not yet saved. The outward lives of some here are quite sufficient evidence that they have never been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, I feel sure that I am addressing some who would not venture to even *claim* that they are Christians! They are too honest to do that, for they know that they are strangers to the saving power of the Grace of God! And how dare these lips of mine call those the children of God who are, at present, the children of wrath, even as others? How can my tongue pronounce that to the gold which I know is but dross? How can I speak to those of you who are living and, I fear will die without a Savior, as though you had an equal interest in the precious blood of Jesus with those who believe in Him?

Further, *the Sunday school teacher must never take this matter for granted with his scholars any more than the preacher must take it for granted with his hearers*. Even when the dear children appear to be favorable to the reception of the Truth of God, to be impressed by the story of the Cross and to have a sort of childish love to Jesus, I think it is still well for us to ask this question over and over again, with tearful earnestness, "dear child, do you believe in the Son of God? for, if not, all that pretty talk of yours and all those hopeful feelings of yours will bring you no solid, lasting good! Unless you believe in Jesus, you are outside the bounds of the Kingdom of Grace."

The people who need to have this question most plainly put to them are, probably, *those who have had godly parents and who have been brought up under religious influences*. It is an untold blessing to have had godly parents. It is an unspeakable mercy to have been in the habit of attending a place of worship from our childhood, but there are dangers connected with even these blessings. It is not bigotry, it is not a lack of Christian charity, it is not censoriousness when we say that there are tens of thousands of people who have attended the services of the Church of England from their childhood and who believe that in their baptism they were made members of Christ, the children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! And that since the bishop's hands were laid upon them in their confirmation, there is no need to ask them whether they believe in the Son of God. Do they not say, in their Creed, "I believe in God the Father...and in Jesus Christ, His Son"? To ask such people whether they believe in the Son of God must surely be a piece of impertinence! Yet I venture to say that there are no people in the whole world who need more to be asked that question than they do. And while it is especially so in the Church of England because the Prayer Book helps Episcopalians to imagine that they are Christians when they are not, it is very much the same among Dissenters!

Many of you were taken to a place of worship in your mother's arms and, therefore, unless you have been privileged to sit under a very honest and faithful ministry, you may be led to conceive that you are the children of God through your godly ancestry—and to imagine that the Grace of God runs in your blood and that you are a Christian because

your father was a Christian. And that you ought to join a Christian church because your ancestors, for many generations, have belonged to that church. Beware of a mere ancestral religion which may be of no more value than the ancestral religion of the Chinese! Do not suppose that you are personally right in the sight of God because you have had a godly mother and father, or godly grandparents? Christ's message to all who have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit is, "You must be born-again." True religion is *personal*—it is a thing which concerns each man himself! In the Prayer Book there is same nonsense about a sponsor promising, in a child's name, that he shall "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same and the carnal desires of the flesh." Why, the sponsor cannot promise to do all that for *himself*, much less can he promise it for the child! No, you must yourselves come to God through Christ, personally make confession to Him of your own sins, seek pardon for your own selves, look with your own eyes to Christ upon the Cross and find salvation in Him for yourselves. All teaching that is contrary to this is nothing but deception—the invention of priestcraft or of the devil! And may God graciously enable you to escape from its snares!

It also strikes me that *this question ought to be frequently asked of all religious professors and especially of all ministers of the Gospel*. It is a terribly easy matter to be a minister of the Gospel and a vile hypocrite at the same time. My Brothers in the ministry, I feel this to be only too true, and I often regret that I am not able to sit in one of those pews yonder, to listen to some faithful Brother minister who would help me to see myself as I really am in the sight of God—and cause me to tremble before Him, lest I should be either self-deceived or a deceiver of others! It is our misfortune that if we begin to preach without being truly converted, there is little likelihood that we shall ever be converted! This thought makes the pulpit to become a place where our shoes may well be, metaphorically, taken off our feet—a place of trembling, alarm and anxiety—for who is to preach to the preacher if he is, himself, unregenerate? Who shall press upon him the question, "Do *you* believe in the Son of God?" Oh, then what solemn heart-searching, what strict self-examinations the preacher should have! How he should lay bare his breast before the all-searching eyes of God, implore the inspection of the Infallible, ask to be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary which cannot err, and seek to be judged by Almighty Wisdom lest, as Paul said, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway!

And it is very much the same, I am persuaded, *with the deacons and elders of the church*. Ah, my Brothers, it is a high privilege to be officers of a Christian Church! And for many of you I have long thanked God every time I have bowed my knees before Him. Yet I must remind you that even you may be deceived, for some like you have been deceived. As I look back, with trembling, over the years of my pastorate in London, I cannot help recalling some who did run well, yet something or someone hindered them so that they obeyed not the Truth of God. As they turned

back, may not any one of you, my Brothers, do the same? May not I also go and do likewise? Nothing but the Grace of God will prevent such a calamity!

I do not know how to talk with you as I want to do concerning this sad condition of soul. My heart would, if it could, get rid of my tongue and then it would speak to you something like this—Did not some of you, at one time, the moment you awoke in the morning, begin communing with God? Were there not red-letter days, when, from morning light to evening shade, you were in fellowship with the Most High? You had your burdens, but you always carried them to Jesus! And you had your joys, but you always shared them with Him. You lived for Him! Your heart was warm towards Him. You walked with Him in constant communion, but now, can you *really* live without even *thinking* of Him? Can you be happy without thinking of your God? Have you a better house than you used to have, and more money, more friends, more of this world's good things—and do you now forget your God and go the whole day without any communication between your soul and Him? Ah, then, you have, indeed, gone down in the world, not up! You are getting poorer and poorer. God help you! If you had come to me and told me that you had lost everything, but that you loved Jesus more, I would have sympathized with you because of your trouble, but I would have congratulated you upon your Grace. But now that you have got on so well in the world that you do not love your Lord as you once did, I can only pity you because of your dreadful prosperity and mourn over the fearful loss which you have experienced.

And as for *you who have been members of this church year after year*, you who have been baptized into the name of the ever-blessed Trinity, you who have often gathered around your Master's Communion Table, permit me to shake you out of the slumbers of your fancied security! If you have taken it for granted that all must be well with you because you are a member of a Christian Church, I do beseech you to make diligent search, lest you should be mistaken. I am no advocate of doubts and fears, as you all well know—on the contrary, I delight to extol the blessings of a full assurance of faith—yet, at the same time, I am well aware that it is hardly possible to have too much holy anxiety and sacred suspicion lest we should not be right with God! I do solemnly beseech you, by the living God—everyone of you old professors, you venerable fathers in our Israel— to again put this question of questions to your own heart and conscience, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" Have you a real, vital faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or is it only a mere notion or name, a mere sham to which you are trusting? God grant that we may all answer the question, and answer it honestly, as in His sight, for it is a most necessary question for every one of us to answer!

II. Secondly, and but briefly, I want to remind you that the question of the text is A REMARKABLY PLAIN QUESTION. "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

Some people delight to see difficulties even where there are none. They revel in reading the Bible through spectacles of various colors. When you

and I read our Bibles, there are certain passages which seem perfectly plain to us—we can understand them without any difficulty. But, when these sectarians read the Bible, they find out such novelties, such astounding marvels, such wonderful things that are to happen in the future, that I can only say that if their interpretation of the Bible is the correct one, it is a strange sort of Bible for God to have given to ordinary Christians like ourselves, for we might have read the Bible through 50 times, yet never have found out such mysterious doctrines and practices as the people profess to have discovered there! May God graciously preserve all of you from falling into the snares that are set by these inventors of novelties and absurdities! They are always hunting after some new thing, like the Athenians of old, and they lead many away from the simple Truths of the Gospel.

But the question in our text is not a difficult or obscure one. It is, as our proverb says, "as plain as a pike-staff"—"Do you believe in the Son of God?" Perhaps you would like me to explain to you the Doctrine of Election! Well, I may do that another day. Possibly you would like to hear about the Second Advent and that, also, I may tell you, as far as I can, in due time, but just now the question is concerning your soul's most vital interests. How do you stand in relation to God—and especially in relation to Jesus Christ whom He has sent to be the Propitiation for the sins of all who believe in Him? This question is short, simple, plain, pointed—"Do you believe in the Son of God?" That is to say, is Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, acknowledged by you to be the Son of God? You know that He died in the place of sinners and that His sacrifice atoned for the sins of all who trust in Him, so that God can be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in His Son. So again I ask, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" When we were singing, a little while ago—

"Jesus our Lord is crucified"—

did you feel that the crucified Christ was your Lord and Savior? Did you rest your soul, for time and eternity, upon that blessed Substitute for sinners, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, expiring upon the accursed tree? If so, it is well with your soul! But if not—if your answer to the question of the text is in the negative, it amounts to this—"I will not accept the Propitiation which God has set forth—the only Savior whom God has provided, shall not save me. I will not come unto Him that I may have life. I will force my way to Heaven by my own works or merits, or else I will go down to Hell neglecting His great salvation." That is the real meaning of your negative answer! And I ask you, as an honest man, to do one thing if that is your answer—say it to yourself in so many words or, better still, write it down and sign it with your name. If you mean to serve Baal, say so! If you mean not to have Christ as your Savior, say so! Sit down and write out the reasons why you reject Christ—put them in black and white, that you may see them and weigh them—as every right-minded man should do when he takes such an extraordinary course. If you think that Christ is not worth having for a Savior, say in your own handwriting, "I will not have Him. I will not trust Him. I will not be saved by Him." If you do that, there will be something *done*, sad as it will be.

But, at any rate, answer the question of the text, for it is so plain and simple that it deserves a perfectly plain and straightforward answer.

III. Now, in the third place, and again with great brevity, I want to show you that THIS IS A VERY PERSONAL QUESTION "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

You, young man, have been giving away tracts this afternoon. That is a very proper occupation, but do you believe in the Son of God? You, young woman, have been teaching a class in the Sunday school. That is well done on your part, I hope, but, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" You, my Brother, have been preaching the Gospel, this morning, according to your ability. So far, so good, but, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" Some of us sat, this morning, at the close of the public service, around our Master's Communion Table, where we broke bread in His name, as is our custom on the first day of the week, but, my fellow communicant, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" Wife, you have nothing to do with your husband in this matter and, husband, you and your wife must be set apart in this instance. For the moment, forget that dear child of yours! Hold him on your knee if you will, but apply not the question to him just now, but answer for yourself, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" That is to say, has your heart really felt the weight of your own sin and have you come to Jesus Christ and given that life-look at the Crucified One which brings instantaneous pardon to all who believingly look? "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

Even our own prayers may come to be idols and hindrances to us. We may think that the way of salvation is to pray, which it certainly is not, for the way of salvation is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to believe on Him at once! Unbelieving prayers will leave us as they find us—they cannot yield us any comfort. As it is with the prayers of others, so is it with our own—unless faith in Jesus Christ is mingled with them, they can never be a sweet savor unto God, and they can never bring a blessing to our own souls. What you have to do, dear Friend, broken-hearted and cast down, is to look away from yourself and all your fellow men, to Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin. Looking to Him brings life to the soul and the testimony concerning all the saints is this, "They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." However feeble may be your eyesight, and however dark may be your surroundings—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One"—

and whoever looks unto Him shall live! Those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness were in various stages of poisoning. Some of them, no doubt, had their eyes well-near closed shut by the swellings that arose through the bites of the serpents. But, however feeble was the look they gave—if it was only through the corner of the eye—if they did but catch a glimpse of the serpent of brass that Moses set upon the pole, as God commanded him, they lived at once! And if, in your case, sin seems to prevent the full exercise of faith and your consciousness of guilt hinders your belief in Jesus Christ, yet say to Him, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief." Touch at least the hem of His garment and you shall

find that it is not the measure of your faith, but the measurelessness of His Grace that will bring you the blessing you need! Though your faith is weak, His Grace is strong! Though you can scarcely believe in Him, all things are possible unto Him and He can cause even your weak faith to be the means of bringing salvation to you!

Ah, my dear Hearers, plainly as I am speaking to you—and the gaudiness of oratory would be out of place here—how hard it is to get you to do what I urge you to do! I would gladly go down these stairs and talk to you one by one, but I might fail even with such an expedient as that—and there are far too many of you for me to come to each one! Yet I remember how holy Richard Baxter pleaded with his people, "I would gladly come and kneel down before you, one by one, and say to you, 'Why will you reject the Savior? Why will you die? Why will you cast away your souls?'" If I cannot do that literally, my spirit shall do it. My Hearer, I ask you, each one, "Do you believe in the Son of God? This is the question which must be put personally to you for you must die alone and you must rise in your own body, and you must be judged alone—and if you will not believe in the Son of God, you must be condemned alone—you must personally be cast into Hell! There can be no sponsor for you in the flames of Hell, no substitute for you to bear your everlasting woe in your place. You yourself will be cast into Hell if you remain an unbeliever and, therefore, again I ask you, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

Thus I have shown you that the question of the text is a necessary, plain, personal question.

IV. Now, fourthly, I have to tell you that THIS QUESTION IS FUNDAMENTAL. "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

This question goes right down to the very foundations of our faith—the fundamentals, as we most properly call them. I do not think that we are right in asking for answers to very abstruse questions from young people. An aged Christian may be asked many questions concerning his experience—the depth of his sense of inward sin, the height of his enjoyment of fellowship with Christ. These are proper points to be brought before those "who are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." It would be very improper to put questions upon these points to a babe in Grace, but it would not be improper to put to a babe in Grace the question now before us. I venture to come to any man who professes to be a Christian—and whether he is illiterate or not—to put to him this question, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

I wish that some of you would put this fundamental question to yourselves, instead of trusting to the nonsense and absurdity in which you sometimes put your trust. Why, to this very day, there are some people who believe that they are Christians because, as they looked out of the window, they thought to themselves, "If the Lord is gracious to us, we hope the sun will shine upon us." The sun did shine upon them and, therefore, they think that God must be gracious to them! What fools they must be to talk like that! Others have said that as they were at their

work, or in their bed, they thought they heard a voice. Suppose you did, what then? If all the voices in the world were heard by you, I would not give a penny for your religion if you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Another says, "I had such-and-such a text impressed upon my mind." If it had been impressed upon your heart by the Holy Spirit, it would have been a different matter. There is a superstitious way of misusing the Bible, of which even Mr. Wesley was guilty when he put a pin into the Scriptures to find out what he ought to do in a certain emergency! I believe that was as wicked as if he had shuffled a pack of cards for the same purpose. God does not guide us in any such way as that. Neither is there any importance to be attached to what you dream, or what you heard, or what you saw—the one fundamental question is, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" If you do, and yet you never dreamed a dream in all your life, thank God that you have slept so well and that you have not been troubled with indigestion, which is a great cause of dreams and visions of the night. If you have never heard mysterious voices, thank God that you have a well-regulated imagination and a well-balanced mind. If you have never had a text that seemed to speak to you like a mysterious incantation, thank God that when you reverently read the Scripture, it speaks to you as the voice of God, and not as the voice of some witch of Endor, or as the voice of some old Delphic oracle speaking to a superstitious ear! My Brother, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, all is well with you, so far as your salvation is concerned. You may ask yourself, "Am, I growing in Grace? Am I making such advances as I ought, in the Divine life?" These questions are right and proper and deserve to be duly pondered by you, but if you believe on the Son of God, you have the root of the matter in you! You have the Tree of Life planted in your soul and you shall assuredly find a place in the Paradise of God. So, ask no further question upon this point, for this is the fundamental question—"Do you believe in the Son of God?"

V. Now just for a few moments, let me remind you of what you know so well, namely, that, THIS QUESTION IS ALL-IMPORTANT.

"Have you made your will?" somebody asks, and that is a very important question to one who has anything to leave. I think that people ought to see to that matter and there are 50 other questions that might be asked, all of which would have their relative importance, but this is the weightiest question of all—"Do you believe in the Son of God?" How can I put that question, with due solemnity, to each person in this congregation? Do you not know, Man, that life and death, Heaven and Hell and bliss or unutterable woe depend upon your answer to that short, simple question? If you believe on Jesus, there are robes of whiteness and tearless eyes for you! But if you believe not, there are for you—

"Flames that no abatement know
Though briny tears forever flow!"

If you can truly say, as you look, by faith, to the precious blood of Jesus, "I am washed in that crimson flood and I am clean every whit"—if it is, indeed, so, then all things are yours, whether things present or things to

come, life or death, time or eternity—all are yours, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's. All is well with you now, and all shall be well with you forever and ever! But, oh, if you have to shake your head and sorrowfully say, "No, I never was cleansed by Christ's blood. I never accepted Him as my Savior." Do you know what your portion must be? Come, Man, do not close your eyes, like the silly ostrich, and then think to escape the hunter because you do not look upon him! Come Man, come look at the portion that awaits you! Do you start at sight of it? Can you see your dying bed surrounded with gloom and darkness? Are you afraid of that? That is a fair sight compared with what I have yet to show you!

There, move away that bed, and let the next scene appear. Do you see that? What? Dare you not look at it? It is your naked spirit shivering before the face of God while He pronounces its doom! Does that frighten you? I have to show you a more terrible picture by far than that! It is the earth on a blaze—the mountains are reeling to and fro, like drunken men! The stars, like withered fig leaves, are falling from the sky! The sun is becoming black as a sackcloth of hair and all the while you are crying to the hills to cover you and to the rocks to give you shelter, for the great Day of God's Wrath has come and you are unable to endure it! Can you not gaze upon that picture? It is what you will come to if you remain unsaved. But if you are afraid of the picture, why are you not afraid of the dreadful reality, for I have not yet shown you the worst of your doom? I scarcely dare to lift the curtain which hides that dreadful prison of the lost, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched," where the wrath to come, like a mighty ocean, never ceasing in its fiery flow, beats over the guilty forever and ever! Where the fierce tornado of the Divine Wrath blows upon the lost forever and ever, leaving them never a resting place, nor a moment's cessation from their awful agony!

My poor words, which may seem to some, terrible in their intensity, are feeble compared with the weighty words of the Lord Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and, therefore, as a man who cares for you, and who would gladly have you care for your own immortal souls, I do implore you, each one, to ask yourself this question, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" If you must honestly answer, "No," then I ask you, Will you not believe in Jesus now? Oh, that the Holy Spirit would graciously enable you, this very hour, to trust wholly to that glorious finished work which, on the Cross, my Master has concluded once and for all, and the merit of which, even in Heaven, He delights to bestow upon all the sons and daughters of men who will believe on Him!

VI. I feel persuaded, further, that, this is A QUESTION WHICH CAN BE ANSWERED AND WHICH OUGHT TO BE ANSWERED. "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

I did not put into "Our Own Hymn Book" the hymn which begins—

"'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?"

I deliberated a good deal about it and I left it out, not because I doubt whether a Christian may sing it, not because I have not sung it myself, but because I am not quite clear that I ought to ask any congregation to sing it, for I hope that most of those in any ordinary congregation will not be in such a state of mind as that. It is a suitable hymn for one to sing sometimes in private, when one cannot sing anything better—but it would scarcely suit a company of true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! A man may be and I think sometimes *will be* in doubt as to whether he really believes in Jesus, but chronic doubt is a sin that is not to be tolerated! Constant questioning as to whether you are saved, or not, is an unhealthy state for any of you to be in. You *can* tell and you *ought* to tell whether you believe in Christ, or whether you do not believe in Him. Faith is, in one sense, the gift of God, but, in another sense, it is a mental act for which we are responsible. God gives us faith, but He does not believe for us. He does not give us faith as we give our children bread, but He, by the gracious operation of His Holy Spirit, makes us willing in the day of His power—and then we *will* to believe in Jesus and we do believe in Him. Well, then, this being the case, I should think that you can, each one, tell whether you have ever believed in God's Son as readily as you can tell whether you have ever trembled at God's Word. One mental act must surely be as much under the cognizance of your inner consciousness as another mental act is.

Besides, you can judge whether you have faith by seeing whether you have its fruits. If you have believed on the Son of God, you have a care about spiritual things which you never had while you were an unbeliever. You are living in a world that is new to you—in the spiritual realm where God rules by His Spirit—and you are no longer confined to that which you can see with your eyes and touch with your fingers. You now see, and hear, and feel, and know a thousand things of which you were formerly utterly unaware. If you have truly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are "a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." You love what once you hated and you hate what once you loved. You have altogether new tastes—you would not now find pleasure where once you reveled in it! And the weariness which you formerly felt in the services of God's House is now all gone and you find the Sabbath to be a delight, and the company of God's people to be a foretaste of Heaven! Are you, dear Friends at this moment desirous to be obedient to all the Lord's Commandments? Obedience to God is a flower that never grew on nature's dunghill! It grows only where the Spirit of God has tilled the soil and planted the root from which it springs. Surely you know whether you believe in Christ or not! At any rate, go not to your bed this night till you know the truth about your case. Fall not asleep with even the *possibility* that you may awake in Hell! Rest not, Man, till you are forever safe! Sleep not till you know that God is your Friend and that Christ is your Savior, lest, in the watches of the night, the hair of your head should stand on end with horror as you are awakened to find that your last hour has come and you are not prepared to stand before your Judge!—

"How will your heart endure
The terrors of that day
When earth and Heaven, before your face
Astonished shrink away?"

VII. Now I must come to the conclusion of my discourse and I do so by saying that THIS QUESTION DEMANDS AN IMMEDIATE REPLY—"Do you believe in the Son of God?"

Possibly, one of you says, "Well, Sir, I will give you my answer when I have a more convenient season." No, you will not, for you will probably forget all about it unless you give the answer now. Oh, what a lot of hammering and beating the iron of the human heart will stand! I am sure that if the iron that comes out of the heart of the earth were half as difficult to soften and to cast into molds as the nature of man is, the ironworker would give up his task as hopeless. Oh, how many times I have tried to preach the Gospel to some of you—not without tears and not without headaches and heartaches, too—not without earnest pleadings in secret with God—not without thinking and planning how I could set the old Truth of God in a new light and by what means I might enlighten your understandings, or interest your imagination and capture your heart! But, alas, thus far, with some of you, the hunter has lost his prey and the fisherman has waited in vain for his fish—and he is bitterly disappointed at his failure! When will the day come when we shall capture you for Christ? What weapon of the Truth of God will pierce you who are like leviathan in his pride? When shall we draw you ashore to life, peace, holiness and happiness?

The great mischief with many of you is that you always talk about what you will do *tomorrow*! Yet there are newly-dug graves every day and the gravediggers hide the bodies of your fellows beneath the sod of the cemetery. It is true that, thus far, you have been spared, but are you, therefore, foolish enough to dream that you are immortal? Do you think that there is no tree growing out of which your coffin is to be made? Ah, Sirs, some of you will never see another year! This is not a matter of guesswork with me! I know that it is the truth that a certain proportion out of every thousand persons now living must die this year. Everybody knows that and here we have some six or seven thousand persons gathered together! [Remember, this was preached on a Sunday evening!] Well, then, there must be so many of us who must go to the grave within the next 12 months. You know that you are not immortal! You know that you must die sooner or later and some of you know that if you were to die now, you would die without hope, for you have not believed in Jesus and you would be eternally lost! I do beseech you, if you have any wits left, to use them now and to be startled as I put to you that ancient question, "Why will you die?" Where is the sense of it! Where is the reason for being damned? Do anything that is reasonable, Man, and who can blame you? If you have a good excuse for doing a certain thing, if it pays you well to do it, if it is the right thing to do for your country even though it does not pay you—go and do it! Cassius did a noble deed when he rode into the chasm in the Forum and so filled it up, for he did good

to Rome. But what good will your damnation do to you or anybody else? What good will it do even to the lost in Hell? Even they might wish to keep you out of that dread place of torment as the rich man wished to warn his brothers, for they would get no good through your ruin.

What possible good can ever come to you if you are lost? It will be all hurt, and no good! All loss, and no gain! All wretchedness, and no joy! All darkness, and no light! All Hell, and no Heaven—forever and ever! In the name of the living God, I beseech you! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I implore you to trust Christ and live! He who stopped the storm on the Galilean Lake and saved the all-but-shipwrecked crew of the little ship can stop the waters of wrath that threaten to beat upon your boat and save you even now! He who said to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," can do as much for you! His precious blood still pleads for mercy! His Almighty Power is still engaged on mercy's side. O my Master, enable these poor souls to trust in You! Father, call the prodigal home! Welcome him now! Give him the kiss of forgiveness now! Clothe him with the best robe now! Spirit of the living God, descend and do what we cannot do—turn hearts of stone to flesh—and to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall be the praise 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.

OUR CHAMPION
NO. 3009

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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"And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill that faces Hebron."
Judges 16:3.

POOR Samson! We cannot say much about him as an example to Believers. We must hold him up in two lights—as a beacon and as a prodigy. He is a beacon to us all, for he shows us that no strength of body can suffice to deliver from weakness of mind. Here was a man whom no fellow man could overcome, but he lost his eyes through a woman—a man mighty enough to tear a lion like a kid, yet, in due time, though himself stronger than a lion, he was bound with fetters of brass. When I think of the infatuation of which Samson was the subject and remember that we are men of like passions with him, I can only, for myself, put up the prayer, "Lord, hold You me up, and I shall be safe," and urge you to do likewise.

And Samson is also a prodigy. He is more a wonder as a Believer than he is even as a man. It is marvelous that a man could smite thousands of Philistines with no better weapon than the jawbone of a newly-killed ass, but it is still more marvelous that Samson should be a saint, ranked among those illustrious ones saved by faith, though such a sinner! The Apostle Paul has put him among the worthies in the 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews and Paul wrote by Inspiration—therefore there can be no mistake about the fact that Samson was saved. Indeed, when I see his childlike faith, and note the way in which he dashed against the Philistines and smote them, hip and thigh, with a great slaughter—the way in which he cast aside all reckonings and probabilities and, in simple confidence in his God achieved the most tremendous feats of valor—when I see this, I cannot but wonder and admire!

The Old Testament biographies were never written for our imitation, but they were written for our instruction. Upon this one matter, what a volume of force there is in such lessons! "See," says God, "what faith can do? Here is a man, full of infirmities, a sorry fool, yet, through his childlike faith, he lives. 'The just shall live by faith.' He has many sad

flaws and failings, but his heart is right towards his God. He does trust in the Lord and he does give himself up as a man consecrated to his Lord's service and, therefore, he is saved." I look upon Samson's case as a great wonder, put in Scripture for the encouragement of great sinners. If such a man as Samson, nevertheless, prevails by faith to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, so shall you and I! Though our characters may have been disfigured by many vices and we may have committed a multitude of sins, if we can but trust Christ to save us, He will purge us with hyssop and we shall be clean! He will wash us and we shall be whiter than snow—and in our death we shall fall asleep in the arms of Sovereign Mercy to wake up in the likeness of Christ!

But now I am going to leave Samson alone, except as he may furnish us with a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Samson, like many other Old Testament heroes, was a type of our Lord. He is especially so in this case and I shall invite you to look at Christ rather than at Samson. First, *come and behold our Champion at His work.* Then, *let us go and survey the work when He has accomplished it.* And thirdly, *let us enquire what use we can make of the work which He has performed.*

I. Come with me, then, Brothers and Sisters, and LOOK AT OUR MIGHTY CHAMPION AT HIS WORK.

You remember when our Samson, our Lord Jesus, came down to the Gaza of this world, 'twas love that brought Him. Love to a most unworthy object, for He loved the sinful church which had gone astray from Him many and many a time. Yet He came from Heaven and left the ease and delights of His Father's palace to put Himself among the Philistines, the sons of sin and Satan here below!

It was rumored among men that the Lord of Glory was in the world and straightway they took counsel together how they should slay Him. Herod makes a clean sweep of all the children of two years old and under, that he may be sure to slay the newborn Prince. Afterwards, scribes and priests and lawyers hunt and hound Him. Satan tempts Him in the wilderness and provokes Him when in public. Death also pursues Him, for he has marked Him as his prey. At last, the time comes when the triple host of the Savior's foes has fairly surrounded Him, and shut Him in. They have dragged Him before Pilate. They have scourged Him on the pavement. They drag Him to the place called Calvary, while His blood drips upon the stones of Jerusalem's streets. They pierce His hands and His feet. They lift Him up, a spectacle of scorn and suffering and now, while dying in extreme pangs, and especially when He closes His eyes and cries out, "It is finished," sin, Satan and death all feel that they have the Champion safe! There He lies silently in the tomb. He who is to bruise the old serpent's head, is, Himself, bruised! O you who are the world's great Deliverer—there You lie as dead as any stone! Surely Your foes have led You captive, O You mighty Samson!

He sleeps. But think not that He is unconscious of what is going on. He knows everything. He sleeps till the proper moment comes and then our Samson awakes—and what happens now? He is in the tomb and His foes have set a guard and a seal that they may keep Him there. Will any now help Him to escape out of their charge? Is there any man who will aid Him? No, there is none! If the Champion escapes, it must be by His own singlehanded valor! Will He make a clear way for Himself and come up from the midst of His foes? You know He will, my Brothers and Sisters, for the moment the third day comes, He touches the stone and it is rolled away! He has defeated death! He has pulled up the posts of the grave and taken away its gates and bars! As for sin, He treads that beneath His feet—He has utterly overthrown it! And Satan, too, lies broken beneath the heel that once was bruised! He has broken the old dragon's head and cut His power in pieces forever! Solitary and alone, His own arm brings salvation unto Him and His righteousness sustains Him. I think I see Him now as He goes up that hill which is before Hebron—the hill of God. He bears upon His shoulders the uplifted gates of the grave—the tokens of His victory over death and Hell! Doors and posts and bar and all, He bears them up to Heaven. In sacred triumph He drags His enemies behind Him. Sing to Him! Angels, praise Him in your hymns! Exalt Him, cherubim and seraphim! Our mightier Samson has gotten to Himself the victory and cleared the road to Heaven and eternal life for all His people!

You know the story. I have told it poorly, but it is the most magnificent of all stories that ever were told! "Arms, and the man, I sing," said one of the great classic poets of old, but I can say, 'The Cross and the Christ, I sing." 'Tis my delight to tell of Him who espoused the cause of His people and, though for a while a captive, broke the green straps and fetters of brass and, having gained the victory for Himself, also liberated others, then goes, at the head of His emancipated people, along the way which He has opened—the new way which He leads to the right hand of God!

II. Let us go now, dear Brothers and Sisters, and calmly SURVEY THE WORK WHICH CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED.

We will stand at the gates of old Gaza and see what the Champion has done. Those are ponderous hinges, and they must have held up huge doors. We will look at these doors, posts and this bar. Why, it is a mass of iron that ten men could hardly lift—and it might take 50 more to carry those huge doors! They were scarcely moved, even on their hinges, without the efforts of a dozen men—and yet this one man carried them all and I read not that his shoulders were bent, or that he grew weary. Seven miles, at least, Samson carried that tremendous load, uphill all the way, too! Still he bore it all without staggering, nor do I find that he was faint as he was aforetime at Ramath-Lehi.

I will not linger upon Samson's exploits, rather would I lift up your thoughts to the great Captain of our salvation! See what Christ has carried away. I said that He had three enemies. The three beset Him and He has achieved a threefold victory over them!

There was *death*. My dear Friends, Christ, in being first overcome by death, made himself Conqueror over death and He has also given us the victory, for, concerning death, we may truly say that Christ has not only opened the gates, but He has taken them away—and not the gates only, but the very posts, and the bar and all! Christ "has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light."

He has abolished it in this sense—in the first place, the curse of death is gone. Believers die, but they do not die for their sins. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." We die, but it is not any longer as a punishment. It is the fruit of sin, but it is not the *curse* of sin that makes the Believer die. To other men, death is a curse—to the Believer, I may almost put it among his Covenant blessings, for to sleep in Jesus Christ is one of the greatest mercies that the Lord can give to His believing people! The curse of death, then, being taken away, we may say that the posts are pulled up.

Christ has also taken away the after results of death, the soul's exposure to the Second Death. Unless Christ had redeemed us, death, indeed, would have been terrible, for it would have been the shore of the great Lake of Fire. When the wicked die, their punishment begins at once—and when they rise again, at the general resurrection, it is but to receive in their *bodies* and in their souls the due reward of their sins! The sting of death is the Second Death—that which is to come afterwards—

"To die—to sleep—
To sleep! Perhaps to dream. Yes, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come!"

said the world's poet—no, not what "dreams" may come, but what *substantial pains*, what *dread miseries*, what *everlasting sorrows* will come! These are not for Christians. There is no Hell for you, Believer! Christ has taken away posts, and bar and all. Death is not to you any longer the gate of torment, but the gate of Paradise!

Moreover, Christ has not only taken away the curse and the after results of death, but from many of us He has taken away even the fear of death! He came on purpose to "deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." There are not a few here who could conscientiously say that they do not dread death—no, but rather look forward to it with joyful expectation! We have become so accustomed to think of our last hours that we die daily—and when the last hour shall arrive, we shall only say, "Our marriage day has come."—

"Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge!
That sets my longing soul at large."

We shall joyfully hail the summons to mount beyond this land of woes, sighs and tears to be present with our God! The fear of death having been taken away, we may truly say that Christ has taken away posts, bar and all.

Besides, Beloved, there is a sense in which it may be said that Christians never die at all. Jesus said to Martha, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Believers do not die, they do but—

"Sleep in Jesus and are blessed."

But the main sense in which Christ has pulled up the posts of the gates of death is that He has brought in a glorious Resurrection. O Grave, you cannot hold your prisoners, for they must rise! O Death, your troops of worms may seem to devastate that fair land of human flesh and blood, but that body shall rise again blooming with more beauty than that with which it fell asleep! It shall rise from its bed of dust and silent clay to dwell in realms of everlasting day! Conceive the picture if you can! If you have imagination, let the scene now present itself before your eyes. Christ, the greater Samson, sleeping in the dominions of Death—death boasting and glorifying itself that now it has conquered the Prince of Life! Christ waking, striding to that gate, dashing it aside—taking it upon His shoulders, carrying it away and saying as He mounts to Heaven, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?"

Another host which Christ had to defeat was the army of sin. Christ had come among sinners and sins beset Him round. Your sins and my sins beleaguered the Savior till He became their captive. "In Him was no sin" yet sins "compassed Him about like bees." Sin was imputed to Him—the sins of all His people stood in His way to keep Him, as well as them, out of Heaven. When Christ was on the Cross, my Brothers and Sisters, he was looked upon by God as a sinner, though He never had been a sinner. And when in the grave, He could not rise until He was justified. Christ must be justified as well as His people. He was justified not as we are, but by His own act. We are not justified by acts of our own as He was. All the sin of the elect was laid upon Christ—He suffered its full penalty and so was justified. The token of His Justification lay in His Resurrection. Christ was justified by rising from the dead and in Him all His people were justified too. I may say, therefore, that all our sins stood in the way of Christ's Resurrection—they were the great iron gate and they were the bar of brass that shut him out from Heaven. Doubtless, we might have thought that Christ would be a prisoner forever under the troops of sin, but oh, see Him, my Brothers and Sisters! See how the mighty Conqueror, as He bears our sins "in His own body on the tree," stands with unbroken bones beneath the enormous load, bearing—

"All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

See how He takes those sins of ours upon His shoulders and carries them right up from His tomb and hurls them away into the deep abyss of forgetfulness, where, if they are sought, they shall not be found any more forever! As for the sins of all God's people, they are not partly taken away—they are as clean removed as ever the gates of Gaza were—posts, gates, bar and all! That is to say, every sin of God's people is forgiven—

"There's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast!
And, oh, my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come there's pardon too!"

Every sin that all the elect ever did commit, are now committing, or ever shall commit was taken away by Christ—taken upon His shoulders in His great atoning Sacrifice and carried away! There is no sin in God's book against any of His people! He sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel—they are justified in Christ forever.

Moreover, as the guilt of sin was taken away, the punishment of sin was consequently taken away, too. For the Christian there is no stroke from God's angry hand. No, not so much as a single frown of punitive justice! The Believer may be *chastised* by a Father's hand, but God, the Judge of all, has nothing to say to the Christian, except, "I have absolved you: you are acquitted." For the Christian, there is no Hell, no penal death, much less any second death. He is completely freed from all the punishment as well as the guilt of sin—and the power of sin is removed too. It may stand in our way to keep us in perpetual warfare, but, oh, my Brethren, sin is to us a conquered foe! There is no sin which a Christian cannot overcome if he will only rely upon his God to enable him to do so. They who wear their white robes in Heaven overcame through the blood of the Lamb—and you and I may do the same. There is no lust too mighty, no besetting sin too strongly entrenched—we can drive these Canaanites out though they have cities walled unto Heaven—we can pull their cities down and overcome them through the power of Christ! Believe, Christian, that your sin is virtually a dead thing. It may kick and struggle—there is force enough in it for that, but it is a dead thing! God has written condemnation across its brow. Christ has crucified it, "nailing it to His Cross." Go now and bury it forever, and the Lord help you to live to His praise! Oh, blessed be His name! Sin, with the guilt, the power, the shame, the fear, the terror of it, is gone! Christ has taken posts, and bar and all up to the top of the hill!

Then there was a third enemy and he, also, has been destroyed—that was *Satan*. Our Savior's sufferings were not only an Atonement for sin, but they were a conflict with Satan and a conquest over him. Satan is a defeated foe. The gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church of Christ, but Christ has prevailed against the gates of Hell! As for Satan, the posts and bar and all have been plucked up from his citadel in this sense—that Satan has now no reigning power over Believers. He may

bark at us like a dog and he may go about like a roaring lion, but to rend and to devour us are not in his power. There is a chain about the devil's neck and he can only go as far as God likes, but no further. He could not tempt Job without first asking God's permission and he cannot tempt you without first getting God's permission. There is a permit needed before the devil dares so much as look on a Believer! And so, being under Divine permission, he will not be allowed to tempt us above what we are able to bear.

Moreover, the exceeding terror of Satan is also taken away. A Man has met Apollyon foot to foot and overcome him. That Man in death triumphed over Satan—so may you and I. The prestige of the old enemy is gone. The dragon's head has been broken and you and I need not fear to fight with a broken-headed adversary! When I read John Bunyan's description of Christian's fight with Apollyon, I am struck with the beauty and truth of the description, but I cannot help thinking, "If Christian had but known how thoroughly Apollyon had been thrashed in days gone by, by his Master, he would have thrown that in his face and made short work of him." Never encounter Satan without recollecting that great victory that Christ achieved on the tree! Do not be afraid, Christian, of Satan's devices or threats. Be on your watch-tower against him. Strive against him, but fear him not. Resist him, being bold in the faith, for it is not in his power to keep the feeblest saint out of Heaven, for all the gates which he has put up to impede our march have been taken away, posts, bar and all—and our God, the Lord, has gotten to Himself the victory over all the hosts of Hell!

III. We will now see HOW WE CAN USE THIS VICTORY.

Surely there is some comfort here—*comfort for you, dear Friend, over yonder*. You have a desire to be saved. God has impressed you with a deep sense of sin. The very strongest wish of your soul is that you might have peace with God. But you think there are so many difficulties in the way—Satan, your sins, and I know not what. Beloved, let me tell you, in God's name, there is no difficulty whatever in the way except in your own heart, for Christ has taken away the gates of Gaza—posts, bar and all! Mary Magdalene said to the other Mary, or the women said to one another, when they went to the sepulcher, "Who shall roll away the stone for us?" That is what you are saying. And when they came to the place, the stone was rolled away! That is your case, too, poor troubled conscience—the stone is rolled away! What? You cannot believe it? Here is God's testimony for it—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You need an atonement for your sins, do you? "It is finished." You need someone to speak for you. "He is able to save unto the uttermost, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us." Can you believe in the mercy of God in Christ and rest your poor guilty soul upon the merit of

His doing and the virtue of His dying? If you can, God is reconciled to you! There may have been great mountains between you and God, but they are all gone. There may have been the Red Sea of your sins rolling between you and your Father. That Red Sea is dried up. I tell you, Soul, if you believes in Christ Jesus, not only is there a way of access between your soul and God, but there is a clear way! You remember, when Christ died, the veil of the Temple was torn in two. There was not a little slit for sinners to creep through, but it was ripped in two from the top to the bottom, so that big sinners might come in the same way as when Samson pulled up gates, posts, bar and all! There was a clear way out into the country for all who were locked up in the town. Prisoner, the prison doors are open! Captive, loose the bonds on your neck—be free! I sound the trumpet of jubilee! Bond-slaves, Christ has redeemed you! You who have sold—

"Your heritage for nought,
Shall have it back unbought,
The gift of Jesus' love!"

The Lord has anointed His Son Jesus "to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Trust Him! May His mercy lead you to trust Him now, for there is really nothing to prevent your salvation if you rest in Him. Between your soul and God, I tell you, there is no dividing wall. "He is our peace, who has made both one...and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near." May these precious words be treasured up by such as need them! Some of you need them. May the Spirit of God put them into your hearts and lay them up there, that you may find comfort in Christ!

But is there not something more here? Is there not here *a ground of exhortation to Christians*? Brothers and Sisters, have not some of you been tolerating some sin—some besetting sin which you think you cannot overcome? You would be more holy, but the thought that you are not able to overcome it makes your arm helpless against your own sin. So you think that Christ has left the posts, do you? I tell you, no! "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin." He that is born of God sins not with allowance. He sins not with constancy and it is in his power, with the Holy Spirit's aid, to overcome his sin! And it is his duty, as well as his privilege, to go to war against the stoutest of his corruptions till he shall tread them under foot. Now, will you believe, Brothers and Sisters, that in the blood of Christ and in the water that flowed with it from His side, there is a Sovereign virtue to kill your sins? There is nothing standing between you and the pardon of your sins but your unbelief—and if you will but shake that off, you shall march triumphantly through the gate of Glory!

Once more and I am through. Is not this *an incentive for us, who profess to be servants of Christ, to go out and fight with the world and*

overcome it for Christ? Brothers and Sisters, where Jesus leads us, it needs not much courage for us to follow. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Let us go and take it for Him! Nations that sit in darkness shall see a great light. Satan may have locked up the world with bigotry, with idolatry and with superstition, as with posts and bars, but the Kingdom is the Lord's! And if we will but awaken ourselves to preach the Word, we shall find that the Breaker has gone up before us and broken and torn away the gates, posts, and bar and all—and we have nothing to do but to enjoy an early victory. God help us to do so!

And now, as we come to the Lord's Table, let us have before us this vision of our glorious Samson achieving His mighty victory! And while we weep for sin, let us praise His superlative power and love that have worked such marvels for us. The Lord give us to enjoy His Presence at His table, and He shall have the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 51.

A Psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet came to him and rebuked him, in the name of God, for his great sin with Bathsheba.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions*. This is not a Psalm to be sung to the joyous music of the harp and the viol, but rather to the minor music of sighs, groans and tears. You must have the picture of weeping David before your mind's eye if you would really get to the heart and soul of his language here. There is only one thing on the Psalmist's heart, and that is the consciousness of his great sin which seemed to swallow up everything else. He feels that he must have that sin forgiven—he cannot rest until he knows that it is pardoned.

Note how he makes his appeal to the loving kindness and tender mercies of God. A sinner under a sense of sin has a keen eye for the mercy of God, for he knows that there is his only hope and, therefore, he looks for it as a mariner at sea looks for a star! He will not allow even one to escape his observation if there is but one visible between the rifts of the clouds. David urges the most powerful plea with God—"According to Your loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* For he loathes it. It is abominable in his sight. His whole spirit seems sickened at the very recollection of it. He not merely prays, "Wash me," but, "'Wash me thoroughly." Wash me *thoroughly*, not only from sin, but from the inequity of it, the wrongdoing of it, that wherein it was essentially sin and when You have washed me, cleanse me, for, perhaps,

washing will not be enough—there may need a cleansing by fire. Lord cleanse me anyway, only cleanse me from my sin."

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me*. He had tried to forget it, but he could not, for it haunted him wherever he went. He had put it behind his back, but now it had gotten in front of his eyes. It seemed as if it were painted on his eyeballs and he could not see without seeing through his sin. This is how God makes men repent—how He makes sin to be like gall and wormwood to them.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge*. David had sinned against a great many others beside God, but the virus, the very poison of the sin, seemed to him to lie in this—that he had sinned against his God. The unregenerate usually take no account of that, they care nothing about sinning against God. Offending men, doing some injury to their fellow creatures, may cause them trouble, but as for offending God they snap their fingers at that and count it to be something not worth even thinking of! But when a man is really awakened by Divine Grace, he sees that sin is an attack upon God, an offense against God's very Nature and this becomes the heaviest burden to him. Do you know what this experience means, dear Friends?

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*. David has got further than seeing sin upon him—he sees that he is, himself, sinfulness—that his nature, his very being, is steeped and dyed in sin! The evil is not merely that you have sinned, but that you are a *sinner*. Sin would never come out of you if it were not in you. And, oh, what a mine of sin, what a bottomless deep of sin there is in human nature! No wonder that it bursts forth as it does. As the volcano is but the index of a mighty seething ocean of devouring flame within the heart of the earth, so any one sin is only a token of far greater sinfulness that seethes and boils within the cauldron of our nature! "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts.* "Alas, O Lord, it is not there! I have looked there, but have seen only sin. It is not truth, but the reverse of truth that I find in my inward parts! Lord, You will never have what You desire to see in me unless You put Your hand to the work."

6. *And in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom*. Yes, God can teach us. Even those hidden parts which no human teaching can reach, God can touch and there He can make us to know wisdom.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* "Sprinkle the blood of Atonement upon me, give me a sacrificial cleansing, and then I shall be clean."

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*. To my mind, this is a wonderful expression of faith. I do not know of any Scripture that seems more full of holy confidence than this is. David had such a deep sense of

his sinfulness that it was a wonderful thing that he should have, side by side with it, such a perfect confidence in the power of God to cleanse him! It is easy enough to say, "I shall be whiter than snow," when we do not realize what scarlet sinners we are, but when the crimson is before us and we are startled by it, it requires a real and living faith to be able to say to God, "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.* God has a way of making our sins come home to us like the blows of great bone-breaking hammers. I suppose that no pain can be much worse than that of a broken bone, but God can make the pain of sin in the conscience to be as continuous and as intense as that of broken bones and then, blessed be His name, He knows how to heal the bones which He has broken and to make each broken bone to sing and rejoice. Whereas it groaned before, he can give it a new power and make that very bone to be a mouth out of which shall come praise to God!

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* "Lord, look no more at them. Do not hide Your face from *me*, but hide it from my sins!"—

"O You that hears when sinners cry,
Though all my crimes before You lie,
Behold them not with angry look,
But blot their memory from Your book!"

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* "Do not let them be recorded any longer, O Lord! Run Your pen through them! Let them not stand against me in Your books of remembrance!"

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Here the truly quickened man speaks. It is not salvation from punishment he asks for, but salvation from the power of sin. He wants a new heart. He wants to have removed from him the defiling power of sin over his affections. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." It will need the Creator to do it. Only the God who made the world can make me what I ought to be. Great Creator, put Your hand to this work—'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.'"

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* "O Lord, do not thrust me into a dungeon and say, 'You shall never be a favored child of Mine again.' 'Take not Your Holy Spirit from me. *That* I should dread beyond everything else!"

12. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. "Lord, I shall slip again unless You hold me up, and, since You cannot trust Your little child by himself, come and teach me how to walk."

13. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You. "If You will but teach me, and save me, and cleanse

me, then I will tell to others what great things You have done for me. I will tell out the story of Your love that others, also, may prove its power."

14. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* This was a wonderful prayer, but it was not wonderful that David should get relief when he called his sin by its right name. Another man, in his place, might have said, "I did not kill Uriah. It is true that I had him put where he was likely to be slain, but then the sword devours one as well as another." That was the way that David did hypocritically talk at first—but now that his conscience has been awakened, he confesses that he is a murderer—"Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God."

15, 16. *O Lord open You my lips: and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering.* How wonderfully a true sense of sin puts a man on the track of Evangelical doctrine! David could see that sin was too grievous a thing for the blood of sheep and bulls to wash it away, and though he did not despise the ritual which God had ordained, he looked beyond it to something greater and better of which it was but a type.

17, 18. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.* This is a blessed end to David's mournful Psalm. He felt that his sin had a tendency to do injury to the Church of God—that he had, in fact, pulled down the towers of Zion by his iniquity, so he prays "Build You the walls of Jerusalem."

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.*

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

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

JACOB'S MODEL PRAYER
NO. 3010

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1867.

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Genesis 32:9-12.

You must have noticed, dear Friends, how very frequently God makes the life of a man to be the reflection of his character. There is an echo in the outward experience, to the inward character of the man.

Look at the life of Abraham. He trusted God in a very eminent degree—shall I be incorrect if I say that God also eminently trusted him? The Lord spoke with Abraham as a man speaks with his friend and when He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" And as Abraham had trusted God in so notable a manner, the Lord entrusted his seed with the oracles of God and with the outward forms of religious worship, so that it was through the seed of Abraham that the Truth of God was handed on, from generation to generation, until the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, next, in contrast to the life of Abraham, take the case of Jacob. He begins life by cheating his brother and, however that cheating may have been overruled so as to fulfill the purposes of God, it was altogether unjustifiable. Now, as he had begun with Esau in that fashion, so he had it returned into his own bosom. When he was with Laban, he was cheated again and again—cheated even in the wife who was given or sold to him. He was a great bargainer—shrewd, crafty, not over scrupulous—the typical father of the Jews, yet you know how he was continually being overreached by Laban who could also bargain on his own account. What a bargaining life it was all through—and what a life of sorrow, although he was still favored of God. His outward experience was the echo of his inward character. As he had done to others, so was it done to him and in him was fulfilled our Lord's declaration which had not then been uttered, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Also look at Moses, practically renouncing the throne of Egypt by refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he esteemed

the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt! Yet what did he afterwards become? Was he not king in Jeshurun, with a strange and marvelous power over the hosts of the Lord and with a greater Kingdom under him, according to the judgment of all who are able to weigh things rightly, than he could ever have had if he had become the ruler of Egypt and the son of Pharaoh's daughter?

I might give you other illustrations of this fact, but I want, rather, to attract your attention to the better side of Jacob's character as we have it revealed in the prayer which I have selected for our meditation on this occasion.

The Chapter from which our text is taken informs us as to the circumstances of Jacob's case at the time that he offered this prayer. He had just escaped from his trouble with Laban when he received the inexpressible honor of being met by "the angels of God." But, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the Revelations which they made to him, a second trouble followed closely upon the heels of the first. He was soon to meet his brother, Esau, and then the great sin of his earlier years would be brought home to him. He had deceived his old father, Isaac, and had gained the birthright blessing by utterly unjustifiable subtlety—and he might reasonably expect that he was about to reap the due reward of his evil deeds!

With true Oriental craft and also with a considerable amount of common sense, he has various plans for appeasing the wrath of his brother. And then, when he had done what he thought to be wise, he betook himself to prayer. Brothers and Sisters, let us learn from Jacob's experience to expect troubles, especially if we have so acted as to bring trouble upon ourselves—but let us also learn from Jacob's action that while planning is right enough when kept within its proper bounds, prayer is much more important. We may easily go to excess in our planning. We may depend so much upon an arm of flesh and upon our own wisdom and prudence—and have such confidence in our own scheming that it may, after all, turn out to be utter folly! The staff on which we lean may turn out to be, at best, but a broken reed—perhaps even a spear which shall pierce and wound us. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"—or to have confidence in ourselves for, even if we had all the wisdom that it is possible for man to attain, it would be but *created* wisdom! Whereas, if we go at once to the Lord our God, we shall go to Infinite Wisdom and we may expect to be guided rightly through all the difficulties of the way!

Prayer, my Brothers and Sisters, must be our first resource. But if it is the last, let it be the first as well. Let us not merely go to God's door because we have tried everybody else and failed. Let us not go to the Fountain simply because the cisterns are exhausted, but let us go to our God first and foremost! And let us say, "Even if earth's cisterns did contain water, we would not forsake our God for them. And if all the forces of our fellow creatures were as real and powerful as they profess to be, we would still lean upon the arm that bears up the whole universe—the unseen arm of the faithful Creator."

I selected this subject for our meditation, on this occasion, because it appears to me to give us *a sort of model of what prayer should be*. We shall view it first in that light and when we have done so, I shall have a little to say about *Jacob's last plea*, for it is most suggestive. And then I shall close with a word or two upon *the answer to this model prayer of the Patriarch*.

I. First, then, concerning JACOB'S MODEL PRAYER, which is one of the earliest that is recorded in Holy Scripture—at least in such detail.

I commend it for your imitation, my dear Friends, first, because *of the plainness of its matter*. Jacob does not come before God with a long roundabout story, telling in general terms the fact that he was in some sort of trouble, out of which he wished to be Divinely helped, but he distinctly mentions the perilous circumstances in which he found himself. He says, "O God…deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." Of course God knew that the name of Jacob's brother was Esau, yet Jacob thought it was necessary to mention his brother's name in order that his prayer should be definite and clear. So he pleaded, "Deliver me, I pray you, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." He was probably then alluding to his dearly-beloved Rachel and her son Joseph, though he may also have referred to the other mothers in the company, for he was a tender father and cared for his children and he mentioned them as being very near his heart, and especially needing Divine protection. So you see that Jacob is very clear as to what he asks of God—and I urge you, my Brothers and Sisters, to imitate him in this respect.

When we pray, we sometimes use very roundabout expressions. We do not come straight to the point. We seem to imagine that a kind of religious etiquette forbids us from speaking plainly at the Throne of Grace. I am persuaded that this notion is altogether wrong and, instead of God approving this mode of speaking to Him in prayer, He would much rather have us speak to Him as a child speaks to his earthly father—respectfully, reverently, remembering that He is in Heaven and we are on earth—yet simply and plainly, for our Heavenly Father needs no garnishing of our speech and the poor tawdry flowers of eloquence with which some of our Brothers at times adorn their prayers must be displeasing to God rather than acceptable to Him. Especially must you unconverted ones imitate Jacob in this matter of plainness of speech—when you pray, never mind about the mode of your expression, but come to the main point at once. Tell the Lord that you have grievously offended Him and mention your sins by name to Him in private. If your great sin has been drunkenness, call it by that name! If it has been uncleanness, call it by that name! Do not endeavor to dissemble before the Lord, or to cloak your sin before the all-seeing Jehovah! You need not reach for a Prayer Book to see how the bishops would have you pray, nor borrow somebody's Morning Devotions to see how a certain eminent Divine prayed—but go straight to God and say, "O Lord, You know what I need! I am a poor guilty sinner and I cannot express myself in such a way as to

please my fellow creatures, but You know what I am and what I need. Will You graciously give me the pardon of my sin, O You who alone can forgive the guilty? Will You receive me to Your bosom, You blessed Savior of the lost?" Come to the point with God, dear Friends. Be explicit with Him. Let it be seen that you are not praying for the mere sake of performing a certain religious ceremony, but that you have real business to transact with the Most High! You know what your request is and you do not intend to leave the Mercy Seat until your request is granted.

So I commend Jacob's prayer to you because of the plainness of its speech.

Next, it is to be commended for *the humility of its spirit*. Notice especially these words of the Patriarch, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." If you even hint that there is any worthiness in yourself, the power of your prayer is at once destroyed! But if you plead your unworthiness, you will then be standing where the publican stood when he cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." And you know how "he went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee," who said that he fasted twice in the week, gave tithes of all he possessed, and was not like other men, especially that publican! In that way he destroyed any power that his prayer might otherwise have possessed. His self-conceit tore the chariot wheels from his prayer so that it dragged heavily and soon could not move even an inch! On the other hand, a deep sense of sin, a full consciousness of utter unworthiness will enable you, like Jacob, to wrestle with the great Angel of the Covenant and to prevail over Him. Possibly you have not succeeded with God because you have not sunk low enough before Him. You unconverted ones, especially, if you put your mouths in the very dust, that will be the best attitude for you to assume. If you still have some relics of strength, you will not receive Divine Strength. If there are some remnants of the pristine idea of human merit tolerated in your heart, the robe of Christ's righteousness will not be wrapped around you! Ask the Lord to strip you of every rag of self-righteousness, to enable you to trust in Jesus, alone, and to have no confidence in the flesh—either in the feelings which you experience or in the works which you do! Your time of uplifting will follow close upon your time of falling down flat upon your face. The dawn of day succeeds the darkest hour of the night, so ask God to bring you down to that dark hour in which the night covers every hope that is born of human confidence, for then will the Lord appear to you in His brightness! So, imitate the prayer of Jacob in its humility of spirit.

The third point in which I would have you copy Jacob's model prayer is in the *arguments to be used*. The whole prayer is highly argumentative. If some of the prayers I have heard at Prayer Meetings—though I must say that the fault is less in this place than in most others with which I have become acquainted—if some of the prayers at certain Prayer Meetings were less doctrinal, less experimental and more *argumentative* with God, they would be more like true prayer should be, for true prayer

is just pleading with the Most High, spreading our case before Him, and then pressing our suit with all the arguments we can muster!

In this short prayer of the Patriarch, no less than four arguments are used. The first is the argument from the Covenant—"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." God had entered into Covenant relationship with Abraham and made solemn promises to him and to his seed, so Jacob prays, "O Lord, You have pledged yourself to be the God of the seed of Abraham, whose grandson I am, and of the seed of Isaac, whose son I am—now, therefore, by Your faithfulness to Your Covenant promise, help me in this dark hour of my life!" Beloved Friends, this is the kind of plea that we can use with the Lord—"O God, have You not made a Covenant with the Lord Jesus by which You have promised that You will save all them that trust in Him? Have You not said, 'I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people? Then, Lord, though guilty, I trust to the merits of Your dear Son and I ask to be absolved by virtue of His great atoning Sacrifice. Behold, as the earthen vessel hangs upon the nail, so hang I upon Him and upon Him alone. Now, by the Covenant of Your Grace, which is ordered in all things and sure, I beseech You to manifest Your love to me." If you use such gracious pleading as that with the Lord, you will surely prevail with Him. And I urge you, also, children of God, to do the same, for the Everlasting Covenant is a mighty plea with God—

"In every dark distressful hour,
When sin and Satan join their power."

Then we pass on to the next use which Jacob makes of the promise which God had given him—"You said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you." If you and I know that we are walking in the path of duty, if we are where the Lord has bid us go, we can always claim the Divine promise! The Lord is bound to protect His servants when they are in the path of obedience to His commands. If you follow your own counsel, you must manage to take care of yourselves. But if you go where the Bible and the clear indications of Divine Providence guide you, you may always reckon that the Master who sent you will protect His obedient servants, let the dangers of the way be whatever they may. If God should command you to go to the utmost verge of this green earth, to rivers unknown to song, or if He should bid you travel through distant deserts, as Mungo Park journeyed through the midst of Africa, yet He could preserve your life there, as well as here in England—and being there, sent by Him—you may rest assured that you shall hear the sound of your Master's feet behind you, or have other unmistakable evidences of His Presence with you!

And, Sinner, this is a good plea for you to use. You can say, "Lord, You told me to believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son, then will You not accept me, for His sake, for I have done what You told me to do? You have said, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble.' Lord, this is a day of trouble with me and I do call upon You, so will You not answer me?" If you argue with the Lord in such a style as this, you will find that this kind of pleading is potent with Him who is Omnipotent.

Then, further, Jacob argued with God from his past history. He said that he was not worthy of the least of God's mercies, yet he had received many of them. Though he went over the river Jordan, when he left his home, a sad and solitary man with nothing but his walking staff in his hand, yet, he had come back with wives and children and so great a number of servants, cattle, camels, goats, sheep and asses that he had become like two bands. "Now, Lord," he said, "after all Your past mercies to me, I beseech You, do not leave me now! Have You blessed Your servant up to this moment and can You leave him now?" I cannot tell you how often I have been comforted by the Truth of God implied in John Newton's words—

"Determined to save, He watched over my path
When Satan's blind slave, I sported with death!
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?
His love in time past forbade me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

So Jacob prayed, in effect, "Lord, You have often been my Helper in the past, so now deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." You, my unconverted Friend, may ever adopt this form of pleading, for you can say, "Lord, You have saved my life many a time when I have provoked You. Let Your long-suffering, which now leads me to repentance, also move You to forgive my sin. I remember what You did on Calvary for sinners in ages long past. Did you give your well-beloved and only-begotten Son to die for sinners and will You not now accept every trembling sinner who seeks Your favor?" This also shall prove to be the kind of pleading that will cause the gates of God's Grace to open!

The fourth argument that Jacob used was perhaps the best of all—"You said, I will surely do you good," and so on. Ah, that was the masterstroke and, in like manner, if you would succeed at the Mercy Seat, you must bring down the hammer of the promise upon the head of the nail of prayer and then clinch it, as Jacob did, by saying to the Lord, "You said," so-and-so and so-and-so. David once said to God in prayer, "Do as You have said." When a man has promised you something that you really need, you take him by the button-hole and you say to him, "Now, you promised to give me that." And if he is an honest man, you can hold him to his own word—and shall the God of Truth ever fail to perform His promise? No, that is one of the things that God cannot do—He cannot lie and yet cannot run back from His promise, nor does He want to do so. O Christian, if you would get anything from God, find a promise of it in His Word, and then you may count the thing as good as received! When a man of means gives you his check, you count it just as good as hard cash—and God's promises are even better than checks or bank notes! We have only to take them and plead them before Him, and we may rest assured that He will honor them!

II. Thus I have tried to place before you the points in which Jacob's prayer is worthy of both commendation and imitation. And now I want to

say something concerning our LAST PLEA which seems to me to be very suggestive—"You said."

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, I need not say more to you upon this matter, for you know the value of the promises of God, and you know how to use them. But to those who are not converted, I may perhaps speak a few words suggested by Jacob's last plea—"You said, I will surely do you good." Sinner, lay hold, as fast as you can, of the promise of God and then plead it with Him. To this end, I would say to every unconverted one here who desires to obtain the priceless blessing of salvation—study the Word of God very diligently and always read it with the view of finding a promise that may suit your special case. And when you read it, study it with the firm conviction that it is God's Word and that, in each promise, God is as truly speaking to you as though He had sent an angel to apply that promise personally to you. Take a text which you find to be applicable to yourself and say, "This is what the Lord says to me as certainly as though He now spoke it in my ear."

Next, I beseech you to remember that God's Word is absolutely true. Fix that fact in your memory and then say to yourself that the promise, being true, must be fulfilled. Next to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great object of faith is the promise of God—and if we were more familiar with His promises, we should more speedily get out of that Slough of Despond in which so many of us flounder so long! Bunyan says that "there are, by the direction of the Lawgiver, certain good and substantial steps placed even through the very midst of this Slough…but these steps are hardly seen—or if they are, men, through the dizziness of their heads, step besides, and then they are stuck in the mud, notwithstanding the steps are there." Look for these steps of promise, my Friend! There is, in the Bible, a promise just exactly suited to your case, so mind that you find it. Did you ever send for a locksmith to open a drawer because you had lost the key and could not open it? He comes with a great bunch of rusty keys—very much like God's promises which you have allowed to get rusty through not using them—and first he tries one key and then another, and another till, at last, he gets the right one—and the treasures in your drawer are spread open before you! It is just so with the treasures of God's mercy. There is one special promise in Scripture which will fit the words of the lock of your experience—and you must try promise after promise till, at last, you get the right one and then you can say to the Lord, as Jacob did, "You said." That is the main matter—what God has said. Never mind what I say—that does not mean a thing except so far as I say what God says! Never mind what anybody else has said, but let your one concern be to know what God says!

Good Mr. William Jay, of Bath, writing upon this passage, "You said, I will surely do you good," makes four observations which I commend to both saints and sinners. The first is, *God has the ability to do you good.* Whatever good it is that you need, God can give it to you. Pardon of sin, help in trouble, comfort in distress, whatever it is that you really need, God has the ability to give it to you and so to do you good. In the second place, *God has the inclination to do you good.* You need not speak to Him

as if He were unwilling to bless you—it is according to His Nature to be gracious. Love is one of His chief attributes and His loving kindness and tender mercies greatly abound. He as much delights to show kindness to the needy as a generous man delights to relieve the needs of the poor. In the next place, *God is under an engagement to do you good.* "You said, Surely I will do you good." God has given a promise to seeking sinners that He will be found of them. To repentant sinners, that He will pardon them. To believing sinners, that they shall find eternal life. And then, the fourth thing is, *God has already done good to you.* This fact ought to strengthen your faith. The Lord has the ability, the inclination and He is under engagement to do you good—and He has already begun to do it!

I may say to you, my Hearers, that the Lord has done you some good in bringing you here to listen to the Gospel and in making that Gospel so sweet and so generous a Gospel as it is—a Gospel for those who labor and are heavy laden, and who can find no rest anywhere else—a Gospel for the very chief of sinners, as Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." I put into your hands this plea of Jacob, "You said, I will surely do you good." Go and plead it and the Lord do unto you according to your faith!

III. My last words which must be very few—concern THE ANSWER WHICH JACOB'S PRAYER RECEIVED.

His prayer was answered, but *it was not answered in the way he expected it would be.* When he had done praying, he found that all his plans had been knocked on the head—so you need not wonder if you find the same thing happen to you when you have done praying! Do not be astonished, my dear Hearers, if, when you have gone to God in prayer, you should seem to feel worse than you did before. There is a young friend—I daresay he is here now—who told me that he came to hear me for many months—that he became outwardly reformed and was, as he thought, going on well, till there came, one Lord's-Day morning, a sermon [Sermon Number 732, Volume 13—THE HEART—A DEN OF EVIL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] about the corruption of the human heart which knocked all to pieces his pretty castle in the air, upset all his hopes and utterly destroyed his self-confidence! I am very glad it did, for his hopes and trust were all false! And, afterwards, by God's Grace, he began to build upon a far firmer foundation. Sometimes, when you have been praying for salvation, God answers you by destroying all your hopes. You ask Him to save you, and you think he would do it in a way that would make you happy. But, instead of that, He plucks up all your fine plants by the roots and turns your pretty garden into a desert because He knows that the flowers you were growing were all poisonous and must be cleared away before He can plant those which will be the plants of His right hand planting!

When God answered Jacob, He met him, not as his Friend, but as his wrestling Opponent. Jacob had a fierce duel, which lasted all night long, by Jabbok's Brook. And if God really appears to you, I should not be surprised if He comes at first like an enemy and you will have to say to Him as Job did, "You hunt me as a fierce lion." God's choicest mercies

often come to us under the guise of adversities. God sends His love letters to us in black-edged envelopes and sometimes we are afraid to open them. If we would but do so, we should soon know the loving kindness of the Lord. Jacob was to have an answer to his prayer but, before the answer came, he had to wrestle—no, worse than that—before Jacob was fully delivered, he had to be made to limp and all his life afterwards he went halting upon his thigh. You, poor Sinner, may be made to feel your sinfulness so much that you will be driven almost to despair! And you, Believer, will possibly have to fight with Satan as long as you are in this body.

Although Jacob's own plans were put on one side, and God met him as though He were his enemy, and the poor Patriarch went on limping when the sun rose over Peniel, yet, *for all that, he did get his prayer answered!* His brother "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." So, Beloved, trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and your enemies shall become your friends, your doubts shall end in joy, your tribulations shall melt away into glory and you shall prove that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Brothers and Sisters, the pith of the whole matter is this, "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." As for you who know Him not, I pray you to trust in the Sacrifice of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. As the doves hide themselves in the clefts of the rock, hide yourselves in the wounds of Jesus by trusting in His atoning Sacrifice. And as for you, the saints of the Lord, return unto your rest for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you, therefore, "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him," remembering that "they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." May the Lord graciously give all of us His blessing and benediction, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GENESIS 32.

Jacob had just come out of a great trouble. God's gracious interposition had delivered him out of the hands of the angry Laban—Laban the churl, who cared for Jacob only for what he could get out of him.

Verses 1, 2. *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.* The angels of God are always around His people. It was well for Jacob to be reminded of that fact, for he was about to pass into another trouble. John Bunyan truly says—

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

Certainly it was so with Jacob for, after he had escaped from Laban, he knew that he had to meet his brother Esau, whom he had so greatly wronged so many years before. Then it was that "the angels of God met

him." Go on your way in peace and safety, beloved Believer, for God's hosts are all around you. You do not go unattended at any single moment of your life. Better than squadrons of horses and regiments of foot soldiers are the ministering spirits who are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

3-5. *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall you speak unto my lord Esau; Your servant Jacob says thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and men servants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord that I may find grace in your sight.* This was a wise and proper action on the part of Jacob, for he had grossly wronged his brother and it was right for him to make advances toward a reconciliation. He prayed to God for help, but he also used such means as he could—the means that ought always to be used when any of us realize that we have done an injury to others. We should even be willing to humiliate ourselves in order to make peace. I think that when Christians differ from one another, there should be a holy emulation between them as to which shall be the first to give way, and which will give way the more to the other. How many quarrels might soon be ended if there were this spirit of conciliation among all professing Christians! I have heard of one who had offended a brother Christian during the day. Possibly the brother Christian had offended him quite as much. But the first one saw that the sun was going down, so he turned to seek his friend, that he might say to him, "Friend So-and-So, I was wrong in being angry today." Half-way between their two houses, they met, and each of them said, "I was just coming to say that I was wrong." There is no need of any arbitrator when each of the disputants is willing to say, "I was wrong." And the trouble is soon over when that point is reached. In this case, it certainly was Jacob's duty to make some reparation to his brother, whether Esau accepted it or not.

6. *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau, and also he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him.* He would not have minded Esau coming alone to meet him, but the thought of the four hundred rough men who had gathered around this wild warrior of the desert made him wonder what they might do and what Esau might do with their help.

7, 8. *Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels into two bands and said, If Esau comes to the one company, and smites it, then the other company which is left shall escape.* He used the means that he judged to be the best under the existing circumstances—and I believe that God intends us always to use our best wits and judgment—and then to fall back upon Him in confiding prayer just as if we had done nothing at all! Do everything as if God were not about to help you and then trust in God as if you had done nothing. An Arab said to Mohammed, "I let my camel run loose and trusted it to Providence," but Mohammed replied, "You should have tied it up, first, and then trusted it

to Providence." And Jacob was very much of that mind and a very sensible mind it was, not at all inconsistent with the very best of faith!

9-12. *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said.* That is always the most powerful plea when we can quote God's own promise—"You said."

12-19. *I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude. And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space between drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, saying, Whose are you? And where go you? And whose are these before you? Then you shall say, They are your servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the drove, saying, In this manner shall you speak unto Esau, when you find him.* That was a very anxious night for Jacob. He was to have another night of still sterner work, but in doing as he did he acted wisely and rightly.

20. *And say you moreover, Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept of me.* Depend upon it, our sins will come home to us sooner or later! Jacob must have bitterly regretted that he had ever wronged Esau. There was a long interval between Jacob going away and his coming back, but his sin came home to him! And if you are a child of God and you do wrong, it is more certain to come home to you, in this life, than if you were one of the ungodly! As for them, they are often left to be punished in another world, but if you are a child of God, you will be chastened here for your iniquity. Remember how earnestly *David,* too, prayed about the sins of his youth and his later transgressions. And Jacob, in deep humility, must have most vividly remembered his sin against his brother.

21-24. *So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.* We know who that Divine Man was—

the God who afterwards actually became Man, of whom it might even then be said that "His delights were with the sons of men."

25. *And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with Him.* For even with a dislocated hip, Jacob would not give up wrestling! He meant to hold this wondrous Man until he got a blessing from Him.

26-29. *And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And Jacob said, I will not let You go, except You bless me! And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name. And He said, why is it that you ask after My name? And he blessed him there.* He would not gratify Jacob's curiosity concerning His name, but He gave him the blessing that he craved. This was just as our Divine Master acted when His disciples enquired of Him concerning the times and seasons—He told them it was not for them to know what the Father had retained in His own power. But Christ added what was much better for them, "You shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." He will not tell us all we want to know, but He will give us all we need to have. What a wise and prudent Lord is ours!

30, 31. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.* He was lame and probably remained lame for life.

32. *Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank which is upon the hollow of the thigh unto this day: because He touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.* Some touch of human weakness must always accompany the Divine Strength that God may give us. If we are allowed the high honor of carrying the untold treasure of the Gospel, we must be reminded that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Yet who would not be content to limp for life if he might but win such a victory as Jacob won on that memorable night by the Brook Jabbok?

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 229, 734, 326.

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

FAITH FIRST, CONFESSION FOLLOWING
NO. 3011

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 4, 1867.

"For with the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:10.

[For two other sermons on this text, see Numbers 519 and 520, Volume 9—BELIEVING WITH THE HEART and CONFESSION WITH THE MOUTH—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IN speaking of this important matter—confessing with the mouth what we have believed with the heart, I call your attention, first of all, to the order of the two things. Believing with the heart must come first. Confession with the mouth must and should come afterwards. To confess with the mouth what I do not believe with the heart would be hypocrisy instead of being an acceptable sacrifice. It would be an abomination in the sight of God. How dare I profess to have faith if I do not possess it? How dare I assume a form of godliness unless I have proven its power in my spirit? So first comes the heart's believing and then follows the mouth's confession. Do not reverse the Scriptural order, but take care that you do all things in their due course. Among the last words of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples are these, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Note the order—not Baptism first and believing afterwards—but he who first believes and then is baptized upon profession of his faith, is the servant of Christ who obeys his Master's commands in their right order—and he it is who "shall be saved."

Having noted the order of faith and its confession, next, note the connection between them. Confessing with the mouth is to follow believing with the heart just as effect follows causes. We are to confess with the mouth *because* we believe with the heart. The heart's belief is to be so potent and energetic a thing that it constrains us to confess openly what we have received inwardly—no confession is worth anything unless it is the outcome of the Grace by which we have received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior!

There is a due order for faith and confession—and there is a clear connection between faith and confession.

Notice, also, *the result of the two put together*—"With the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made

unto salvation." The result of faith and confession is salvation. I do not doubt that a man who truly believes in Jesus is saved even before he makes a confession of his faith, but it is very remarkable that the blessing of salvation is constantly connected with these two things rather than with either one of them alone—and we must not put asunder what God has joined together. The same Truth of God is taught in the memorable sentence which I quoted to you just now—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." There is no saving efficacy in Baptism, yet belief and Baptism are joined together by our Lord Jesus Christ and again I say, "What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder." I would not like to attend to one duty and neglect another when I found my Master laying both upon me. The path of obedience is always the path of happiness and if any God-given command should ever seem to your imperfect apprehension to be less important than another, remember the wise words of the mother of Jesus to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, "Whatever HE says unto you, do it"—and do it conscientiously, gladly, promptly, because He commanded it, even though you cannot see any other reason for doing it. [For two other sermons upon this subject, see Number 2275, Volume 38—BLIEF, BAPTISM, BLESSING—and Number 2339, Volume 39—BAPTISM ESSENTIAL TO OBEDIENCE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

We have, on this occasion, to consider the lesser duty of the two, which is, nevertheless, most certainly enjoined upon all Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. In talking of it, I still have to speak of four things. First, *what it is that we are to confess?* Secondly, *when are we to confess it?* Thirdly, *why we should confess it?* And, fourthly, *how and in what spirit should we confess it?*

I. First, then, as BELIEVERS IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE TO CONFESS?

It is clear, from the text, that we are to confess with the mouth that which we believe with the heart. The same things which, through our faith in them, are the basis of our salvation, become the subject of our confession before God. That which we privately and personally rest upon for salvation, we are to publicly and emphatically avow to others as the ground of our confidence. And you know whom that is, Beloved. It is neither more nor less than the Person, work, Character and offices of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We build for eternity upon Him. He is the foundation and the chief cornerstone of the invisible, yet most substantial structure upon which all our confidence rests! And if any Believer should ask, "What am I to confess?" the answer is plain enough—confess JESUS CHRIST!

First, we are to confess that *we believe Him to be the appointed Savior of sinners*—that we look upon Him as being the long-promised Seed of the woman who came into this world to bruise the old serpent's head and to recover His chosen people from among the terrible ruins of the Fall. We believe Him to be the Son of God, equal with the Father and the ever-blessed Spirit. And we accept Him and confess Him as our Savior, in

whom alone we have confidence, upon whose unique Sacrifice we rely for pardon of all our sins and upon whose constant intercession we depend for our preservation unto the end. We confess Christ before men as King of kings and Lord of lords, as "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," the Messiah by whom alone can be fulfilled Gabriel's prophecy to Daniel, "to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." We must confess Christ in all His offices and Characters—and if we lay stress upon any part of His life, or any attribute of His Character, it must be upon that which is most attacked in the age in which we live. The great point of controversy in Paul's day was the Resurrection of Jesus and, therefore, wherever he went, he preached the Resurrection. He knew that this Truth of God would excite the ridicule of the philosopher and bring down upon him the fierce opposition of the Jews, but, nevertheless, this was always a prominent point in his preaching and writing, "Christ is risen from the dead."

Sometimes it has been the duty of Christians to make most prominent the Deity of Christ because that Truth has been the one most attacked just then. Some years ago, many insults were cast upon the Godhead of our Lord and then every genuine Christian was bound to expound and defend that master Doctrine that Jesus Christ "is over all, God blessed forever." Whatever may be the point in the Character of our Lord which is most debated and controverted, it is the duty of His true disciples to bear witness upon that point with special distinctness and frequency. To confess Christ is to say of Him, "I have received Him into my soul as my Savior and He is my sole hope for time and for eternity. I honor Him as the Son of God and I submit to His Laws as those of the great King who is worthy to rule as He pleases. Let others set up what lords they will and be governed by what laws they choose, as for me, the crucified Man of Nazareth—who is none other than the ever-blessed Son of God, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit—shall have the absolute control of all my powers and faculties. This, I take it, is the way in which "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

But, in confessing Christ, *we must take care that we confess all His words as well as Himself. You recollect that solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ*, "Whoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him, also, shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the Glory of His Father with the holy angels." A Scriptural confession of Christ involves our profession of faith in that form of Doctrine which is revealed in the Divinely-Inspired Scriptures, our union with that body of Believers who most clearly comply with the requirements of our Master's Words, our willing subjection to whatever we perceive to be according to the mind and will of Christ. And we are not altogether faithful to our conscience unless, in every point, as far as we receive the Light of God, when we know our

Master's will, we do it! Oh, that all Christians would look upon this kind of confession as being one of the most important parts of the Christian's business here below! Instead of that, it seems to be the view of some that you are to keep a great many Truths in the background just because they happen to be inconvenient either to yourselves or to other people! But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the true ideal of a New Testament Christian Church is that of a company of Believers witnessing to the whole of Christ's Truth, counting every fragment of the Word to be so precious that if the entire Christian community should go to martyrdom in defense of just one Truth of God, that priceless Truth of Revelation would be saved at a cheap rate even by so great a sacrifice! To stand firmly by God's Word in everything, to conform to our Master's will even to the jots and tittles, to savor the things that are of God and not those that are of men—this it is what every Christian should seek to do by the aid of the ever-blessed Spirit!

Further, dear Friends, *it is the duty of each Christian to confess his clear faith in Christ*. You should avow before your fellow men that you have believed in Jesus. I think the Scriptures teach us that this ought to be done early in our Christian career. We should not live as secret Christians, for years, as some do, as though they were ashamed of Jesus and saying nothing to show that they have believed in Him. Confess that unless you are dreadfully deceived, you are saved by Christ, and are resting in Him! Then confess what Christ has done for you and do not be ashamed to confess the details of your case. Paul told Timothy that "before he was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious." But he adds, "However, for this cause I attained 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." Do not be ashamed to confess that there is a change in you, that you are not now what you once were! Tell the story of your spiritual experience. Is it not written, concerning God's deliverance of His people, "It shall be to the Lord for a name?" Do not rob God of the great name of Deliverer, to which He is so fully entitled! It is due to a physician, when he has been the means of curing some extraordinary disease, that you should tell of what he has done, so, tell to others what the Great Physician has done for you!

If you have been, spiritually, raised from the dead by the Lord Jesus Christ, never cease to publish abroad what He has done for you! And as you grow older and your experience increases, confess with your mouth the deeper Truths of God that have been revealed to you. Tell to the young people around you what the Lord did for you in your times of trouble. Speak well of your Master—imitate the holy resolution of David—"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." And when the time comes for you to die, mind that you bear a closing testimony to Christ, then, if it is possible. Let those around your bed hear you tell, in your last moments, how real and

true you find Christ to be to you when all else in the world seems like a dream and your life melts away like a shadow.

This appears to me to be an accurate, though brief, summary of a Christian's confession of faith—what Christ is in himself and what Christ has been to him and been for him. You can yourselves supply any deficiency that there may be in my summary, for the flight of time prevents me from dealing further with this part of the subject.

II. Now, secondly, let us enquire WHEN SHOULD ONE WHO BELIEVES WITH THE HEART, MAKE CONFESSION WITH THE MOUTH?

Should he not make it *as soon as he is converted*? Is it not the most fitting time for making his first confession when he comes forward to unite himself with a Christian Church? Many churches, nowadays, have given up the old-fashioned custom which once prevailed in Baptist churches, of candidates coming before the Church and making a public avowal of their faith before their fellow Believers and, through the abandonment of that Scriptural method, they have bred a race of cowardly good-for-nothings who hardly dare to say that their souls are their own, who never know what their religious convictions are, but are turned this way and that with every wind that blows, like so many weather-cocks! But you, my Brothers and Sisters, though some of you once thought it a great ordeal and trial, have all testified before the Church, "Yes, we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Some of you said it with very trembling lips, but still, you all said, personally and individually, as your turn came, "Yes, we are on the Lord's side." It seems to me that this is an Apostolic custom which ought never to be given up and I scarcely count that to be a church which receives its members without any testimony of their faith being verbally given! We know that Paul, himself, when he went up to Jerusalem, "essayed to join himself to the disciples," but they were afraid to receive him until they had heard how he had been converted to God, "and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." Then they gladly received him, "and he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem." Why is it that good Christian people are so frightened over the little matter of saying to their fellow Christians, "We believe in Jesus," utterly amazes me! If you have been, as Jeremiah says, wearied by running with the footmen, how can you contend with horses? And if, in these little billows of trouble through making your open avowal of faith to your own Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you get so frightened, what will you do in the dwellings of Jordan? You are afraid of going to see your minister about joining the church, are you? Yet you have to meet the devil, foot to foot, as Bunyan's Christian had to meet Apollyon! Are you afraid of meeting a few of your fellow Christians? Why, you have to meet DEATH! You have to face a scorning, scoffing, frowning, jeering, persecuting world! If you are afraid of a company of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are only too glad to hear you say that you are on the Lord's side if it is really true, and

who will cheer and comfort, and help you as far they possibly can—if you are afraid of us, surely you cannot have the courage which ought to be the possession of all good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

Then, next, *the two ordinances of the Christian religion are, both of them, confessions of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* It seems to me that the Baptism of Believers is a most impressive and instructive mode of confessing with the mouth what we have believed with the heart. Coming to the open pool, the Believer says to you who look on, "I believe that Jesus Christ died and was buried, and rose again on my behalf, in testimony to which I, also, am about to be buried in this liquid and out of which I shall rise, as He rose from the grave. I believe that this flesh of mine is past improvement and must die—I look for no perfection in my body, for I know that the perfection I am to receive is spiritual. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." And I give up this body of mine to be buried—the body of my flesh, these old corruptions, to be buried once and for all. I openly confess, this day, that I am dead to the world, that my life is hid with Christ in God, and that the life which I henceforth live shall be a resurrection-life, a life in the power of the Holy Spirit who has quickened me, and raised me up from among the dead to live with Jesus Christ in newness of life!" I cannot conceive a more impressive and instructive form of confession with the mouth than that which our Master Himself has enjoined upon us, not only by precept, but also by example when He told John to baptize Him in the river Jordan, and said to him, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness."

And then, when we gather around the Table of Communion in obedience to our Master's command, "This do in remembrance of Me," we, "do show the Lord's death till He comes." And there, in the breaking and eating of the bread, and the pouring out and drinking of the wine, we make another confession with the mouth that we have trusted in Jesus as our Savior, that He is "the Living Bread which came down from Heaven," upon which we live and, "the wine on the lees, well refined," which is the choicest cordial our quickened spirits can enjoy.

So you see that both the ordinances are God's own methods by which we are to confess our confidence in His Son, Jesus Christ.

More than this, *every Christian is bound to acknowledge his faith in Christ at all times when it is possible.* We are not merely Christians on some special occasions, we are always Christians and Christians forever if we are Christians at all! We are not only Believers in Jesus when we meet each other at the Communion Table, or at a Prayer Meeting, but we are Believers in Jesus out of doors, at our work, in our business, or our daily occupation, whatever it may be. I utterly abhor that so-called, "piety," which belongs only to places and to dates! Your "holy" places, and your "holy" dates, and your "holy" water, and so on are all alike anti-Christian and Popish! To the Christian, every day is alike holy, every place alike holy and everything alike holy! He is a sanctified man and all

things that are around him are sanctified to God's service and to his fellow creatures' good and, to that end, he confesses Christ with his mouth at all times.

Still, there are certain special occasions when we should do this. For instance, it is our duty to confess Christ with the mouth when enquirers ask us for information about Him. There are many persons in the world with a sufficiently candid spirit to want to know what Christianity really is. So, as the Apostle Peter says, "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Do not let such enquirers go away unsatisfied, even though it may be a very long and difficult matter to satisfy their enquiries.

Mind, also, that you are always ready to make confession of your faith to objectors, even though they should only ask questions and raise objections just for the sake of opposition. When a controversy is started and someone else speaks on the wrong side, do not hesitate to put in a word for that which is right and true! I have heard of some people who are of so gentle a spirit that if they hear others engaged in controversy, they always walk away. Well, have you ever heard of the soldier who was so gentle-spirited that whenever there was any fighting to be done, he always hid away in a corner, or some other safe place? That was not very creditable on his part and when he was discovered, he was shot! And that mode of skulking, which some people adopt whenever a religious controversy is on, is about as honorable to them! If you can say a word that will really help a good cause, do not keep it back, for, sometimes, even the simplest observation may come in just at the right time and may overthrow the adversary of the Truth of God. So, bear your personal testimony for the Truth in times of controversy. And take care that you always confess Christ when you are likely to be ridiculed for doing so. This, indeed, will be a test of your sincerity! To confess Christ in summer weather when religion, as it were, walks in silver slippers, is what a hypocrite might do—but to take your place beside Christ when He stands in the pillory and every man's hands are full of mud and filth to throw at Him—this is what only a genuine Christian can do! Confess Christ when His followers are in rags! Acknowledge Him when His disciples are oppressed and persecuted! Remember what Paul mentions to the praise of Onesiphorus—"he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains." Do not any of you Christians be ashamed of Christ's chains, but count it your highest honor and glory, as Paul says, to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," "for His body's sake, which is the Church."

Let me, having thus given you sufficient opportunity for making your confession of faith, urge upon those present who have believed in Jesus, but have never yet confessed their faith, the duty of doing so at once! Be no longer backward, but say, "I, also, am on the Lord's side." I pray you,

if you have never done so, take the first opportunity you have of doing it and, in some way, but especially in your Lord and Master's own way, come forward and say, "He is my Savior, my King, my All-in-All, and I hereby avow Him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation."

III. Now, thirdly, let us ask, WHY SHOULD WE CONFESS OUR FAITH IN CHRIST?

I shall not spend many minutes on this point, for it seems to me that every true Christian's heart can supply him with many reasons for acting thus. To confess God in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, *is a part of true religious homage which is naturally due to the Most High.* Our prayers and praises are rightly due to the great Being who created us and who still preserves and provides for us—and our confession of Christ, if we have truly believed in Him, is due to the One who has redeemed us from destruction with His own most-precious blood!

We should confess Christ with the mouth *because He claims this from us.* I repeat the solemn words I quoted to you a little while ago—"Whoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him, also, shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the Glory of His Father with the holy angels." Tremble, lest you should incur the doom of those who are ashamed of Christ! There is another terrible passage in the 21st Chapter of the Revelation and the 8th verse—"But, the fearful, and unbelieving…shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "The fearful"—that is, those who are afraid to confess Christ—not those who are fearful concerning their own salvation! Not the Little-Faiths and the Much-Afraids—but those cowards who are afraid to suffer for Christ's sake and who, therefore, take the side of the world for the sake of their present ease and comfort—these are they who shall be shut out of Heaven and have their everlasting portion with idolaters and liars in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone! I implore you to tremble lest that should be your lot.

We should openly acknowledge Jesus Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, *if only for our own sakes*, for really, it does a Christian great good to say openly, "I love the Lord." It gives happiness, comfort, satisfaction, rest of heart and lasting joy to confess Christ before men! I have not the time to tell you of all the blessings that I personally received through publicly acknowledging that Christ was my Savior. One thing I may say, however, I believe that up to that time I was one of the most timid persons in the world! I never spoke to anybody and never ventured to give an opinion upon anything without tears coming into my eyes. But, from that happy day when I walked into the water at Isleham Ferry to be baptized into the name of Christ, I have never been afraid of any man in the world, nor of the devil, either, while engaged in the pursuit of the things of God! My Baptism was a sort of crossing of the Rubicon for me. I had burnt my boats, drawn my sword and thrown away the scabbard—so there was no possibility of going back—and I never wished to do so. And I believe that

others who are always timorous, trembling and afraid, would derive perpetual benefit from once and for all boldly and openly acknowledging themselves to be on the Lord's side!

And, Brothers and Sisters, *we ought also to do this for the sake of others*. Who knows what good you may do in your family by confessing Christ with the mouth if you have believed on Him with your heart? There is another poor trembler in your home—if you come out for Christ, that other one will soon come out, too. Frequently, it is my happy lot to see a daughter come to join the Church and when I ask her if her parents are godly people, she says, "Oh, yes, I hope so, Sir!" "Do they attend the Tabernacle?" "Oh yes, Sir!" "Then how is it that they have not joined us?" "Well, Sir, I think it is because they are so timid." And then, often, in about a month afterwards, the father and mother both come—they cannot let their daughter be in the Church without them, so they also come and openly acknowledge their faith in Christ. It is not the right order, you know, for the child to come first, but it is often so—and when one comes, others soon follow. I have known many a time, the youngsters of the family to be the boldest in acknowledging Christ as their Lord and Master and then, when they have broken the ice, the other Believers in the household have followed them and made the heroic plunge. Confess Christ, therefore, because of the good you may do to others by so doing!

Further, by giving such public testimony to your faith—that is, if you live up to it—*you help to let the world know that the old faith has not died out.* And though they may hate you for doing it, you will have borne your personal witness that there is a God, that there is a Savior and the wicked world will not be able to sleep so soundly as it did before! Your confession will touch its guilty conscience and cause it to have disquieting dreams. It may be that you will help to awaken it and so be the means of bringing some out of it whom Christ has bought with His precious blood who will also boldly come out on the Lord's side!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *if you will look through the history of the Church of Christ, you will find abundant reasons why every Christian should publicly acknowledge his Master*. Look at those days of diabolical persecution under Diocletian and the other Roman emperors. Look all down the blood-red path of the noble army of martyrs. Where would the confessors of Christ have been if all Christians had left the knowledge of their faith to themselves? Where would the Church of Christ, itself, have been if every Believer had done as some do now—namely choke the good Seed within their own hearts by never giving expression to the faith that is in them? Why, when the fires of persecution were the hottest, Christians were the bravest—and multitudes of men and boys, matrons and maidens, were not ashamed to come to the Roman and other tribunals and say, "We are followers of Christ, we acknowledge the Man of Nazareth as our Lord and Savior."

They did not hide themselves away—many of them even seemed to court grim Death, though he came dressed in his most terrifying garb! Torture, flaying alive, breaking on the wheel, dragging at the heels of wild horses, rotting in foul dungeons, burning at the stake—none of these things could quench their courage! They knew whom they had believed and were persuaded that He was able to keep that which they had committed unto Him and, therefore, they marched bravely to prison and to death! What then? Shall others fight to win the prize and shall you, as a coward, abide by the stuff? God forbid! Instead thereof, the Lord help you to confess Christ in the day of His rejection that you may be honored with Him in the day of His exaltation! God help you to take His part in the midst of the sinners of the world, that you may be with Him when the acclamations of cherubim and seraphim, and the innumerable host redeemed by His blood shall make all Heaven ring and ring again with the music of His matchless name!

IV. And now, lastly, IN WHAT SPIRIT SHOULD WE CONFESS CHRIST?

We should confess Christ, first, *with due self-examination*. As it is with the Lord's Supper, so it is with this important matter of confessing Christ with the mouth. "Let a man examine himself," says the Apostle, and so say we, for, remember that confession with the mouth will be very dangerous unless you are sure that you have believed in Christ with your *heart*. I am greatly afraid for those of you who are not converted, but who have united yourselves with some Christian Church. After the exercise of the best judgment on the part of Church officers, such a calamity will occasionally occur, but if, my Friends, this is your case, you are in a most perilous position! You are now not very likely to be converted, for the preacher's message to the sinner will pass on to somebody else when it should be received by you. The fact of your being in the Church may be very much to your spiritual injury. Therefore do not confess with the mouth what you have not believed with the heart!

But, *when you have believed with the heart, take care that you promptly and quickly confess Christ with the mouth.* Do not need to be pressed to do it. Do not need that mother, or father, or friends should urge you to do it. Christ did not need any pressing to give Himself to die for you, so you should not need any pressing to live for Him. The best wine flows most freely from the grape and the sweetest honey is that which drops freely from the comb. Let your soul freely drop with love to Christ like the droppings of the honeycomb. "Freely we have received, freely give" to Him who freely gave His all for you.

Take care, too, that you also *came forward very boldly*. Do not be ashamed to confess Christ with the mouth in His own appointed way. What you are about to do has no shame connected with it. If you sincerely believe in Jesus, you have no more need to blush at being baptized than a king has when he comes forward to be crowned, or a knight when he kneels to receive the accolades from his sovereign. There

is no sin in being a disciple of the Son of God and no shame in confessing that you am His!—

"Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend?
No, when I blush, to this my shame,
That I not more revere His name."

Further, *confess Christ with the mouth very plainly*. Do not acknowledge Him in a mystical sort of way which nobody can understand, but bear your testimony by plain words and by still plainer actions. Remember that "actions speak louder than words" and, therefore, make your confession most of all by the consistent Christian character of your daily life. "Let your conversation be as it becomes the Gospel of Christ."

Then, *constantly make your confession with the mouth*. Do not retract at home what you say abroad and, on the other hand, do not disown abroad what you acknowledge to be true at home! Do not be one thing in the Church and another thing in the world. Remember that you are always a Christian if you are ever a Christian! Stand fast in the faith, therefore, at all times. Nail your colors to the mast if you have entered the service of the Lord High Admiral of the Galilean Lake!

Above all things, *confess the Lord Jesus Christ sincerely*. Let there be no hypocrisy about your confession in any way. Do not repeat some other Christian's experience which is not your own. Do not borrow your confession of faith from the biography of some eminent Christian. Let your own experience be what you profess. Say, with the Apostle John, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

Also, *make your confession modestly*—not as though you had anything to boast of in being a Christian—not as though your Christianity was the result of any good thing in you. Take care to ascribe it all to Sovereign Grace. Do not blush at being a Christian, but, at the same time, do not boast about it. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Rejoice in Christ Jesus," but, "have no confidence in the flesh."

Further, *make your confession of Christ wisely*—not doing it so as to unnecessarily irritate others—being willing to suffer for Christ if necessary, but not making a martyr of yourself when there is no occasion for doing so. Boldly speak out for Christ whenever you can, but always blend the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.

Finally, *confess Christ out of love to Him because you cannot help doing so*. Let holy zeal blaze and burn within you till the sparks fly out of your soul in the form of a burning confession of Christ. Let your feet be dipped in the holy oil of complete consecration to Christ, that you may leave a sacred unction behind you wherever you walk. That will be the best confession of your faith that you can make. Still, do not dissociate the word of confession from the action, for it is to be confession with the mouth. Do say and say it unmistakably, "I am a Christian." If Christians have any other nickname beside that of Christians—for so it was given to

them at the first—do not be ashamed of that nickname. Do not be ashamed of the denomination to which you belong, even though some may denounce you as a sectarian. Remember that the genuine Christian is and must be a sectarian—that is to say, he is one who firmly holds the whole Truth of God which he has learned from the Scriptures through the teaching of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, he is what the world calls "a sectarian." But as for latitudinarianism, which believes nothing and counts no truth to be worth anything—the modern Diana of the Ephesians—I pray you, make no shrines for that hideous idol and pay no reverence to it, but, like honest men and women, read your Bibles, find out what is the revealed Word of God and stand to it at all costs. If it brings an ugly name upon you and you are called a sectarian, be willing to bear that name for Christ's sake! Only take care that in bearing it you have not the horrible spirit of some sectarians who denounce all others because they do not see eye to eye with them—and who have no fellowship with them because they cannot say, "Shibboleth," exactly as the sectarians say it. Love the whole family of God but do not be ashamed of those distinctive Truths of God which give you a name which makes you a separatist from the ungodly and from those who do not follow the whole counsel of God. Stand out boldly for Christ and for His Truth, so that when He comes again, He may say to you, "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."

You who have not yet believed on Jesus with the heart, must make no confession with the mouth. But I pray that you may be, even now, led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The way of salvation is simply this—Trust Jesus Christ—that is believing with the heart. Depend upon His merits, rely upon His all-sufficient atoning Sacrifice, rest in His perfect righteousness. If you do that, you are saved! And then, being saved, come forward and openly acknowledge your faith and God bless you in so doing, 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.

GOD COMFORTING HIS PEOPLE
NO. 3012

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1906.

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"The LORD has comforted His people."
Isaiah 49:13.

THE JOY of the Prophet was too great for him to give adequate expression to it with his own solitary tongue and, therefore, he would have even the angels of God and the redeemed from among men in Heaven to praise the Lord for His super-abounding mercy! He would also have the redeemed upon earth and all the works of God's hands take up the joyful strain of praise to the Most High! And he would have even the great mountainous masses of inanimate Nature find tongues with which to express the greatness of God's loving kindness and tender mercy in having comforted His people!

And, when we come to think of it rightly, we see at once that it is a theme for wonder, worthy of the consideration of Heaven and of earth that ever the Infinite God should stoop so low as to comfort finite and fallible creatures such as we are. Had He nothing better to do than that? Were there no more worlds to be created? Were there no other deeds of power and glory to be performed that He must come to this poor earth to comfort the sick, the sad and the sorrowing? To speak comfortably even to those who had rebelled against Him and to give them peace and joy when their penitent hearts were breaking in earnest longing for His pardoning mercy? That is a wonderful passage in the 147th Psalm—"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names." He is truly great in the majesty of His power, but He is equally great in the condescending Character of His love and, as "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" when Jehovah's great creative works were worked, let them not be slack in their music when His condescending works are worked—when, from the highest heavens, He stoops to the couch of deepest woe to lift us up from our sins and sorrows by the power of His eternal love!

Taking the text somewhat out of its immediate context and speaking simply upon these six words, "The Lord has comforted His people," we see that in the first place, *the Lord has a people.* Secondly, *they are a*

people who need to be comforted. And thirdly, *the Lord gives them the comfort that they need.*

I. First, then, it is clear, from the very wording of our text, that THE LORD HAS A PEOPLE. Isaiah does not say, in general terms that the Lord has comforted the children of men as a whole, but he says, "the Lord has comforted *His people*." Here is, as Dr. Watts says—

"A garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground!
A little spot, enclosed by Grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness"—

and it is concerning this particular portion of the human race—selected and elected by God—that the Prophet was moved by the Holy Spirit to write, "the Lord has comforted His people."

Observe, in the first place, that the children of God are "His people" in this sense, that they *enjoy His special love.* Never let us doubt the universal benevolence of God. Let us hold it as a fundamental Doctrine that "the Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works." And let us firmly believe that if any man shall be consigned to carnal misery, it will be because it is just that he should so suffer and he has brought his terrible doom upon his own head, for, as the Apostle Peter tells us, God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Yet, we must never forget that inside this universal love, there is a private, secret, distinguishing, discriminating love which is set only upon those whom God chose, before the foundation of the world, to be His own peculiar people. Paul writes to his son, Timothy, "We trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe." And Moses, long before, was Inspired to write, "The Lord's portion is His people." There is something peculiarly personal in His affection for them. He is kind and generous to all His creatures, but He is lavishly liberal to His own people. And Paul bids us imitate him when he says, "Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

The Lord, then, has a people whom He regards with a special love which is not shed abroad in the hearts of others. These people He set apart for Himself from eternity. They are a people who are near and dear unto Him, to whom He says, by the pen of the Apostle Peter, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

They are not only God's people because He has thus chosen them unto Himself, but because, having fallen into sin, they are now His by *particular and special redemption.* Again let me remind you that the Scriptures plainly teach us that the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ has a universal bearing and it seems to me that those who limit the value of the Atonement do most seriously err from the faith. I believe the

Sacrifice of Jesus Christ was so Infinite that if there had been ten thousand worlds full of sinners to have been redeemed, it was amply sufficient to have redeemed them all! Paul writes to Timothy, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." And I am not known to put a limit where I see no limit put by God's Word. Yet, notwithstanding that Truth of God, you cannot diligently read the Scriptures and study them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit without learning that there is a special aim and objective in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself said, "I lay down My life for the sheep." The singers in Heaven, in their new song, declare that "these were redeemed from among men"—they were bought out of the great mass of mankind, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Paul says that "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it."

The special objective of Christ, in coming to this world, was that He might "save His people from their sins." That is the very meaning of His name, Jesus. It is in them that redemption attains its great end. It is in them that Christ sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. It is for each of them, personally and individually, that the Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary with the distinct purpose of saving them. Christ did not die for Judas as He did for Peter. He did not shed His blood for Demas as He shed it for Paul. There is, in the redemptive work of Christ, an inner and select circle into which none but those who are spiritually quickened by the Spirit of God are ever privileged to enter—and herein, Beloved, we see that God has a people who are specially His—a people especially loved and specially redeemed.

These same people, too, *are especially called by the Spirit of God*. Again, to keep up the parallel with which I commenced, let me remind you that all sinners are called to repentance and faith in Christ wherever the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed. It is true that Christ Himself said, "Many are called, but few are chosen," yet the call of the Gospel is a universal call to all mankind. Wisdom truly says, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men," but, Beloved, there is another call, a special, peculiar, personal, *effectual call* by which only the Lord's chosen and redeemed people are called out from among the mass of men by whom they are surrounded. The New Testament title for the Church of Christ is the *ecclesia*—the assembly of those who are "called out" from among men by the distinguishing Grace of God. The Holy Spirit has breathed upon those who were, spiritually, like the dry bones in the valley—and they have "stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Though they were, once, heirs of wrath even as others, and far off from God by wicked works, they have been brought near by the blood of

Christ and now they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." They are now regenerated, quickened and so completely changed that "all things have become new" with them! They now enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a way which others know nothing at all. The Holy Spirit may "strive" with some men who ultimately perish, yet He does not operate upon them as He does upon those in whom He works effectually, making them what He would have them to be, *without violating their will*, yet so effecting the Divine Purpose as to constrain them to be obedient to the will of the Most High.

These, then, are the Lord's people—especially loved, especially redeemed and especially called.

Besides that, *they are especially cared for in the world*. God's Providential care extends not only to the righteous, but also to the wicked—yes, and not only to the wicked among men, but to the very beasts of the field. You know what I said to you, the other Sabbath morning, about the God who makes the grass to grow for the cattle. [See Sermon No. 767, Volume 13—IN THE HAY FIELD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is the same great Provider who feeds the young ravens when they cry, and the hungry lions when they roar for their food. God's Providence not only extends to mankind in general, and to the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the innumerable fish in the sea, but also to every atom of matter in the universe. The grain of dust that is blown from the threshing floor is steered as certainly as "the stars in their courses." It is the same God who provides for the little and for the great—though all must be infinitely little to Him who alone is great. Yet, while all that I have said is true, we cannot read the Bible without knowing that there is a special Providence always watching over and caring for the people of God. That comforting assurance in Psalm 34:7 applies not to all men, but only to some men—"The Angel of the Lord encamps around *them that fear Him*, and delivers *them*." Then there is that cheering question concerning the holy angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister"—not for all men, but—"for them who shall be heirs of salvation" Turn to Romans 8:28. "We know that all things work together for good"—to whom? Not to every son or daughter of Adam, but—"*to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*." The wheels of Divine Providence are like those wheels which Ezekiel saw—full of eyes, but everyone of those eyes gazes upon everything out of love to the chosen people of God who are thus especially cared for, as well as especially loved, especially redeemed and especially called.

I need not try to describe the sense in which the saints are to be God's people *throughout the never-ending eternity of bliss which is especially reserved for them*. It will suffice if I remind you that God has said of them that they are to be His special treasure, His royal regalia, His crown jewels—"They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I

make up My jewels." Just as a man sometimes says of a certain thing that he prizes beyond everything else, "I will give all else away, but I will reserve this for myself," so God gives to kings and princes the power to rule in the world and He frequently gives to the ungodly the very fat of the land—but He gives away everything but His people—and of them He says, "They shall be Mine." He claims such complete ownership of them that He will never give them away. For them the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world and lived, loved, labored and died. For them that same Jesus still lives to plead before His Father's Throne above. Their names are engraved on His hands and on His heart. He carries them upon His shoulders as the shepherd carries the sheep that was lost and He will never let go His hold of any one of them till He has brought it home and called together the holy angels and the redeemed from among men, and said to them, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost."

Thus I have shown you that God has a people.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, because I do not want to make the roll of lamentation too long, THEY ARE A PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE COMFORTED.

You never find God giving any blessings that are not really required. "Works of supererogation" are talked of by fools and knaves, but such works are never performed by God, nor by man either! So that, when the Lord comforts His people it is because they *need* comfort.

If I began to tell you why the people of God need to be comforted, you would think that I was attempting a work of supererogation! You do not need to be told *that*—some of you can find enough reasons in your own recollections to assure you that the people of God often need comfort. Yet I may, perhaps, give you one or two reasons that occur to me.

We need comfort *because we are in the valley of tears*. We do not travel long in that gloomy valley without finding that the dewdrops of tears are hanging thickly every morning and every evening upon the briers and the brambles by the wayside. Many of you have troubles in your family and they are very heavy troubles. Some of you have dead crosses in the form of those who have been taken from you, and living crosses—which are much heavier to carry—in the form of those who seem to live only to trouble you. Others of you meet with serious losses in your business and you have to ask how that bill is to be met and how that liability can be honorably discharged. There are troubles in the house and troubles in the field—troubles on the land and troubles on the sea and, worst of all, there are troubles even in the Church of God.

"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." But *when we were born-again, we were born to a double set of troubles*. Both our births bring us troubles! Our first birth brings us the troubles that are incident to sin and our second birth brings us the troubles that are incident to

fighting against sin. But, though we get a double share of trouble, we get a double share, a triple share, a sevenfold share, a thousand-fold share of joy when we become partakers of the new life in Christ Jesus! There are troubles incident to ordinary manhood and troubles incident to Christian manhood. But the worst trouble of all is that caused by our inbred sin. I would not mind all the trouble that comes from the world if I could but get rid of sin—if I could but live without temptation, or even with temptation if it came only from the devil. We could manage very well, even with him, if it were not for the evil that is within our own hearts—for we are worse enemies to ourselves than even the devil is! Our great enemy cannot do us much harm if he is kept locked outside the gates—as long as there is no traitor within the walls of Mansoul to admit him into the castle of our heart. The sailor does not fear the roaring billows outside his vessel, but when he finds that a leak in the ship gives the water power to rise in the hold, then he begins to fear. And, alas, we have many a leak in the ship of our soul and, in that way, temptation gets great power over us. We need comfort from God while we are wrestling with inbred sin. That fearful trinity, "the world, the flesh and the devil," will keep a Christian from imagining that this world is his rest, for one or other of them will stuff his pillow with thorns and make his bed hard for him to lie on and cause the pilgrimage of his life to be like passing through a hedge of thorns and briers which lacerate the flesh and weary the spirit.

The sorrows of God's people not only come from within and from without, from Satan beneath and from the world around, but they also come from God, Himself, when He chastens His people for their good. Is there any son, anywhere, whom his father chastens not? If so, he is not a son of God, for He "scourges every son whom He receives." Among the mercies of the Covenant, the rod is very conspicuous, and when the Lord chastens us with it, He causes us to smart! Yet every twig of the rod is sanctified and every stroke we receive from it is for our lasting good.

I said that I would not enlarge upon this part of the subject. Neither will I. But I know that there is not a little trouble in the lives of many whom I am now addressing. As I look around this area and these galleries—though I know far less of many of you than I would like to know, and if there were fewer of you, I could know you better—I remember some of your sorrows and I know that many of you are seldom long at ease, yet, with all your troubles, you enjoy that peace which is like a river, for you have learned to drink of that river, the streams of which make glad the city of our God!

III. Now I must pass on to the third point which is more comforting to us. It is this—as God has a people who need to be comforted, the Prophet Isaiah is Inspired to tell us that "THE LORD HAS COMFORTED HIS PEOPLE.

It is profitable to us to note the various ways in which God has provided for our comfort in our ever-recurring sorrows. He knew that we should have many fountains of grief and, therefore, He appointed quite as many fountains of joy and even more. And besides opening the fountains for us, blessed be His name, He draws the water for us and puts it to our parched lips, as the Holy Spirit applies to us the precious promises which God has provided for us in His never-failing fountain of comfort.

In the first place, in providing for the comfort of His people, *God has been pleased to give us this grand old Book, the Bible*. What a storehouse of comfort this is! Many times have we gone to it, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we have never gone there without finding a portion that just exactly met our needs. Some of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ are, perhaps, in old Giant Despair's castle, but if you use this precious Book rightly, you will find in it a key that will open every lock in Doubting Castle and make the way clear for you to pass through the great iron gate. O Beloved, what would we do without this Bible of ours? Let us prize it, among other reasons, because through it, "the Lord has comforted His people."

Then He has also been pleased to give us that blessed institution which is not second in importance even to the Bible, namely, the Mercy Seat. Wherever we may be, that Mercy Seat is always accessible! What a mercy it is that there are no longer any specially holy places, like the Temple at Jerusalem but that—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground!"

If I thought that I had always to go up to a certain "sacred" building in order to be able to pray to God, or that there were certain "holy" hours in which it was right to pray, I would often be miserable—but it is not so. At midnight, in prison, prayer is in season and in place, for Paul and Silas thus prayed at Philippi—and the prison walls began to shake and the prison doors flew open! Prayer is in season at all hours, for David says, "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." No matter where you are, nor into what state you may have fallen, nor how low and desponding you feel—and no matter how sinful you are—for God has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." After providing for us the Mercy Seat, over which is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," surely you may truly say, "The Lord has comforted His people!"

You all know that prayer to God is necessary in great things, but it is equally necessary in little things. None of you doubt that when much is at stake you ought to pray, but you ought equally to pray when little is at stake. I do not think that many true Believers go wrong in the difficult

places of their pilgrimage, for they then kneel down and ask God's guidance. And so they go right. But when they get to the very plain places, they think they know all about the road and then it is that they are sure to make a mistake. The warrior was not slain in battle for lack of courage, nor for want of armor—why was he slain? It was because one nail was missing from his horse's shoe, as the old saying puts it, "For the want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for the want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for the want of a horse, the rider was lost"—and many a Christian has been almost lost "for the want of a nail." Mind that you look after the nails and take care of them. Take the little things to God in prayer, for the little is the mother of the great and that of the greater, and even the little is great if we only look at it rightly. Just as the brush of a bird's wing sets the first snow-flakes moving, which afterward accumulate into a ball, which grows into a great mass, which comes rushing down the mountain in a mighty avalanche, so it is the little thing that sets the great in motion! And it is for this that we need particularly to enquire of the Lord—

"There is no sorrow, Lord, too light
To bring in prayer to Thee.
There is no anxious care too slight
To wake Your sympathy.
You who have trod the thorny road
Will share each small distress.
The love which bore the greater load
Will not refuse the less."

Besides that, He has been graciously pleased to give us *the means of Grace*. I trust that you have often gone out of this House of Prayer saying, "Truly, 'the Lord has comforted His people' this morning." Or, "We have certainly had our burdens taken away from us while we have been listening to His precious Truth this evening." When God the Holy Spirit has spoken through the preacher, you have found that the Word preached has been to you a delightful spiritual repast and cordial, so that you have been able, at least for the time, to forget your sorrows!

The Lord has, however, comforted us in a still higher way, *by forgiving all our sins*. I recollect the time when I would gladly have made a strange bargain with God, if He would have agreed to it. My sin was such an awful burden to me that I thought that if I might but have it all pardoned, I would even be willing to be imprisoned for a hundred years. If you have ever felt the weight of your sin, you must acknowledge that there is no bodily affliction that is at all comparable to it. If you once really know, by sad personal experience, what the word, "guilt," means—if its horrors are clearly revealed to your soul—you will be distracted in mind and know not what to do. And you will admit that all the griefs that could possibly be heaped upon you could not equal the horror of great darkness which comes over the soul under a sense of sin. But, then, "the Lord has comforted His people," because He has forgiven their sin. Your

coat may be threadbare, my Brother, but your sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake! Your loaf may be but a very small one, and your bed may be a very hard one, but, being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! If you are the very poorest of God's saints, in pardoning your sins "the Lord has comforted His people." Is not this the best comfort you could possibly have? Long ago the Prophet Isaiah was Inspired to write, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." The forgiveness of all their sins is the greatest comfort that the Lord's people can ever enjoy!

Moreover, in addition to giving us the pardon of all our sins, *the Lord has graciously adopted us into His family*. Ah, poor son of toil, your brow may often be covered with sweat, but you shall, by-and-by, be made like unto your Divine Elder Brother, for you have become, by Grace, a child of God! How delightful it is to us to know that "we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"! There is no other peace like this, no other joy like this! The angel Gabriel has not half so much reason to be happy as I have. It is true that he has not my cares, nor my troubles, but then, he is not a child of God, for, as Paul wisely asks, "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son?"But He does say that to us who have believed in His Son, Jesus Christ! We are the sons and daughters of the Most High God! The holy angels are highly favored in having been kept from sinning, yet the Son of God took not up angels, but He became a Man that He might redeem us from destruction and, through Him, we are brought into closer communion with God than the angels ever have! Oh, what cause we have, then, for thankfulness when we think of our adoption as well as of our pardon!

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I have not time to even mention all the blessings which are already in your possession. Truly, the full roll of them would need eternity in which to display it rightly before your eyes, "for all things are yours…whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." So you have every reason to rejoice and no cause to be disconsolate, for God has comforted you with the richest of consolations in the blessings which He has already bestowed upon you!

But *think of what is yet to come*! Let the pearly gates be opened for a moment. You will soon be inside them—how soon, none of us can tell. Unless our Lord shall first come—as He may—we who have believed in Jesus shall all pass through the gates of pearl and our disembodied spirits shall see our Savior face to face! Glory be to God, there is a crown there that no head but yours shall wear, Believer! A harp that no hands but yours shall play, a mansion that none but you shall inhabit. Without you, Christ's mystical body would not be complete—one of its members

would be missing without you! The hallelujah chorus of Heaven would lack some of its jubilant notes and the eternal orchestra would miss one of its players on golden harps—so you must be brought there. The Apostle Paul, speaking of glorified saints who have gone to Heaven before us, says, "They without us should not be made perfect." They must have us to perfect the company of the redeemed, to gather in Glory the full complement of the elect! Come, Brothers and Sisters, take off your sackcloth and ashes. Take down your harps from the willows. Put away the sackbut and bring out the Psaltery and all kinds of joyous music, and let us sing, in the words of the familiar hymn—

"My God, I'll praise You while I live,
And praise You when I die!
And praise You when I rise again,
And to all eternity."

Well now, what follows from all that I have been saying to you? This question surely follows—*who would not be one of the Lord's people*? I pity those of you who have great grief, but no consolation. I do not know how some of you manage even to live! You work hard, but what do you get by it all—food and raiment? Yes, and then you go on again and again, and all your life is like that of the blind horse at the mill, going round and round and round, and you never make any real progress. You bring up your children—in a fashion. You grow old, and you die, and that is the end. It would be better for you if it *were* the end, but, alas, there is something far worse to come! How can you keep on living as you do, without any objective beyond this poor groveling world? I can understand a Christian galley-slave, chained to the oar and flogged all day long, feeling that he was living up to the dignity of a man in Christ Jesus, for he could say, "I have a Savior on high and though my legs and wrists are bound, yet my free, immortal spirit has fellowship with the eternal God." But I cannot understand how men can work on, day after day, or, being above work, can roll along in their carriages and yet have no thought beyond this present, sin-stained world! It is not even fit for immortal spirits to think much about—it is too base, too scant, too poor, too barren a thing to satisfy immortals! Its atmosphere is a coverlet too narrow for a man to wrap himself and all that earth calls good or great is a bed too short for a never-dying spirit to stretch itself upon! How do you live without your God? Especially you who are sick and ill! You young people who have consumption stamped upon your cheeks—you young men who are mortally ill and know you must soon depart, you graybeards who are not only awaiting the assaults of Death, but are already attacked by him—how can any of you bear the thought that God's short sword of Infallible Justice is furbished against you? How can you make mirth on the very edge of the bottomless Pit? Oh, that you would flee away to Christ, lay hold upon Him by a simple faith and so be saved forever!

If a man suffers much trouble, some persons draw from that an inference that he is one of God's people. I have sometimes heard very great professors of religion pacify their consciences with the idea that because they were going through much tribulation, they must, therefore, inherit the Kingdom—because they were tried and troubled, they have, therefore, inferred that they must necessarily be the children of God. Let such understand that there is a rod for the wicked as well as a rod for the righteous! 'Tis true that many go through much tribulation to the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is equally true that many go through all their tribulations to the depths of Hell. "Well" says good Mr. Watson, an old Puritan, "The path to Hell is hard and rough to many. Many a man has gone to Perdition in the sweat of his brow and has toiled harder to win for himself eternal damnation than ever the Christian has labored to serve his Master." I doubt not that this is exactly the truth, or may even come short of it!

There is another thought that is suggested by what I have been saying. It is this, *If God comforts His people, we should imitate Him.* If we are His, let us be God-like. I do not know when a man is more like God than when he wipes the tears from a mourner's eyes. God wipes away the tears from all eyes in Heaven, so, whenever we have wiped a tear from the eye of a saint here below, we have been doing similar work to God's. If you do not yet know what joy and satisfaction are to be found in helping the fatherless and the widow, I hope you will all soon have that joy and satisfaction by helping them in every way that you can. When you go to visit the widow and see those many little children, their heads rising one above another like a set of stairs, the father dead, the mother doing a little needlework to provide for her children—when you see all this, I am sure you will help them all you can! It has been a great joy to some of us, this very night, to receive some six or seven fatherless children into the Orphanage which has yet to be built—and we could not help feeling great joy as we accepted them. There is great joy in helping the fatherless and the widow, relieving the poor and needy, comforting those who are broken-hearted, speaking a cheering word to the mourner, or a guiding word to the soul that is seeking Christ, repeating a word of promise in the ear of a backslider, or of one who, for a while, has lost his evidences. So, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as God has comforted His people, mind that you try to do the same good work, remembering that in ministering to *them*, you are also ministering to HIM, as our hymn puts it—

"They who feed YOUR sick and faint
For YOURSELF a banquet find!
They who clothe the naked saint
Round YOUR loins the raiment bind!"

And then, finally, *as God has comforted His people, why do they go about the world as if they were not comforted*? I thank God that there are

so many members of this Church the sight of whose face is enough to make us glad even in the worse weather! Some of my Brothers and Sisters, when I am the most disconsolate, cheer me up with the very grasp of their hands! These are cheerful Christians who live near to God and who so firmly believe in Christ that they will not believe the devil's lie when he tells them that God has forsaken them. Dear Brothers and Sisters, should we not all try to be like them? It is a great blessing to be of a happy, thankful spirit and to carry a cheerful countenance wherever we go. Yet some Christians, when you go to see them, are always telling you how poor they are, how badly they have had the rheumatism, how many aches and pains and trials and troubles they have, and so on. I remember one visitor who had heard this sort of story so often from one good old lady whom he used to visit, that one day he said to her, "My dear Sister, I have heard all about your troubles so many times that I think I could repeat them word for word! So could you now change the subject for once, and tell me something about your joys?" Whenever we must touch the mournful theme, let us do as the swallow does when it just brushes the brook with its wing and flies up into the clear air as if its whole being were full of joy. So let it be with us—sometimes touching the waters of trouble, as we must, yet swiftly mounting in sweet contemplation and holy meditation—leaving the sinful, sorrowing world behind us and entering into the very Presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?
Great Comforter, descend and bring
Some tokens of Your Grace."

God bless you, dear Friends, with the Spirit of consolation! The Holy Spirit is the Comforter! May He comfort you, for Jesus' sake! Amen!

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

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

WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT
NO. 3013

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1864.

"I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Song of Solomon 5:2.

How changeable is the creature! In the verse preceding our text, we find the spouse in a happy, healthy, heavenly frame of mind, for her Beloved was with her and she was in the enjoyment of the closest communion with him. We find him saying, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Yet, from the height of this glorious fellowship, how soon the spouse comes down to the depths of such a cry as this, "I sleep, but my heart wakes"! Truly, the weather of our isle is not more variable than the feelings of Believers. One day the sun shines hot and strong. The next day comes a black cloud, accompanied with the lightning flash and the voice of thunder. Then come the rattling drops of hail and then, in a few more hours, it is hot again, or perhaps the chilly North wind begins to blow. Have you not been on Mount Tabor at one moment and at another in the Valley of Achor? Have you not been at one time like the chariots of Amminadib, driving so fast that the axles were hot with speed, and soon after you have been like Pharaoh's chariots when the wheels were taken off so that you drove heavily? Now you mount as upon eagle's wings and soon you sink as in deep mud where there is no standing! At one moment delighting in God's goodness and mercy, but the next moment, crying, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." Lord, what a changeable creature is man! When You have taken him up to his highest altitude, how speedily he comes down, by the force of Your hand, to the very depths! How soon do You bring him down from his highest eminence even to the very dust!

Christian, when the Lord favors you and your soul walks in near fellowship with Him, remember that there is a devil within you and a devil outside you. Be careful of your footsteps—even when you are on the top of the mountain, even when Jesus is sitting by you and whispering in your ear that you are His, watch with the greatest, possible care, for you never lose your corruption! Your communion may be transient, but your corruption is perpetual. To be with Christ is but a thing of a moment with you, but to be with your corruption is a thing of every hour in the

day! I pray you, keep this in mind and whenever you are in your best frame, then be doubly careful lest you should lose your Beloved and have to cry once again, "I sleep, but my heart wakes!" Dr. Ives, who used to live on the road to Tyburn at the time when prisoners were always carried in a cart to be hanged there, would frequently say, when he had any friends with him, if he saw the criminals riding by, "There goes Dr. Ives." And when they asked him what he meant, he replied, "Such crimes as that felon has committed I would have committed but for the Grace of God." That is true even of you who live nearest to God. You who have the most familiarity with Christ and enjoy the most holy fellowship with Him may soon become the very leaders of the hosts of Satan if your Lord withdraws His Grace! David's eyes go astray and the sweet Psalmist of Israel becomes the shameless adulterer who robs Uriah of his wife. Samson one day slays a thousand of his enemies with the might of his arm and the velour of his heart—another day his honor is betrayed, his locks are shorn, and his eyes are put out by a strumpet's treacherous wiles.

How soon are the mighty fallen! Behold Solomon, the wisest of men, yet the greatest fool who ever lived! Even Job fails in patience and Abraham staggers as to his faith. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." These observations seem to rise at once to our minds when we consider such passages as abound in this "Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." We find, at one moment, that the spouse is so happy that she cries out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love," and, at another moment, she is searching for her Beloved and cannot find him, and mourning because of the darkness, and of the cruelty of "the watchmen that go about the city."

The text very readily suggests three subjects for meditation—first, *a lamentable state*—"I sleep." Secondly, *a hopeful sign*—"but my heart wakes." And thirdly, *a potent remedy*—"It is the voice of my Beloved." Nothing can wake a Believer out of his sleep like the voice of his Beloved!

I. First, here is A LAMENTABLE STATE—"I sleep."

I think I can describe this state pretty well because I experience it too often and I am afraid many of you could also describe it with some degree of accuracy, for frequently you, too, fall into it. What is it for a Christian to sleep? Well, thank God, there is a sleep which the Believer never knows. He can never again sleep that deadly sleep in which Christ found him while he was in his sinful state—he shall never sleep the judicial sleep into which some were cast as the result of sin! He shall not sleep, as do others, to his eternal ruin, yet he may sleep dangerously and sinfully—and this is the state in which the Christian is found when he thus sleeps—*in a state of inaction*. You are doing something for God but you are doing it as a matter of custom than as a matter of loving earnestness. You pray. You go up to the House of God. You teach in the Sunday school but you do these things mechanically, as a man walks who is sound asleep. You are in a sort of spiritual somnambulism! The work that you are called upon to perform, you do after a fashion, but there is none of the power of God in the work—there is no earnestness

thrown into it. It is done, and that is the end of it—but your heart has been absent from it.

Coupled with this, there is *a need of vigor in everything to which such a man sets his hand*. If he preaches, there is no force or burning energy, no boiling, scalding periods—he just takes his text and speaks upon it. Perhaps God's people are edified, perhaps sinners are saved, but that man has no enjoyment in his work during the whole time that he sluggishly performs it thus. A man, to enjoy the work of the Lord, must throw his whole strength into it. It is the same when you come to prayer. You pray after a sort, but it is not that wrestling with the Angel which gets the blessing from Him. You knock at the door, but not with that force which causes it to open. You have forgotten your former vigor. Whereas once your place of prayer was the witness of groans and tears, now you can go into it and come out of it without so much as a single sob. And it is just the same when you read the Scriptures. Once the page sparkled with promises and your soul was satisfied with marrow and fatness. But when you read it now it is very dull and you no longer derive refreshing consolation from it. Like the temple out of which God has moved, you walk through it—there are the pillars, there stand all the symbols of worship. The altar is there, but God, the King, has gone and a voice has been heard to say, "Arise, let Us go from here." And so, you go through the sacred edifice and find nothing there. In this same sleepy state, we go up to the House of God to listen to His Word and if our sleep has got a strong hold upon us, we cannot get any comfort. We begin to rail at the minister because we are not edified as we used to be—we think that a change has come over *him*. That is possible, but it is just as likely, and more so, that our lack of enjoyment of God's Word is owing to ourselves. We sit and hear as God's people hear—and we sing as God's people sing, and pray as they pray—after the outward form, but we go out as a man rises from his bed whereon he has tossed all night and we feel that we are not a whit refreshed! And the Sabbath that was once a joy and delight to us, has perhaps become a weariness and a burden!

There is no enjoyment while a man is thus asleep and, as there is no enjoyment, there is no consciousness of pain. Ah, Beloved, I have known seasons when I would almost have given my right arm to be able to shed tears of repentance—wherein I wished that I might again have a broken heart—when I have longed to make my soul feel even the pains of Hell rather than not feel anything! This is one of the worst states a Christian can be in—to go nodding on through life, slumbering over eternal realities, dreaming over Heaven, nodding his head and continuing to sleep when he is in the Presence of the Most High God and should have gathered up all his powers and strung them to the highest pitch of intensity! Have you not been in such a state? If you have not, happy man are you! There are most holy men, some of the giant servants of God, who have fallen into this state and have been compelled to cry out, "I sleep," finding themselves happy, indeed, if they could add, "I sleep, but my heart wakes."

Such a state as this is very sinful. Is it not sinful, O my Soul, to be trifling with the eternal state, to be playing at prayer? Can you be so dull and heavy about eternal things when worldlings are so thoroughly awake about their silver and gold and commercial pursuits? When souls are being hurried to eternity, how is it that I can still be indifferent? While time is speeding on and eternity is so near, how can I still go to my slothful couch and cry, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of your hands to sleep"? Chosen in Christ, redeemed with His precious blood, quickened by the Divine Spirit and made partakers of the Divine Nature, how can it be consistent with our position and condition to sleep as do others? The light of God's Grace has shone upon us—is this a time to slumber? Let the world sleep if it will, for its object and aims are not worthy of the Christian's high ambition, but shall you and I sleep when Heaven is before us and Hell behind us—when there is temptation surrounding us everywhere and angels beckon us to Heaven while a glorious company of saints holds us in full survey? Come, my Brothers and Sisters, we must feel that such a state as this is sinful in the highest degree!

And *how dangerous it is, too*! A man who sleeps in his enemy's camp is exposed to imminent peril. There lies Sisera asleep in Jael's tent. Little do you know, O silly Dreamer, when that woman's hand lifts up the mallet to drive the nail through your brain! If you desire to sleep, Christian, wait until you get Home! There you shall have rest enough forever in your Father's House, but, to sleep here is to sleep in the dragon's jaw! To sleep on the top of the mast when the ship is driving before the storm! No, awake and think of your position and condition and sleep no longer! O God, have mercy upon Your people who have long prosperity! There is the pinnacle of the Temple and blessed is the man whose feet slip not when he stands there. I do not think we sleep so much, spiritually, when we have bodily affliction, though pains of body frequently make a Christian long for his rest. Nor do I think we have slumbering times when we are losing our friends. Men cannot easily sleep when the funeral knell is tolling in their ears and when they are following dear departed ones to the grave. Nor do I think we sleep much when we are the subjects of very violent temptations and have a great many doubts and fears. But when we are in our vessel when the day is fine and the sail is spread, and the wind blows softly, and the ship goes on steadily without a motion, gliding as o'er a sea of glass—then it is that the mariner, perhaps, forgets the rock and the shoal! The poet was right when he said—

"More the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests lowering overhead."

I do not like trouble and pray God to deliver me from it. I cannot well endure bodily pain. I find myself impatient under tribulation, but I am able to say this—if I had my choice between the severest affliction and a state of sinful slumbering, I would prefer to have the affliction. "There is no devil," said one, "like having no devil." That is to say, there is no temptation like the temptation of not being tempted! The worst form of danger is when a man is left to himself, when he is not much tossed

about, when he is quiet and easy. It ought not to be so. The greater our prosperity, the better should we love God. And the more our spirit is at ease, the more we should serve Him with both our hands and render Him hearty thanksgiving for His favor towards us! It should be so, but it is not so. In these smooth waters we are sure to meet with mischief and, therefore, may the Lord, in His mercy, watch over us when we are in much prosperity!

Do I hear somebody ask, "How may I know when I am asleep?" If you are a true Christian, you will soon know it by a sort of instinct, when an unutterable sense of misery comes over you. I may compare the sleep of a sinner to the sleep produced by opium which gives its victim dreams of the most magnificent character, carrying the soul up to Heaven and then, soon, dashing it down to the depths. All sorts of fantastic imaginations are the offsprings of that deadly drug, yet the man enjoys himself while under its influence. But though it causes some happiness in the use of it, it will bring him to Hell as surely as murder itself! The sleep of a Christian, when he falls into this state, is rather like the sleep produced by henbane—it is a kind of uneasy, short, disturbed, unreeling rest. It does a man little harm compared with the other and his constitution recovers from the shock much more readily. Such, I say, is the Christian's sleep—there is no pleasure in it as there is in the sinner's sleep, but his sleep is uneasy, his conscience pricks him, his heart wakes and he finds no peace in it. It lasts but for a little time and it does him much damage, but still, not the deadly damage that the world's sleep of sin brings to its votaries. God save you from it! May He ever keep you from falling into that kind of sleep!

I think many of you will not need me to warn you of it. Still, if you do need to know, let me ask you to compare yourself with what you used to be. Are you as lively in Divine things as you once were? Is prayer as fervent and refreshing to your souls as it once was? Do you find that willingness to pray that you once had? Do you find that you have to flog yourself into your closet and, when you get there, do you offer up your prayers and desires with coldness which you were known to offer with warm and loving fervor? Do you still continue to have the blessedness you had when first you knew the Lord? If not, that is a symptom of sleep. Then, compare yourself with what you ought to be. Think how you ought to have grown during the years that you have been a Believer. Are you what you ought to have been? Then, if you are not, you must be asleep, or else you would have made better progress. Compare yourself with what others have been and you will see cause for shame! And if so, my Brothers and Sisters, you are asleep! You are in a dangerous condition and I pray the living God, by the demand for watchfulness when the Prince of this world comes, by the agonies of Christ in Gethsemane, yes, by the blood of Him who poured out His soul unto death, to awake you out of this deadly sleep, for it is a state that will lead to some great and grievous sin, some black and terrible fall unless God shall prevent it by His Grace! First you sleep, then you slumber, then you sin, then you sin again, then you go still deeper and so will you continue unless God, in

His Grace, steps in to deliver you from the consequences of this dreadful sleep!

II. Yet, secondly, there is, in the text, A HOPEFUL SIGN.

I think that most of us, though we do sleep, can say as the spouse does, "my heart wakes." Beloved, it is a blessed sign that *the spouse knows her state and truly confesses it.* She does not say, mark you, "I am a little tired. My eyes are heavy." No, but with honesty of heart she says, "I sleep." Ah, it is a good sign when you and I know our state and are willing to confess it before God. I have heard of a Believer in Christ who, on one occasion, was intoxicated, and he was expelled from the church as the result of it. But he was visited by many Christian Brothers and among the rest by one who prayed with him. They prayed together to God, but he could not get any peace. "No," said his friend, "and you never will until you come to the point and confess your sin as it really is." And when the man said, in his prayer, "Lord, You know that I have disgraced myself. I have been drunk," it was *then* that he obtained peace. He had directed the lances to the wound—he had put before God the right state of the case and this is what we must do, Beloved, if we would have restoring and renewing Grace—we must tell the Lord what our sin really is. As the spouse did, we must confess, "I sleep."

But you will observe that *the spouse is as bold in saying, "my heart wakes," as she was in saying, "I sleep."* What does this mean, "my heart wakes"? Why, just this. "My conscience tells me that this sleepy state is not a proper one for me to be in and my heart cries that I must get out of it. I cannot find any rest while I slumber. At a distance from God, I cannot be happy." Peter may follow afar off, but Peter cannot be happy afar off. Peter may sit and warm his hands with the servants in Pilate's Hall, but he cannot warm his heart. Sinners may say, "Why make all this fuss about a little sleep? There is no great sin in it." Ah, but little sins trouble Believers far more than great sins trouble sinners! If a Christian's soul is but a little away from God, it is sufficient to mar his joy and make him unhappy. A man clad in armor may go walking through the woods and may never feel the thorns, but another man who has had his armor taken off, will be scratched and torn to pieces! Sinners clad in the armor of sin feel not the thorn of Christ's desertion—but saints who have thrown this armor aside and are tender of heart, feel even His slightest frown.

My dear Hearer, perhaps you are slumbering this evening and are content to be so. Then you are no child of God! But if you are slumbering and there is some power—something within you that keeps crying out, "O God, I would be delivered!" Though this voice is ever so feeble, though this cruel sleep of yours may almost have gagged it, yet if it does rebel against this state and cries out, "Lord, I would be changed! I would be different! Turn You unto me and I shall be turned! Revive me, and I shall be revived!" If there is such a longing as this in you, you are still a child of God and well may you exclaim, "I sleep, but my heart wakes. Lord, I would live near to You if I could. I am like a man that rides a sorry jade of a horse—the horse will not go, but he spurs him, hacks at the bit and strikes him again and again, for the man would go if he could—and so it

is with me! 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' and, 'when I would do good, evil is present with me,' and 'how to perform that which is good I find not.'" Lord, help Your servants and let them not sleep any longer!

III. Now, thirdly, here is A POTENT REMEDY—"the voice of my Beloved."

Some Christians try to get themselves into a healthy state of heart by looking to the Law of God, by self-examination and by a thousand other remedies. But, after all, *the true cure for every disease in the Christian is in Christ Himself*. You may try to chasten yourselves for your sins, but you will continue to sin if that is all that you do. Beloved, I know that the heart has a great objection to coming to Christ after being in a sleepy state. Old Legality whispers in our ears that, "You cannot go and trust Christ as you did, for see how badly you have behaved? You must not go to the fountain filled with blood, now, as you did at first, for look, you have played the harlot and you cannot go with the same confidence as you went at first." "Ah, Old Legality, I can, and I will!" The Law never did bring us out of our state of nature and will it bring us now out of our state of lethargy? If the Law had first of all quickened us, then it would be well to look for restoration by the Law! But inasmuch as we found our first life by simply believing in Christ, the only way to renew that life is by believing in Jesus Christ again! I will listen, then, not to the voice of the curse, not to the condemnation of Moses, but to the voice of my Beloved, for no music is like His and nothing can so wake my soul as hearing Him speak to me. Hear, then, the voice of your Beloved in the Gospel! He is still your Beloved, though you are asleep! But He sleeps not and He calls to you, "Come to My bosom; come, My Beloved, open the doors of your heart to Me. Come, My affianced and Precious One, I have not put you away, though you have grieved Me and opened My wounds afresh. I have loved you with an everlasting love. Open the doors of your heart to Me and let Me come into communion with you." It is the voice of Jesus speaking to you through your minister and He cries to you, "Come to Me now! Trust Me once again and your spiritual strength shall be renewed."

Then *turn to this precious Book and you will hear the voice of your Beloved there*. In words like these He speaks to you, "Turn, backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you." Hear Him as He cries to you, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Hear Him as He cries to you, ungodly ones, "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"

Hear, then, your Beloved's voice and mark, dear Brothers and Sisters, *if you do not hear the voice of your Beloved in the days of prosperity, you will be likely enough to hear it in affliction*. If nothing else will keep you awake, the rod will. If you will sleep in prosperity, you shall have adversity—and sooner than you shall be lost, you shall lose everything. If, my Brothers and Sisters, God sees we cannot stand our present peace and prosperity, He will send His servant, Death, into our families. He will

take away our possessions. He will place us in adversity. He will wither all our fair flowers and break all our idols and dash in pieces everything that stands between our soul and Himself! Oh, that we were wise, and would hear His gentle voice! "Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle," but hear what the Lord says to you from the watchtower of His ministry and from the witness box of His Word—and then you shall escape the rod.

And perhaps, my Brothers and Sisters, *the Beloved may speak to you without the ministry and without the Word*. If He shall do so, I pray you to catch His Words. It may be, while you are sitting here, or when you are walking home, or perhaps at the Lord's Table, where some of us hope to meet, directly, you will hear Him whisper some kind, assuring Word that shall sink your fears again. I have known what it is to preach, sometimes, on a Sunday, and I have felt like a butcher who stands in his shop cutting out joints of meat for others—they are fed, but he, himself, has nothing. Or as a cook who prepares and sends up dinners, but cannot so much as get a taste, himself. Then I have gone downstairs to the Lord's Table with a dull heart and, perhaps, in a second, as though a strange miracle has been worked, my soul has been as full of devout joy and holy mirth as ever spirit was out of Heaven! And if you ask me how that has been caused, I would say it has been caused by some kindly look of my Beloved, some loving glance of His eyes, or some sweet Word from His mouth—and my soul has rejoiced with unspeakable joy! Why should it not be so with you tonight? That is the best thing to waken you up! If your heart is dull and heavy, as soon as your Beloved speaks, you will at once awake to spirit and to life!

My time has gone but I want to say this to you. I am sometimes, no, I am *often* haunted with the fear lest we, as a Church, should fall asleep. Oh, how greatly has the Lord blessed us these many years! And what favor seems to rest upon every agency! The preaching of the Word has been very successful, but still it is open to the conversion of many. In our classes how is God honored! Ah, you little know, some of you, what others of us see—and even we do not see one-tenth of what God is doing in the class conducted by one of our sisters here. And our Sunday schools may very well be a delight, for the Lord is working a great work in them! But I am always jealous over you, lest you should slumber. How easy it is to fall asleep! I often fear that my voice, which was once like a trumpet to you, will become like sleep music—that you will become so accustomed to it, and I, perhaps, shall become so dull and heavy, that the life of God will almost die out among us. My soul weeps and cries to God over this matter! My Master knows that I would cheerfully resign, that another voice might speak to you, if that would keep alive your zeal and enthusiasm. If it is, however, not my fault, even a changed ministry would not suffice. When Churches grow to a great size, people think they must always continue so, and that God will always bless them as He has done. Why, Sirs, as our first blessings came in answer to prayers—all future blessings must come in the same way!

I remember well, when we used to meet together in Park Street to have holy communion with the Lord, how we used to wrestle with Him in prayer, so much so that I have scarcely been able to pronounce the benediction, much less give any address, because we all seemed to be carried away in the mighty majesty of wrestling prayer! We have now, sometimes, very choice seasons, but I am afraid not altogether such as we once had. At any rate, if there is any falling off, I thank God there is very little, indeed. It is scarcely perceptible as yet, but how soon may there be, unless we watch and are jealous with a holy jealousy? Let us work with Christian earnestness in prayer. O you who have done little for Christ of late, I pray you, do more for Him! You who think your time of service is over and that you may retire like pensioners, and no more fight, I want you to enlist again! Put on the colors once more as if you were but raw recruits! You who once could defy persecution and stand up in the street to preach Christ and laugh at all your fears, gather up your courage once again! Oh, that you would wake up, as a Church, and put on your beautiful array of past times when you were despised and persecuted—and the minister's name was a byword and a proverb, and you, yourselves, because you were linked with him, were thought to be fools and the off-scouring of all things! But now I tremble lest we should grow respectable and great, and lest men should think we are respectable and depart from us. My soul begs and beseeches you to renew your prayers for me, that I may preach with greater vigor. What if my ministry should become as dull and stupid as the ministry of one-half of my Brothers—what if it should become as useless and as unprofitable as the ministry of nine out of ten who occupy the pulpit? I had sooner die than live to be such a being as many who stand up in the pulpit wholly to waste people's time and not to win souls! My spirit pants to have the consuming zeal of Baxter and the earnest, passionate enthusiasm of Whitefield—but I cannot get it except through your prayers! Or getting it, it cannot be maintained without your vehement cries and entreaties before the Lord!

Perhaps we, as a Church, have been brought to our present state for a great purpose which has never dawned upon us. We have already done something for God—we are filling the pulpits of our village churches with men sound in the faith and earnest for God. We are erecting a great barrier against the everyday increasing encroachment of heresy and infidelity—but we need to do something more and something looms upon us in the future—I scarcely know what—some high and holy purpose which this Church has been brought up to this point to accomplish. Shall we draw back? Men of Ephraim, will you draw back in the day of battle? Will you be condemned for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Shall the angel pronounce over you the sentence, "Ichabod, for the Glory of the Lord has departed from you because of your declining to continue earnest in zeal"? If it is so to any extent, let us return unto the Lord! Let us take to Christ words of repentance and faith and let us beseech Him to make this Church again His buckler and two-edged sword and to make His minister once more a captain in the midst

of the Lord's hosts, for the day of the Lord is mighty and the battle of the Lord is terrible—and every man must take his place and every soldier must draw his weapon from his thigh—for the day of the Lord draws near and the battle of God is to be fought now, even now! Let us arise, my Brothers and Sisters! Let us rush like lions to the prey, like swift eagles to the chase! And God shall help us, God shall help us, and that right early!

This Church cries tonight, "I sleep." But she can also say, "my heart wakes." The heart of the Church is still awake! I think my voice to you tonight is an echo of the voice of your Beloved. Sisters, Brothers, bestir yourselves! Let us cry mightily unto God! Let us labor for the winning of souls! Let us pant and pray for a great increase to our membership and God will save sinners, in answer to our prayer, and His name shall be glorified forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EXODUS 12:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. *And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.* And for this reason that, now, as a nation, they were to begin their separate history, separate in existence from all the rest of mankind!

3, 4. *Speak you unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a 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.* The separation of the lamb was to take place some four days before the time of its slaughter. Probably it was kept in the house, according to the Jewish tradition it was so, and they would hear it bleating and be reminded of the purpose for which it was to be slain.

5. *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats.* You know what a type this is of Christ, "without blemish," offered up for us in the very fullness of His strength, in the prime and glory of His Manhood, giving Himself up to be our Paschal Lamb, "The Lamb of God."

6. *And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.* Just as the sun went down, or just before it set for the evening. There is also the marginal reading "between the two evenings." The evening before the sun set, was the first, and then the daylight after the sun set was the second evening.

7. *And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.* Not on the threshold, lest it should be trodden upon—and woe be unto the man who shall trample upon the blood of Christ! On the two side posts and on

the lintel was placed the mark indicating that God had redeemed the inmates of that house with blood.

8, 9. *And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the innards thereof.* We are to have a whole Christ, with His head of wisdom and His heart of love, the walk and conversation of Christ, and all the inward secret life and Grace of Christ to be ours.

10. *And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire.* Not a bone was to be left for the Egyptians to treat with dishonor, but all was to be consumed.

11, 12. *And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.* All those false gods had been smitten in the different plagues and now, inasmuch as the Egyptians regarded the first-born in the family with veneration, the last stroke was about to be struck—and Pharaoh and all his subjects would stagger under the tremendous blow.

13. *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are.* Oh that we would all look upon the blood of Jesus as a token—a token of Divine Love in giving the Well-Beloved to die for us—a token that Justice has had its due—a token that we are perfectly secure forever!

13. *And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.* It is God's view of the blood of Christ, which is the all-important matter! When He looks at Christ upon the Cross and is satisfied with the Atonement that He there offered, the Lord passes over all those for whom Christ died as a Substitute.

13-15. *And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.* Therefore he was no partaker in the redemption purchased by blood. He who is not purged from hypocrisy may say what he likes, but the blood will not save him unless he repents—there must be the putting away of this leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, or else even the blood of Atonement will not avail.

16. *And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you, no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.* What rest this brought into the houses of the Israelites! There was not only deliverance from the plagues, but there was also rest from all manner of work. Herein is the blessedness of the blood of the

Lamb—when it comes to the home and the heart of the Believer, it gives him rest of soul while others are toiling in vain to get relief by their own works!

17-25. *And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe the day in your generation, by an ordinance forever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whoever eats that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger, or born in the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall you eat unleavened bread. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the Destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever. And it shall come to pass, when you come to the land which the LORD will give you. According as He has promised, that you shall keep this service.* What? Were they never to forget the slaying of the lamb and the sprinkling of the blood? No, never! Not when they came to Canaan, to the land that flowed with milk and honey, and when God had worked other great marvels for them? No, never! And the highest honor that we shall ever have will be this, to be able truthfully to sing—

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

26, 27. *And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.*

—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 SERMON FROM A SICK PREACHER
NO. 3014

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1869.

"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious."
1 Peter 2:7.

[Not only was this the first text from which Mr. Spurgeon preached, but it was his theme on many subsequent occasions. Two of these discourses bear the same title—CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS although one of them is No. 242, Volume 5 in the New Park Street Pulpit and the other is No. 2137, Volume 36 in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

MY Brothers and Sisters, I am quite out of order for addressing you tonight. I feel extremely unwell, excessively heavy and exceedingly depressed, and yet I could not deny myself the pleasure of trying to say a few words to you. I have taken a text upon which I think I could preach in my sleep and I believe that if I were dying, and were graciously led into the old track, I could, with my last expiring breath, pour out a heartfelt of utterance upon the delightful verse which I have selected. It happens to be the passage from which I first essayed to speak in public when I was but a boy of sixteen years of age and I am sure it contains the marrow of what I have always taught in the pulpit from that day until now. The words are in the Second Chapter of the First Epistle of Peter, and the seventh verse—"*Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.*"

We might find "ample room and verge enough" if we were to enlarge upon the preciousness of Christ in His Person as God and perfect Man, His preciousness to His Father, His preciousness to the Holy Spirit, His preciousness to angels and glorified men. We might next speak of Him in the preciousness of His work, showing His preciousness as the Mediator of the New Covenant and at the Incarnate Messenger of that Covenant on earth, His preciousness as working out a perfect righteousness and as rendering a complete expiation. We might dwell upon His preciousness in all His offices, whether as Prophet, Priest, or King, and in all His relationships as Friend, Brother, as Bridegroom. Indeed, we have before us a subject as inexhaustible as the river of God, and as bright as the sapphire Throne! If we should endeavor to show how precious the Well-Beloved is in all respects, we would need eternity in which to complete the task—

"Precious is the name of Jesus,
Who can half its worth unfold?
Far beyond angelic praises
Sweetly sung to harps of gold.
Precious when to Calvary groaning,
He sustained the cursed tree.

Precious when His death atoning
Made an end of sin for me.
Precious when the bloody scourges
Caused the sacred drops to roll.
Precious when of wrath the surges
Overwhelmed His holy soul!
Precious in His death victorious,
He the host of Hell overthrows,
In His Resurrection glorious,
Victor crowned over all His foes.
Precious, Lord! Beyond expressing,
Are Your beauties all Divine!
Glory, honor, power and blessing
Be henceforth forever Thine."

The wording of the text binds our thoughts to one point. "*Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious.*" It is not so much how precious He is, as how precious He is to you! If you are a Believer, the text affirms that Jesus Christ is, without any adverb to limit the extent of the descriptive word, precious to you!

I. We shall, first, talk awhile upon the Truth of God that JESUS CHRIST IS NOW PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS.

Notice, attentively, *how personally precious Jesus is.* There are two persons in the text. "Therefore, to you who believe, HE is precious." "You" and "He." You are a real person and you feel that you are such. To yourself, you must always be the most real of existences. You do not think of yourself as a person of whom you have read in history, or heard of in discourse, or seen from a window years ago. You have, (to use an ugly word, since I do not know any substitute for it), realized yourself—you are quite clear about your own existence. Now, in the same way, I pray you strive to realize the other Person! "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious." Jesus exists just as really as you do and you must not regard Him as a personage who was here 1,869 years ago, or one of whom you have heard, and whom you like to think of as a poetical conception—but there is a real Christ now existing in spirit, existing here—in real flesh and blood now standing at the right hand of the Father! And between Him and you, if you are a Believer, there exists a bond of unity which, though invisible, is nevertheless most matter-of-fact and positive. You believe in Him. He loves you. You love Him in return and He sheds abroad in your heart a sense of His love. You two are bound together tightly and firmly. There is neither myth, nor dream either in Him or in your union to Him. He is and you are—and He is in very deed most precious to you.

Notice, too, that while the text gleams with this vividness of Personality to which the most of professors are blind, it is weighted *with a most solid positiveness*—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious." It does not speak as though He might be or might not be, but "He is precious." There are some things about myself as a Christian which are frequently matters of question. I may gravely question whether I am growing in Grace and under such a doubt I may search my heart to see whether I love my Lord better, or whether I have more fully conquered my

sins. But one thing I do not question, namely, that being a Believer in Him, Jesus Christ is unutterably precious to my soul! If you doubt your faith, you may doubt whether Christ is precious to you, but if your faith is certain, the preciousness of Christ to your heart is quite as certain. "He is precious." If the new life is in you, you are as sure to love the Savior as fish love the stream, or the birds the air, or as brave men love liberty, or as all men love their lives! Tolerate no questions here! Allow no debate upon this vital point of your religion! Jesus must be precious to you. Cleanse your eyes if any dust has dimmed your sight of Jesus' preciousness and be not satisfied till, in the language of the spouse, you can say, "My Beloved is the chief among ten thousand." "Yes, He is altogether lovely."

Mark, further, *the absoluteness of the text*—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious." It is not written how precious He is. The text does not attempt, by any form of computation, to measure the price which the regenerate soul sets upon her bosom's Lord. There is no hint that He is moderately precious. It does not even say positively or comparatively precious. I infer, therefore, that I may, if I choose, insert the word, "superlatively." And, certainly, if I did so, there would be no exaggeration, for more dear than light to the eyes, or life to the body, is Jesus to the sanctified heart! Each saint can truthfully sing—

"Yes, You are precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust!
Jewels to You are gaudy toys
And gold is sordid dust."

Since no sparkling gems or precious metals, no royal regalia, or caskets of rare jewels can ever equal the value of Jesus, the comparison is vain. We therefore place Him by Himself, alone, and say that He is absolutely precious to Believers. Gold is precious, but the diamond is more so and, in comparison with the diamond, the gold is of small account. The diamond is precious, but give a man a bagful of diamonds of the first water and put him down in a desert, or let him be out on the wild waste of ocean—he would give all his diamonds for a draught of pure water to drink, or a crust of bread to eat—so that, in certain cases, even the excellent crystal would lose its value. In fact, mineral substances are merely arbitrary signs of value, they have but little worth in themselves. Gold in itself is less useful than iron and a diamond of little more account than a piece of glass. They have no absolute intrinsic value which would remain the same under all contingencies. But Christ is absolutely precious! That is to say, nothing can ever match Him, much less excel Him, and He is precious under all circumstances! There never can arrive a time when we shall be compelled to confess His lack of value, or lower our estimate of Him. He is infinitely precious! O my Soul, do you esteem Him so? My Heart, are you sure of this, that unto you He is precious beyond compare? Positively precious? Comparatively precious, though Heaven itself were compared? Superlatively precious beyond all things that can be dreamed of, or imagined? Is He to you essential preciousness, the very standard of all value? Thus it should be,

for the text means no less—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious."

The thought which I desire to bring out into fullest relief is this, that *Jesus Christ is, today, continually precious to His people*. The moment a soul believes in Jesus, his sins are forgiven. Well, then, the precious blood that washes all sin away, is not that done with? Oh, no! Unto you that believe, though you have believed to the saving of your soul, He is still precious, for your guilt will return to your conscience and you will yet sin, being still in the body, but there is a fountain still filled with blood and thus unto you, experimentally, the cleansing Atonement is as precious as when you first relied upon its expiating power! No, Jesus is more precious to you, now, than when first you were washed in His blood and were made white as snow, for you know your own needs more fully, have proved more often the adaptation of His saving Grace and have received a thousand more gifts at His blessed hands! I fear that some Christians imagine that after believing, all is done, but my Lord Jesus Christ is no old Almanac, used up and of no further service! He is not like the medicine which I took months ago, which then healed me of my disease, so that now I can afford to put the rest of it on the shelf and laugh at it—oh, no! He is still my Divine Medicine! I still need Him and I still have Him. If I believe in Him, I feel I need Him more than I ever did and He is dearer to me than ever He was. If I needed Him before, as a poor guilty sinner, I need Him just as much as a poor needy saint, hanging upon His daily bounty, deriving life perpetually from His life, peace from the virtue of His precious blood and joy from the flowing out of His love to me! Instead of Christ's losing value to the Believer, the pith of the text is this—that you, Believer, when you get Christ and get what Christ brings to you, instead of esteeming Him as though He were an empty vessel out of which you had drained the last drop, prize Him more highly than you ever did before! He is not a gold mine worked out and exhausted, a field reaped of its harvest, or a vineyard where the grape gleaning is done—He still has the dew of His youth, the fullness of His strength, the infinity of His wealth, the perfection of His power!

II. Now, Beloved, just for a minute or two, let us think how CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO YOU TODAY.

He is precious to you today *because His blood, even now, this day, is the only thing which keeps you from being a condemned sinner, exposed to the wrath of God*. There has been enough sin upon your soul, my Brother, my Sister, this very day, to cast you into Hell if your Surety had not stood between you and God's Justice. You have been into no sinful company today. You have been in your Sunday school class and I have been in the pulpit, but ah, my pulpit sins would have damned me, today, if it had not been for that precious blood! And your Sunday school sins would have shut you up in Hell if that dear Mediator had not stood between you and God! So, you see, it is not merely the first day in which you believe in which He is precious to you, but right on, still, as long as you are a sinner, the Intercessor stands and pleads for you, evermore putting your sin away, being yesterday, today and forever, your Savior,

your Shield, and your Defense and, therefore, evermore supremely precious!

Remember, too, He is precious *because the only righteousness you have is still His perfect righteousness*. That which pleads with God for you is not what you are, but what HE is! You are accepted at this moment, but you are only "accepted in the Beloved." You are not justified because you feel in a sweet frame of mind, or because your heart rejoices in the name of God. Oh, no! Your acceptance is all in your great Surety and if it could be possible that He and the entire system of His Grace could be withdrawn and Covenant engagements abrogated, you would be as unacceptable as even lost spirits are and, like they, forever driven from the face and favor of God! Is He not, then, as your accepted Substitute, at this hour most precious to you?

Moreover, Beloved, Jesus Christ is precious to you at this moment as much as ever He was, because from henceforth it is His example which you strive to imitate. So far as He is an example to His people, His Character has always been most admirable in your esteem—and this day you delight to know that in His life, God's Law appears—

"Drawn out in living characters."

You aspire to be like Him now—you expect to be perfectly like Him in the day of His appearing. Now, because He shows you what you shall be and because in Him lies the power to make you what you shall be, is He not, therefore, daily precious to you? In proportion as you fight with sin. In proportion as you seek for holiness with inward longing and sublime partings—in that proportion will Jesus Christ, the Paragon of all perfection, be precious in your esteem! Beloved, you are to be crucified with Him! Your flesh, with its corruptions and lusts, must die upon His Cross as He died. Is He not precious when you believe that it will be by virtue of His death that sin will die in you? You are to rise in Him! No, I trust you have already risen in Him into newness of life. I hope you are panting more and more after the resurrection life, that you may no longer regard the dead things of this world, but live for eternal things, as those whose "life is hid with Christ in God." If so, I know you will prize a risen Savior and your appreciation of Him will increase as you drink more deeply into the fellowship of the risen life. Forget not, Beloved, that our Redeemer has ascended, and in that ascension every saint has his share. I do not say that you all enjoy your share yet, but, in proportion as you do so, you will reckon Christ to be precious, for He "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." "Our conversation is in Heaven from where we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," whose Second Advent is to be the perfection of our spiritual life, the unveiling of the hidden beauties and manifestations of the sons of God! Just in proportion as you enter into your royal heritage and live in it, and believe in it—in this proportion Jesus Christ will be precious to you.

Beloved, let me tell you a secret. To many of you there is as much in Christ undiscovered as you have already enjoyed. Your faith has only yet grasped Christ as saving you from going down to the Pit—Christ is

precious to you so far—but if your faith could even now comprehend the fact that you are one with Christ, members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—that you are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, ah, then, how doubly precious would Jesus be! As surely as your faith grasps more, becomes more capacious and appropriating, Christ will grow in preciousness to you! I am persuaded that there is a meaning in these words which none of God's saints have yet been able to discover, a deep mysterious preciousness of Jesus only to be known by a close and intimate acquaintance with Him such as falls to the lot of few. "Therefore, to you who believe"—just in proportion as you believe—the larger, the stronger, the deeper, the purer, the more sublime, the more full-grown your faith, the more Jesus Christ is precious to you. Ask, then, for more faith, that Jesus may be more precious to you! And God grant it to you, for His name's sake!

III. Thus much on that point. Now a few words on another. BECAUSE JESUS IS PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS, HE EFFICACIOUSLY OPERATES UPON THEM. The preciousness of Christ is, as it were, the leverage of Christ in lifting up His saints to holiness and righteousness!

Let me show you this. *The man who trusts Christ values Christ.* That which I value, I hold fast. Hence our valuing Christ helps us to abide steadfast in times of temptation. The world says to a Christian, "Follow me and I will enrich you." "No," says the Christian, "You cannot enrich me. I have Christ and I am rich enough." "Follow me," says the world, "and I will bless you. I will give you the delights of the flesh." "No," says the heart, "you cannot bless me, for these things are accursed and would bring me sorrow, not pleasure. Jesus Christ is my pleasure and to love Him and to do His will is my joy." Do you not see that the greater your value of Christ, the greater your strength against temptation? Although the devil may tempt you with this and that, yet Jesus Christ, being more precious than all else, you say, "Get you behind me, Satan. You cannot tempt me while Christ is dear to my spirit." Oh, may you set a very high value upon Christ, that thus you may be kept firm in the day of temptation!

Notice further *this valuing of Christ helps the Believer to make sacrifices*. Sacrifice-making contributes a large part of any high character. He who never makes a sacrifice in his religion may shrewdly suspect that it is not worth more than his own practical valuation of it. When a man has a very important document about him, on which depends his title to his estates, if a thief should try to take it from him, he will allow the thief to tear away his garments, to rob him of anything he has except his treasure! That he takes care to hold fast as long as he can. Indian messengers, men entrusted with jewels, have been known to swallow them to preserve them from robbers—and to allow themselves to be stripped naked of every rag they wore—but they would not lose the jewel with which their prince had entrusted them. So the Christian will say to the world, "Take away my fortune. Take away my livelihood. take away my good name, if you will, O lying world! But, despite all, I will retain my Savior, for He is precious!" Skin for skin, yes, all that a man

has will he give for Christ—and he never will or can give Christ up if Christ is precious to him.

See, then, that believing in Jesus makes Him precious and His being precious helps us to make sacrifices most cheerfully for His dear sake.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, *this valuing of Christ makes us jealous against sin*. What, I say, does Jesus Christ deign to live under my roof? Then, while He lives in my heart, I will give no roosting place to any foul bird of sin that might begin hooting in His ear! No, you enemies of Christ, begone, begone, begone! My Beloved shall have the best chamber of my spirit undefiled by your filthy feet. We are afraid lest we should do anything to grieve the heavenly Lover of our souls. This makes us keep our garments white and pick our steps through this miry world. Hence, a right valuing of Christ promotes directly the highest degree of sanctification. He who loves the Redeemer best, purifies himself most, even as His Lord is pure.

Besides, Beloved, *high valuing of Christ helps the Christian in the selection of his associates in life*. If I hold my Divine Lord to be precious, how can I have fellowship with those who do not esteem Him? You will not find a man of refined habits and cultured spirit happy among the lowest and most illiterate. "Birds of a feather flock together." Workers and traders unite in companies according to their occupations. Lovers of Christ rejoice in lovers of Christ and they delight to meet together, for they can talk to each other of things in which they are agreed. I would recommend you to choose the church of which you would be a member and the pastor whom you would hear by this one thing—by how much of Christ there is in that church and how much of the savor of Christ there is in that ministry! It is an evil thing for a child of God to be enchanted by mere rhetoric. As well might you choose a table to feast at merely on account of the knives and forks, or the polish of its mahogany! You require food for the soul and there is nothing that will long feed a true heart but Jesus Christ who is the meat and the drink of His people. Love to Christ soon makes a Christian discontented with mere oratory. He cannot be satisfied even with the best doctrine apart from Jesus. "They have taken away my Lord," he says, "and I know not where they have laid Him." I must hear about Jesus and if that silver bell does not ring, then all the rest may chime as they may, but my ear is at unrest until I hear that celestial sound!

Thus, a lofty estimate of Christ will be seen, if I had time to track it, to operate through the entire history of a Christian!

Little need is there more fully to particularize, but we must not fail to remark that *a sense of the Redeemer's preciousness makes the Christian useful*, for that which is much on the heart will soon creep up to the tongue—and the testimony of the heart is a notable method of spreading the Gospel. If you love Christ much, you will speak about Him. Your restrained speech will almost choke you. Your soul will be hot within you while you are silent, till, at last, like a fire in your bones which cannot be concealed any longer, it will break out and you will say to others, "My Beloved is the fairest and noblest of all beloveds! Oh, that you all knew

Him and loved Him as I do! If you see Him, His face is brighter than the sun in its strength! If you hear Him, His voice is sweeter than the chorus of Heaven! If you draw near to Him, His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia! And if you trust Him, you will find Him to be faithfulness and truth itself." The words may be broken, the sentences may not flow with rhythmical harmony, but he who really loves Christ must speak it out somehow or other! Thus, proclaiming with a burning heart the things which he has made touching the King, others will hear the good news and they will ask, "Who is this Precious One?" And they will, by God's good Spirit, be led to seek Him and find Him! So the Christian valuing Christ will come to be useful to the souls of men! Indeed, as I have said before, it will exercise an operating power on the entire Christian and render it holiness unto the Lord!

IV. Christ being thus precious, HIS PRECIOUSNESS BECOMES THE TEST OF OUR CHRISTIANITY.

I shall not prolong this humble talk, but shall, in conclusion, put a question to you. Beloved Brother or Sister, you know very well that I would be the last person in the world to speak lightly of the value of sound doctrine. I wish we were all far more acquainted with the Scriptures than we are and that the Doctrines of Grace were more clear to our understandings and more imprinted upon our hearts. But there are some people who love a certain set of doctrines so much, that if you differ a hair's breadth, they will denounce you as rotten to the core! They will not associate with any who do say, "Shibboleth," and sound the "sh" very harshly, too! They will cut off and condemn all God's people who do not precisely agree with them. Now, mark you, it is not written, "Unto you that believe a code of doctrines will be precious." That is true, but it is not written so in the text. The text is, "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious." It is better to count Christ precious than it is to count orthodoxy precious! It is not loving a creed, but it is loving Jesus that proves you a Christian! You may become such a bigot that it may be only the laws of the land which keep you from burning those who differ from you, and yet you may have none of the Grace of God in your heart! I love Protestantism, but if there is anything in this world that I have a horror of, it is that *political* Protestantism which does nothing but sneer and snarl at its fellow citizens—but which is as ignorant as a cow about what Protestantism truly is. The great truths of Protestantism—not merely Protestant ascendancy—and the great secret power of those truths, far more than the mere letter of them, is the thing to be prized. You may get it into your head that you are a member of the one only true church. You may wrap yourself about with any quantity of self-conceit, but that does not at all prove you to be a possessor of Grace. It is love to Christ that is the root of the matter. I am very sorry, my dear Brother, if you should hold unsound views on some points, but I love you with all my heart if Jesus is precious to you! I cannot give up Believers' Baptism. It is no invention of mine and, therefore, I cannot give up my Master's ordinance. I am sure that it is Scriptural. I cannot give up the Doctrine of Election—it seems to me so plainly taught in the Word. But over the head of all

doctrines and ordinances, and over everything, my Brother and Sister, I embrace you in my heart if you believe in Jesus and if He is precious to you, for that is the vital point! These are the matters of heart-work that mark a Christian—nothing else is so true a test. If you cannot say, "Jesus is precious to me," I do not care to what church you belong, or what creed you are ready to die for, you do not know the Truth of God unless the Person of Christ is dear to you!

This may serve as a test for each one here. My Brother, my Sister, do you believe in Him who is the Son of God and yet was born of the Virgin here on earth? Do you rely alone on Him who, on the Cross, poured out His heart's blood to redeem sinners? Do you depend on Him who now stands with His priestly garments on before the Throne of the Infinite Majesty, pleading for the unjust that they may live through Him? If you do, then answer this question—Do you love Jesus now? Do you love Him with your heart and soul? Would you serve Him? Do you serve Him? Will you serve Him? Will you subscribe your hand to be His servant from this day forth? Do you declare now, if not with lips, yet honestly with your soul, "He is precious to me, and I would give up all else sooner than give up Him"? Then it is well with you! Be happy and rejoice! Come to His Table and feast with Him at the banquet of love!

If not, you have not built on the Rock. If you are not loving Christ, I pray you examine yourself and see where you are, for there is but a step between you and Hell. Repent! May God convert you and give you now to put your confidence in Jesus and now to be saved, that He may be glorified in you, for hitherto He has had no glory from you! Unto you that do not believe, Christ is not precious, and you will go your way and despise Him. Oh, that you were made wise by the Holy Spirit and taught to consider things rightly! Then Christ would, indeed, be precious to you. He is the only way for your escape from the wrath to come. He is the only hope for you of ever entering the gates of Heaven. He must be your only Shelter when the world will be all ablaze, as soon it shall—when the stars shall fall, like withered leaves from the trees, when all creation shall rock and reel—and His voice shall resound in earth, and Heaven, and Hell, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!" The only hope of a Savior, in that last tremendous day, must be found in Jesus. Oh, seek Him now while He may be found! Call upon Him now while He is near! Turn not your heels away Him now, lest you turn once and for all to Hell! Come to Him now! Believe in Him now! And He shall have the glory! Amen.

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

Verse 1. *Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speaking.* Putting these evil things right away from you, having nothing further to do with any of them. Notice the repetition of the word "all." "All malice and all guile"—everything in the shape of deceit—"and all evil speaking." All these are to

be put away by all Believers, as rags are put away in the rag-bucket, or refuse on the dunghill!

2. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby*. Be glad to get simple Truths of God—the "milk of the Word." Even if you can digest the strong meat of the Word, never grow weary of the milk, for it is always good diet even for a full-grown Christian. Do not crave milk and water, but, "desire the unadulterated milk of the Word that you may grow thereby." It is not enough for you to be spiritually alive—you must grow! And especially while you are babes in Grace, your great desire should be that you may grow.

3. *If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*. You begin with tasting that the Lord is gracious. You go on to desire the unadulterated milk of the Word and so you grow more and more in Grace.

4. C*oming to Him, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious*. No one figure is sufficient to set forth Christ as He really is. A stone is a Scriptural simile and symbol of Christ, but we have to make the metaphor somewhat incongruous by comparing Him to "a living stone."

5. *You also, as living stones.* It is not "lively" stones. It is the same word in the original, in both cases—"a living stone" and, "living stones." The translators of our Authorized Version have often rendered the same Hebrew or Greek word in a different way, which is a pity, as it is in this instance. "You also, as living stones."

5. *Are built up a spiritual house.* A house that is a living structure from the foundation to the topstone.

5. *An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. He is a living stone, and you, as living stones, are built upon Him—and He and you together make up a living spiritual house. And in order that the house may have suitable tenants and be properly furnished, you also become priests and, as priests, you "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

6. *Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded*. Thus the Apostle quotes from the Prophet Isaiah the ancient prophecy concerning Christ.

7. *Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner*. Here Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22. What reverence these Inspired men had for the Inspired Book! The Spirit of God could have spoken fresh words if He had pleased, but, as if He meant to honor above everything else the Book which He had, Himself, Inspired, He "moved" Peter to quote the ancient Prophet and Psalmist in confirmation of what He was writing.

8. *And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed*. These are terrible words, but they are true. I cannot fully explain them. As Archbishop Leighton says, "It is easier to get into a depth over this awful Truth of God than it is to get out again." O God,

grant that none of us may stumble at Christ! If we do, Christ will not move because we kick at Him, or fall over Him.

9. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.* These are wonderful epithets that are here heaped upon Believers. May we have the Grace to be able to appropriate them and to expound them in our lives!

9. *That you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* See where you once were, and also see to what you have been called by God's Grace—"out of darkness into light." That is not all—into *His* light. Even *that* is not all—"into His *marvelous* light." The light of the Gospel is full of wonders. As common light is made up of many colors, so the light of God's Grace is made up of many marvelous colors—the colors of all the attributes of God!

10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* What a great change, conversion is! And how great a change conversion works! How wonderful is the effect of regeneration! We had not obtained mercy, but now we have obtained mercy! We were not a people, but now we are the people of God!

11. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you.* Peter puts his hands together and pleads with intense earnestness.

11. *As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.* Those fleshly lusts belong to this present evil world, but you do not belong to it—you are "strangers and pilgrims" here—therefore feel an absolute alienation towards such things, an utter abhorrence of them! Do not even think of them, much less practice them. "Abstain from fleshly lusts," for, while they injure the body, that is not the worst thing that they do, for they "war against the soul."

12, 13. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.* You are not to be disturbers of the peace. You Christian people are to cultivate the spirit of conciliation wherever you dwell, submitting yourselves, "for the Lord's sake," even to some things which you do not like.

13. *Whether it be to the king, as supreme.* In Peter's day, the king was a poor creature and something worse than that. Indeed, I might say of the bulk of the Emperors of Rome, who were the chief "kings" of that day, that they were monsters of iniquity! Yet the office was to be respected even when the man who occupied it could not be. Much more should it be respected when the occupant is what a true "king" should be.

14-16. *Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free.* Free in yourselves, free in your conscience, free in your mind and heart.

16. *And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.* You possess a freedom which others claim, but do not

know. You feel that you are no man's slave, yet you do not use your liberty for evil, or to the injury of others.

17-19. *Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully.* There is no credit in suffering rightfully—the credit is in patiently enduring suffering which you do not deserve.

20-21. *For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called.* It is part of a true Christian's calling to bear what is put upon him wrongfully.

21-23. *Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not: but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.* This leads Peter to make the following glorious declaration concerning the atoning Sacrifice of Christ.

24. *Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.* There was a transference of sin from sinners to Christ. This is no fiction. He, "His own Self," bore that sin "in His own body on the tree."

24. *That we, being dead to sins.* Because He died for us and we died in Him.

24. *Should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.* By His sufferings, you were cured of sin! His death not only removed from you the penalty of sin, but what is far better, it also removed from you the dread disease itself!

25. *For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.* God grant that this may be true concerning everyone of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

THE TWO DEBTORS
NO. 3015

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1906.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGE*ON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 14, 1867.

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed one hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more?" Luke 7:41, 42.

[Other Sermons on various parts of this Parable, are as follows: No. 2,768, Volume 48—DEBTORS AND DEBTORS; No. 1,739, Volume 29—BANKRUPT DEBTORS DISCHARGED and No. 2,127, Volume 36—LOVE'S COMPETITION—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.]

IT is not wise to compare ourselves with our fellow men. It is comparing one incorrect standard with another and is very apt to mislead. Still, as men will do this, as they will sail upon this tack, we will, for the moment, do the same with the view of correcting some of their mistakes.

I. The very brief Parable before us suggests four thoughts upon which we will dwell for a few minutes. The first is that THERE ARE DIFFERENT DEGREES IN OUR SINNERSHIP—some owe five hundred pence and others only fifty.

It would be very incorrect to say of all men, that they are alike sinful. That they are all guilty is true, but that they are all *equally* guilty is not true. There are persons who would contend very earnestly for this distinction because they claim to be among the better sort of sinners. They claim that they are not one tithe as guilty as many whom they know and that, in comparison with more grossly vicious persons, they are all but innocent! We will admit that, my excellent Friend. We will admit—not all, perhaps, that you would like us to admit—but we will at once allow that you are not so guilty as others. We will also admit that all sins are not alike degrading. There are vices, especially those which pollute the body, which manifestly lower men to the level of beasts, or worse than that, and we would not, for a moment, insinuate that our young friends who have been educated in the midst of godliness and have been preserved from any taint of vice, are so degraded by sin as drunks and revelers, the profane and the debauched.

Moreover, we are persuaded that the penalties of sin will differ and that, albeit all the wicked shall be cast into Hell, yet there will be degrees in the anguish of that lost state. Our Master has Himself told us, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with

few stripes. For unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required." There are great criminals whose punishment shall be more intolerable than that of others—and there are others, who have not sinned to the same extent, who, though justly punished with God's wrath—shall not endure it to the same extent as those who have plunged more deeply into iniquity.

Thus we are prepared to admit that there *are* differences in sin, differences in the consequent degradation of sinners, and differences in the punishment due to sin. Our own conscience, common sense and right judgment teach us this, yet notwithstanding the admissions, I want to put a few plain questions to you, dear Friends, who think that you are among the fifty-pence debtors and who look down with some sort of disdain upon those who owe five hundred pence! And, first, let me ask you this question—*Are you quite sure that you are the lesser sinners*? Are you certain that you are to be reckoned among the fifty-pence debtors? Remember that we must always judge sin not merely by its outward appearance, but by the motives and character of the person committing it—and also by the circumstances under which the offense was perpetrated.

Will you not all admit that *a sin committed against light and knowledge is far worse than a sin of ignorance*? If a man should offend against the law of the land, not knowing it to be the law, his offense would not be as gross as that of another man who, understanding what the law is, deliberately sets himself in opposition to it. It may be that some of those upon whom you have looked down as owing God five hundred pence may have been without the light that you have had. Probably the most of them never had the privileges that you have enjoyed. Did not your godly mother pray over you from your very birth? Did not your anxious father diligently instruct you in the way of salvation? You have read the Bible, you have a tolerably clear notion what is right and what is wrong, so you have sinned in the light—you have sinned knowing it to be sin. May not, therefore, your little sins, as you think them to be, really be more heinous in the sight of God than those apparently greater sins which others have committed without the same degree of light and knowledge that you have had?

Further, *must not sin also be measured by the violence which a man has to do to his conscience in order to commit it*? To some persons, no doubt, from their early habits and even from their very constitution, I will not say that sin becomes inevitable, but certainly they glide into it almost by nature and without being conscious of any restraint—or the restraint is so little that they scarcely feel it. I know that there are some of you who, happily, had to pull and tug against the bit and bridle before you could live as sinners. Conscience has so sharply pricked you and made you so uneasy in your course of life, that you have had to wrestle with your own conscience as a man struggles with his adversary. You have had to clutch conscience by the throat and try to throttle it and if you could have done so, you would have stifled, once and for all, that warning cry which became a constant nuisance to you. You could not sin with such pleasure as others could because your conscience would not

keep silent, so, may not those minor offenses of yours which have been committed, notwithstanding the alarms of your outraged conscience, have had in them a heinousness which does not apply to the sins of others who have not had to contend against this inward monitor when plunging into sin?

Yet again, dear Friends, *may not example sometimes have a great deal to do with sin*? When I see some of our young people inclining to be drunks, I am very sorry and I blame them. But can I wonder at their conduct when I see how many parents train up their children as if they really intended to make drunks of them—tempting them to drink and giving them their first taste of that which becomes a cause of stumbling to them? I do not see how, if it were the objective of some parents to make their boys drunks, they could act otherwise than as they now do! I have heard a workingman say to his son, when he has passed him a jug of ale, "Take a drink, my lad," and he has looked quite pleased when the boy has taken a deep draught. And then he has taken him to the gin palace and let him mingle freely with the evil company usually found in such a place! So, is there any wonder that the boy becomes a drunk? Can a father blame his son for swearing when he is, himself, a blasphemer? No. And I say that people who have thus been in the midst of sin from their very childhood, may not, after all, be such great sinners as others who have had the very opposite example set before them—and yet have committed these sins contrary to all the training of their early childhood. Some of us cannot recollect a fault on the part of our parents. Honestly looking back upon the private life of my father and mother, I cannot recall anything in their example which it would have been unsafe for me to imitate. Well then, if I have sinned, I have sinned against a parental example which I ought to have followed and, therefore, there must be more guilt in my fifty-pence sin than in the five-hundred-pence sin of others who have not had such an example as I had!

Do you not think, too, that circumstances greatly affect the comparative enormity of sin? If a thief steals a loaf because he has starving children crying at home, would you give him the same punishment as you would award to another man who steals what he really does not need and who seriously injures the man he robs merely for the greed of gain? You all make distinctions as to the motives which prompt to various actions—if you find that the motive, in one case, although not right, was more excusable than in the case of another—you judge the first one the more leniently. How do you know, my dear Hearers who resisted the calls of Divine Grace last Lord's-Day, that you were not more guilty than that man who was not here but who reeled home that same night, intoxicated? You came into direct contact with God's mercy and you resisted it—and that is more than the poor drunk did! And as to some of you seat-holders who are constantly here, yet still remain unconverted though we have entreated you to lay hold on Christ—I will not say it, but I almost think that your resistance of those continued invitations of Grace may have in it more of moral guilt, in the sight of God, than some of those offenses for which men are shut up in prison and are execrated

by their fellows! Many people do not regard sins against God as being so heinous as crimes against men, yet they are even more so! And it is one of the marks of our common moral conduct that while a man may not be greatly offended if you call him a sinner, he would be very angry if you called him a criminal! That is to say such a man thinks there is not much amiss in having offended God, but he thinks it would be a dreadful thing to have broken the laws of his fellow men!

If you think these things over seriously, I should not wonder if anyone of you who at first said, "I am a fifty-pence debtor. I thank God that there are differences between sinners and that I am not so degraded as other men are"—should have to say, "It makes very little difference to me after all. It is true that I have never been a thief, I have never committed an act of unchastity, I have been an honest, upright, respectable member of society, yet, as I have not believed in Jesus Christ and turned from sin, I may be among those who were apparently first, who shall be last, while some who seemed to be last, shall stand far before me." I shall *not* be sorry, dear Hearer, if that is the point to which you come. Indeed, I shall rather be glad, for it will be a more hopeful position for you to occupy than that which you once felt was your right place!

II. Having thus shown you that there are degrees in sin, I shall now pass on to show you that THERE IS AN EQUALITY IN THE BANKRUPTCY OF BOTH THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE SINNERS.

Neither of the debtors in the Parable had anything with which to pay his debt. And when God means to save a soul, He makes it realize that it has nothing with which it can discharge its debt to God. If any of you think that you can do *anything* towards saving yourselves, go and do it! But Christ will have nothing to do with you on those terms! You must be brought to feel that you are helpless, hopeless, lost, ruined and undone—and that you cannot lift even a finger to save yourself—but that the Grace of God must do everything for you, from the first to the last! And unless you are thus emptied, and humbled, and laid low in the dust before God, I see no sign that His Spirit is effectually working in you—

"While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge."

Both these debtors knew that "they had nothing to pay." *There are some men who are conscious of a great deal of guilt who offer to discharge their liability by their repentance.* "Oh," says such a man, "I am very sorry for my sin and that sorrow will surely make up for it. My tears shall flow freely and I will deprive myself of this pleasure and that! Surely that is all that is needed." But the man whom God means to save knows that his repentance cannot atone for his past guilt. If I get into debt, it is no use for me to be sorry—that sorrow will not pay my debt! And as I am immeasurably indebted to God, my tears of repentance will not discharge that debt—

"Could my tears forever flow,"

they would not atone for sin! I hope you all realize the Truth of what I am saying, for if you do, it is a token for good in your case.

Some others, though they cannot pay the full amount of their debt, hope to make a compromise. They will do their best and leave the Lord Jesus

Christ to make up the rest. They cannot offer to God perfect obedience, so they offer such obedience as they can—and they trust that will satisfy Him. But a soul that has been truly awakened by the Holy Spirit knows that "compromise" is quite out of the question. The Divine declaration is, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." There is not a word about some things which are required and other things which may be excused. My dear Hearer, I trust you are convinced that no half-obedience can ever be accepted by God! If you are to be saved by your own works, you must be absolutely perfect in thought, word and deed from the moment of your birth to the hour of your death! One crack in the crystal vase of perfection spoils it—and you all know that the vase was not only cracked, but smashed to atoms long ago. Do not trust in your own righteousness, but confess before God that you have "nothing to pay" off that terrible debt which you have incurred through sin.

Some men give their note of hand and promise to pay their debt. They hope they will be better in the future than they have been in the past. But suppose they are? They will then be no better than they are always bound to be—and how can that improvement discharge their *past* debts? Try that plan on one of your tradesmen. You owe him, shall I say fifty pounds? Well, then, go to him and say, "I cannot pay what I owe you, but I will never get into your debt again." Will that promise take your name off his ledger? You know that it will not! And so, even if you could serve God perfectly in the future, that would not put away your sins in the past! The fact is, these promises of yours are just like the paper money which represents no real security and so leads to bankruptcy. You may build up a nice-looking structure with promises of good works which you will do in the future, but it will all come tumbling down one of these days—and great will be the fall thereof.

This is the only safe declaration for a man to make—"O God, I am deeply in Your debt and have nothing to pay! If You would save me through my repenting, even then, if You did not enable me to repent, I could not repent, for my heart is hard as a stone! Lord, will You not take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh? And, Lord, if I am to be holy in the future, it must be Your Grace which will make me so. I know that if I am ever to enter Heaven, I must be holy. And I also know that holiness must be worked in me by Your Holy Spirit. Consequently, it cannot be any credit to me—You must have the credit of it all. As for me, I am like the two debtors, I have 'nothing to pay'—nothing whatever! If You send the sheriff's officer to take me and put me in prison, and tell me that I shall never come out until I have paid the uttermost farthing, I must lie there forever and ever, for I know that it is not in my power to meet even one in ten thousand of Your just demands. If you should lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, my building for eternity must be found wanting. Pull it down, Lord, and then build me up as You would have me!"

We are all equal here—"there is no difference." You respectable ladies and gentlemen are on a level with the worst villains in the land! My Lord,

you are no better off, in this respect, than a chimney-sweeper! Your Majesty, even *you* have no preference, in this matter, over the poorest woman in your dominions! If you are to be saved—high and low, rich and poor, you great and mighty ones, and you despised and abandoned ones—so must all bow together here as you will have to lie in earth's common grave! So must you bow down in one common lowliness of mind before your God, whose debtors you all are, confessing that you have "nothing to pay"—not a single rusty farthing of goodness in the whole human race! Jew and Gentile must bow together before God, crying, "Guilty, guilty, GUILTY! We are guilty, everyone of us and we have nothing to plead in answer to the demands of Your righteous Law. And even this confession, itself, is forced from our lips because we cannot help feeling that it is, alas, but too true." We are all equal here.

III. Passing on to the next point, we observe that when Sovereign Mercy dealt with these two debtors—the fifty-pence man and the five-hundred-pence man—IT PUT THEM ON A LEVEL, AGAIN, for their creditor "frankly forgave them both."

The man who owed the five hundred pence could turn to the other debtor and say, "I am out of debt, my Brother!" And the other one could say to him, "Give me your hand! I cannot say any more than you can, but, glory be to God, I cannot say any less, for I, also, am out of debt! I could not pay my fifty pence, so I could have been shut up in the debtors prison—and you could not pay your five hundred pence, so you, also, could have been kept in prison. And though I did not owe as much as you did, yet I owed more than I could ever have paid, so let us together bless the name of the Lord who has frankly forgiven us both because His only-begotten and well-beloved Son has redeemed us from going down to the Pit by paying all our debt on Calvary's Cross."

There is one word that I want you to especially notice—"He *frankly* forgave them both." By that I understand that he forgave them altogether because he willed to do so and not because of any reason in them why he should do so. Once and for all, he fully cancelled all their debts. And now, just as if they had never been in debt at all, he could not arrest them for debt and they had no cause to be afraid that he would do so, for he had no legal claim against them for he had, himself, by an act of Grace, forgiven them all that they owed—and they were, therefore, clear. Ah, my dear Hearers, your hearts must leap for joy if you know that God has forgiven all your past sin! Sometimes, when we get to talking about the perfect pardon which we have received from God, some people say, "How egotistical, how presumptuous you are!" Well, we will be egotistical and presumptuous in that sense—and the more we are so, the better will it be! Anyone who has believed in Jesus is wholly forgiven! Against me, if I believe in Jesus and against you, if you believe in Jesus, there is no sin recorded in God's Book of Remembrance! It is all blotted out! If you could turn the pages over, you would not find a single entry of the sin of a Believer. In God's sight, if I have trusted in Christ, I am as pure as though I had never sinned, for I have been so washed in Christ's precious blood that not a spot or wrinkle remains upon me! And you, too, Believer, are not half-pardoned. Christ is not half a Savior to us, but a

whole Savior! And the pardon which God gives to us is a full and final pardon. He does not forgive us upon condition that we do not go back to the world. He makes no such condition and He will not let us go back. He forgives us outright, and puts the whole of our sin away forever. He receives the prodigal back into His bosom and bids him sit at the table and feast while the music and the dancing make glad his heart!

Do you *know*, dear Hearer, that *you* are forgiven? "Oh," says one, "I would give all I have to know that." You may know it. If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, that is a sure proof that you are pardoned. And you may live and you *ought* to live in a constant realization of perfect pardon through the precious blood of Jesus. There may have come into this place one who would not like his name to be known, or his character to be described. He has gone very, very far into everything that is evil. But he is now standing at the foot of the Cross and he is looking up to the Crucified Christ and he can say, "My trust is in Jesus only." There is probably also here a young man whose life, from his youth up, has been most excellent—nobody could ever detect a flaw in his moral character. He, too, is looking upon the wounds of Jesus, and he also can say, "My trust is in Him alone." Now, these two persons are equally pardoned! That great sinner has no more against him in God's Book than that excellent youth who is also forgiven—"He frankly forgave them both"—nor forgave one of them fully and the other only partially, but, "He frankly forgave them both."

My eyes glance here and there upon some of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ whose life stories remind me of the differences there are between them—and also of the likeness which Divine Grace has worked in them. There are some here whose tongues were used in blasphemy not long ago. The drunkard's cup was often at their lips and the drunkard's language was their usual speech. But they are washed, cleansed and sanctified! And now there is no difference between them and those who were preserved from wandering out of the path of morality. "No difference," did I say? Sometimes I think that there is *this* difference—that those who have sinned much and have had much forgiven, are the warmest-hearted among us, the most faithful and the most earnest. So that if we, in our earlier days, seemed to excel them, they now excel us and we almost envy them their holy joy and earnest love to the Lord who has washed them from their many sins! Still, there is an equality between these two classes. They are both alike pardoned, both washed in the same precious blood, both clothed in the same spotless righteousness, both equally adopted into the family of God, both equally secured by the Everlasting Covenant and both equally have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! And they shall both equally stand at the right hand of Christ, wearing the white robes, waving the palm branches, and they shall equally share His victory as they sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

IV. Now, lastly, THERE IS ANOTHER POINT OF DIFFERENCE—"Which of them will love him more?"

It is quite certain that there are some Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ more than others do. Some who love Him much while others only love Him a little. Shall I describe those who love Christ only a little? If I do, some of you will be able to recognize your own portraits. They come to the place of worship pretty regularly. They sing, but not too loudly, for they are afraid of being too enthusiastic. They seldom come to a Prayer Meeting and only occasionally to the week-night service. They take just sufficient spiritual nourishment to keep them alive! I suppose they are afraid of taking too much, lest their spiritual nature should become too vigorous. They do have family prayer—sometimes. They do pray regularly, but it is very short. It may be sweet, but it is certainly very short. They do some good in the world—at least, we hope they do. They could count on one hand all the souls they have ever brought to Christ and all the good works they have ever done for the Lord Jesus Christ might be recorded on a very small scrap of paper. Some of them are wealthy and they heard a man ask them to give a tithe of their income to Christ. They thought he was a fanatic—they never *dreamed* of doing such a thing as he urged, though they do, sometimes, give a sixpence to the collection! They like other people to be earnest. They do not object to that unless those people ask them, also, to be earnest. These little-loved people have believed in Jesus, so they will go to Heaven—but such a change will have taken place in them that we shall scarcely know them.

I have seen whole congregations of this sort of people! I have preached to them—that was terrible work, I can assure you. I have gone home with the deacon and he has been a person of the same sort. He didn't care to know how the cause was getting on in London. Indeed, he didn't care much whether it was getting on or not. As for revivals, if you only mention the word in the presence of such Brethren, they say, "No good ever comes of them." These people have had little forgiven, so they only love a little. They were never very great sinners and never had any deep repentance so, in their own estimation, they never owed Jesus Christ very much—they are a sort of superficial Christians who will be "saved, yet so as by fire."

You hardly need that I should describe those who love Christ much—those who delight to praise Him, to pray in His name and to do all in their power to make Him known to others—those who give to God's cause at no ordinary rate, and help us to fight Satan in no ordinary way and to spread the Gospel of Christ in no common fashion! Last week some of us were at a meeting at which there was present a dear Brother in the ministry, the very flame of whose eyes seemed to set us all on fire—and when we have heard him speak from this platform, the very place has seemed to shake under the power of his fervent proclamation of the Truth of God and his impassioned prayers! A man who is thus all soul and all heart cannot preach lifeless, heavy, drugging sermons—and cannot bear to be with people who are dull, cold and heavy of heart. He feels that he has had much forgiven and, therefore, he loves much. I

could also tell you of some godly Sisters who have given almost all their living to the cause of God and of others who give all their time to God's service, having sacrificed everything else that they may devote themselves to the cause of Christ. These are they who love much.

We have differences even in the ministry. We have some Brothers who preach twice in the week, and they get so weary that they have to go away for a long holiday. But there are others who can preach 10 times in the week, or who, if they are not preaching, are visiting their people from door to door—and yet they do not die, but bless God that they have the strength thus to serve Him! As it is in the pulpit, so is it in the Sunday school, and so is it with all classes of Christians—there is a difference. Some seem to be all heart and others seem to have no heart at all. There are some who serve the Lord with their whole soul and others who give Him just the odds and ends of their time and strength. I pray God to raise up among us many Brothers and Sisters who shall be eminent for their Grace and consecration to Christ!

What is the best way to reach this point? Not to be great sinners, but to *feel* that you are great sinners! To have a deep sense of your own sinfulness. If you have never plunged into open vice, be thankful that you have not done so, but regard your sin in the light in which I tried to put it in the earlier part of this sermon. Set a clear view of it till you are humbled, broken down and crushed under its ponderous weight. Then go to Jesus Christ with this load of sin and, trusting in Him, know that you are forgiven through His atoning Sacrifice. And then there will be a potent motive within you which will give strength to your entire life and put muscle, nerve, sinew and bone into your Christianity! Then will you sing—

"Love I much? I've more forgiven!
I'm a miracle of Grace!"

God bless this message to those poor trembling souls who are deeply in debt through sin—that they may see God's way of forgiving them through the merits and death of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. And may those who are forgiven much love Jesus much, and may God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 7:36-50.

Verse 36. *And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.* It was usually a suspicious circumstance when a Pharisee desired to be familiar with Christ. It might generally be suspected that he wished to entrap Him. Yet, on this occasion, if there was no real friendliness to Christ, there was at least the appearance of it. We see what our Savior did when the Pharisee gave Him an invitation—"He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." The Lord saw there an opportunity for usefulness. He knew that He would have a good reason for speaking personally to this Pharisee, who, perhaps, was one of the better sort. At all events, our Lord felt that it was right for Him to go into that house,

even if they did watch Him and try to catch Him in His talk. If there was hypocrisy there, there was the more need for His Presence, as Jesus Himself said concerning His eating with publicans and sinners, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

37, 38. *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.* She was not a sinner in the ordinary sense of the word, but she was "a sinner" by trade, "a sinner" by profession. It always seems to me that in this description of her, every word is emphatic. There is much meaning in every separate action of the woman and, even in her little mannerisms, there is something that is instructive to us. Our Lord was reclining at His meal and His feet were turned towards the door, so that she had not to come far into the house before she reached His feet. And there she stood "at His feet." Those are blessed words, "*at His feet.*" That is where we, also, should stand and weep. That is where we should sit and learn. That is where we should wait and serve. That is where we hope to live and reign forever—"at His feet."

This woman "stood at His feet *behind Him*"—as if she were unworthy to be looked upon by Him, but found it honor enough to be behind Him, so long as she was but near Him—"at His feet behind Him, weeping"—with sorrow for her sin, with joy for her pardon, with delight in her Lord's Presence, perhaps with grief at the prospect of what yet awaited Him. And she "began to wash His feet with tears." O sweet repentance which fills the basin better than the purest streams of earth could ever do! Then she unbound her tresses—those nets in which she had, perhaps, caught many a man when she had hunted for the precious life after her former sinful manner. But now she uses those tresses for something better, she makes a towel of her hair. That which was her pride shall now fill that humble office and even be honored thereby. "And kissed His feet." Oh, the tenderness of her love and the strength of her passion—a sacred one, not born of earth at all—for that dear Lord of hers! She kissed His feet and then she poured upon them the precious perfumed ointment which had cost so much.

39. *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying.* Well, what did he say? I think that if some of us, taught of God, and let into the secret of eternal love, had been there, we would have whispered to one another, "What a change has been worked in that woman! There she is, weeping and washing the Savior's feet, when, but the other day, she was standing at the corners of the streets, in the attire of a harlot, plying her accursed trade." How greatly we would have rejoiced to see her! But it is only Divine Grace that teaches us to rejoice over even one sinner that repents and Simon the Pharisee appeared to know little or nothing of Divine Grace! He had, however, the good manners not to say aloud what he thought, but, "he spoke within himself, saying."

39. *This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him: for she is a sinner.* Yet "this Man" *was* a Prophet and He *did* know "who and what manner of woman" that was who touched Him! More than that, He knew what manner of woman His Divine Grace had made her and how true, how pure was the love which she was then manifesting to Him! And He knew how deep was her repentance, how changed her heart, how renewed her entire life was. He knew all about her, but poor Simon could not know "this woman" as Christ knew her.

40. *And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have something to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on.* Christ often answers people who do not speak audibly. He answers those who only speak in their hearts. So you who are silently praying may take comfort. If Jesus answers a Pharisee who speaks in his heart against Him, much more readily will He answer His own people when they are speaking in their hearts to Him! It was a hopeful sign that Simon used a respectful title in speaking to Christ and that he was willing to listen.

41-43. *There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave more. And He said unto him, You have rightly judged.* Now, dear Friends, I hope that those of us who have had much forgiven are proving, by the warmth of our love, how right was this judgment on the part of Simon. If you have had much forgiven, be well to the front in every struggle on behalf of the cause of Christ! Be well to the front, also, with your gifts for Him—bring your alabaster box and break it for Him. Wait not for anyone to ask you, much less to press you, to give to Him who gave His all for you, but, spontaneously, out of the love you bear to Him who has loved you so much as to die for you, prove that you love Him most of all.

44. *And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See you this woman*? Christ knew that Simon did see her, and that he had just been sneering at her in his heart. "See you this woman?"

44. *I entered into your house, you gave Me no water for My feet: but she has washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.* "I became your guest and, therefore, as My host, the first thing you should have done was to give the ordinary Oriental hospitality of washing My feet. 'You gave Me no water for My feet; but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.'" What a changing of places there is now! The Lord has made the first to be last and the last to be first! Simon thought himself far in advance of this woman, but now that Christ had explained their true positions, I should think he began to see that the woman was far ahead of him.

45. *You gave Me no kiss.* Yet that was the Eastern custom in welcoming an honored guest.

45. *But this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet.* "At best, you would only have kissed Me once, but this woman,

since I came in, has never left off kissing My feet. With a sacred audacity of love, she has lifted My feet to her lips and kissed them again and again." So, see here again how the first is last, and the last first.

46. *My head with oil you did not anoint: but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment.* "That is a common custom in the case of a guest of honorable estate, but you did not observe it. Yet this woman has poured upon My feet the most precious form of perfume that could be procured anywhere."

47, 48. *Therefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said unto her, Your sins are forgiven.* There I see the clear run of the argument—that she is a woman who has had much forgiven by Christ and that is the reason why she loves Him so much. But often, when an inference is very natural and plain, the Savior leaves men to draw that one for themselves, while He draws another. He puts the same Truth in another shape—"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." I am afraid that there are many professed Christians who must have had very little forgiven them, for they love Christ very little. This seems to be the age of little love to Christ. There are some few who love the Master intensely, but oh, how few they are! Some persons think they are only very little sinners and we are told, nowadays, what a little thing sin is, and what a little place Hell is, and what a very short time the punishment of sin will last! Everything is according to scale and it must be so in religion! As you diminish the guilt of sin and the punishment of sin, you also diminish the sense of obligation in being saved from sin. Consequently, you diminish our love to Christ and we shall gradually get less and less, I fear, unto the old scale, the old balance! The old shekel of the sanctuary shall once again be used by us.

49. *And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that also forgive sins*? "Who is this who can thus absolve from guilt?

50. *And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* "Go home, good Woman, do not stay here and be bothered by these people." And oftentimes that is the best advice that we can give to new converts. There is a theological controversy raging and the jargon of the different schools of thought is being used by one and another, but, do go home, good Soul. You need not trouble about controversial matters. Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you. If you know that, you know as much as you need to know just now. Go home and be quiet and happy. "Go in peace."

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

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

GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN
NO. 3016

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1906.

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

"And, behold they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."
Matthew 9:2.

"And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you."
Mark 2:3-5.

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto Him, Son, your sins are forgiven you."
Luke 5:18-20.

[Other sermons upon this miracle are as follows—No. 2,337, Volume 39, THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT and No. 2,417, Volume 41, FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS man was paralyzed in body, but he was very far from being paralyzed in mind. From the little we know of him, he would appear to have been earnest, resolute, energetic and persevering. You very seldom find persons attempting more for you than you, yourself, desire—and if the four men who carried this paralytic person were so zealous in getting him under the Lord's notice, we may be morally certain that he, himself, was even more set upon it. His bearers would never have gone the length of breaking up the roof and letting him down upon the heads of the crowd unless he had urged them to do so. He was something more than passive under such heroic treatment! If he did not suggest the plan, he evidently entered into it most willingly.

Suppose it to be your own case, my dear Hearer. Are you not persuaded that if, broken in spirit, you were to say to your friends, "let me alone, my case is hopeless," few would dream of exciting themselves to desperate efforts on your behalf, but would let you lie in your apathy, according to your request? It is a rule that you must, yourself, be energetic if you are to make other people energetic on your behalf and, therefore, it seems to me that this man had a resolute and intense

spirit—and had such influence over his friends that he inspired them by his eagerness, having first won them by his importunity. He besought them to aid him in what had become a necessity of life—he must see Jesus. He must be brought before the great Healing One, somehow or other, and because of his personal eagerness and pressing importunity, his friends made up their minds to help him.

We may yet discover a little more about this palsied man and it will not be mere conjecture, for, by certain rules established by observation and experience, we may often learn much of a character from very small circumstances. Our Lord Jesus was accustomed to address the persons who came to Him very much according to their mental condition. When one poor man, half imbecile in spirit, was brought to him, He asked him, "Will you be made whole?" He was so listless as barely to have the will to be restored and Christ's saying, "Will you be made whole?" is evidence to us that even the poor creature's wishes had begun to slumber. Take it as a general rule that while Christ regarded the onlookers and spoke with some view to them, yet, in the main, His first thoughts were concerning His patient and He generally spoke with an eye to that patient's case. I gather, therefore, from the fact that Jesus said to this man, "Son, be of good cheer," that he was very greatly depressed in spirit and unhappy—and when He added not, "Your palsy shall be removed," but "Your sins are forgiven you," we are quite safe in concluding that the cause of the man's sadness was his sin, for which beyond all things else he desired pardon! Our Lord went straight to the root of the mischief—the man was sad, and so He cheered him. The man was sad about his sin and so He granted him forgiveness. His palsy would, secondarily, be a fountain of bitter grief to the sick man and, therefore, the Savior dealt with it in the second place. But first and foremost, over and above all grief for his infirmity, was his painful sense of unforgiven sin. It is not likely that he told his bearers about that, for they might not have been able to sympathize with such a spiritual necessity—to them he spoke of his affliction, not of his repentance, for while they would pity him for his palsy, they might have ridiculed him for his guilty conscience. The Lord, however, knew the heart's grief without telling—He read it in the sufferer's looks. The great Sin-Forgiver knew right well that earnest gaze which meant, "Be merciful to me, a sinner," and He met that wistful glance with a smile and the cheering words, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

I suppose that the patient was a young man, for the word, "Son," would hardly have been spoken by our Lord to a man older than Himself. I gather that he was a man of childlike faith, for Jesus did not call people His "sons and daughters" unless there was something of the childlike spirit about them. He was evidently a man of simple-hearted faith who fully believed that Christ could forgive his sin and so it happened to him, after the rule of the Kingdom, "According to your faith, be it unto you."

The case stood thus—The paralyzed man was burdened with sin, weighed down and oppressed in conscience. This urged him to seek the Savior. "I must see the Christ," he said. His passionate earnestness extracts a promise from the neighbors that they will take him to Jesus.

He begs them to do it now. But the Lord could not be reached, for a dense crowd shut Him in. "I must see Jesus," cries the man. His friends reply, "You cannot rise from your bed." "Carry me upon it," cries he. "But we cannot get in." "Try," he says. They reached the door and they cried, "Make room. Here is a man sick of the palsy who must see Jesus." They are gruffly answered, "Plenty of other poor men want to see Him. Why should everybody give place to you? What is the use of pushing? There is no room for that bed here! What folly to drag a sick man into all this pressure and heat! The Prophet is speaking—you will interrupt Him. Away with you!" The bearers cannot enter. They plead and they push, but all in vain.

"Then," cries the resolute man, "take me up the back stairs. Get me to the top of the verandah and let down the bed through the ceiling. Run any risk for I must get to Jesus." Possibly his friends object and state the difficulties of the procedure suggested. "Why," says one, "you will be hanging over the people's heads, for there will be no room for you when we let you down." "Try it," he cries. "If I am let down from the top, there will be no fear of my not reaching the ground! They cannot push me up again, or keep me on their heads! They must make room for me." His earnestness having been ingenious, now becomes infectious! His bearers smile at his eagerness and enter into it with zest. He will give them no rest till his desire is accomplished—and so they break up the tiling, and let him down before Jesus, with the glad result described in the Gospel, "Jesus said to him, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

We have before us, *first, a doctrine*—the doctrine that it is one of the grandest comforts in the world to have your sins forgiven you! "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Secondly, we have before us *a question*. May everyone of you have the honesty to ask it and to answer it in your own case. The question—Have I had my sins forgiven me? For, if so, I have a right to be of good cheer and to be as merry as the birds in spring. But if not, I am destitute of the greatest comfort which Christ, Himself, can speak to a sinner's heart.

I. Dear Hearer, let us give our hearts at once to THE DOCTRINE. It is plainly taught us here that the pardon of sin is one of the richest comforts which the Lord can give to a man.

It is so, first, because *the pardon of sin removes the heaviest sorrow which a man can feel*. Some know little about this grief. May the Lord cause them to mourn with broken hearts or they will perish in their sins! Those of us who have known the burden of sin can tell you that it is a crushing load. Thoughtful persons who have seen things in their true light—honest persons who refuse to be flattered, pure-minded people who long to be right with God—all these will tell you that a sense of sin is, of all miseries, the most sharp and disquieting. To know that you have sinned against light and knowledge with special aggravations is as a hot iron to the flesh and as a serpent's venom in the blood. There is no rest day or night to a soul which carries this Hell within it—

"Sin, like a venomous disease
Infests our vital blood!
The only balm is Sovereign Grace,

And the Physician God."

I speak what I know from personal experience and I only say what many a hearer knows, too, within his own soul. Once let conviction flash in upon the soul and the world loses its fascinations—the music hall, the ballroom and the theater are robbed of their enchantments—even business wearies and domestic joys are deprived of sweetness. A sense of sin spoils all. Guilt on the conscience hangs over everything like a funeral pall. It drowns all music with its prophetic knell and withers every green herb beneath its burning feet.

Sin, sin—what direr ill than you are, can even Satan, himself, beget? A man infected with a deadly disease is never at ease. Whatever garments he may put on, or at whatever tables he may feast, he is still unhappy because he has the arrows of death sticking in him! Such is a man conscious of sin. Nothing can please him. Nothing can ease him till his sin is removed. But when sin is gone—when he knows that he is pardoned, he is as a bird set free from its cage!

A great fire raged one night in a village and a large thatched mansion, in which a man of God resided, caught fire. It blazed furiously, but he and his wife and the most of his children escaped. Judge of their horror when they counted them over, to discover that one little one was missing. Nothing would content them while that dear child was in the burning house. "Mr. Wesley," his neighbor might say, "we have saved your chest of drawers. We have saved your valuable books from the house." "Ah, but," the good man would have said, "my boy is in danger." What his wife thought of it, when she recollected that little John would be burned to death, I need not tell you. But when, at last, he was lifted out of the window and brought to his parents' arms—then be sure that the good man would gather his whole family about him and bless the Lord, even though all his substance was consumed. Now, when a sensible man's soul is in danger, nothing can content him. He prospers in business, his happy children play around him—but what of these while his soul remains in deadly peril? When once, through pardoned sin, his soul becomes like a brand plucked from the burning, then his daily troubles lose all their weight and his heart is full of joyful song! It is clear to every experienced man that the pardon of sin is an immense comfort because it removes the bitterest cause of distress and alarm.

Next, forgiveness of sin is a comfort of the first order, for, indeed, *it is altogether indispensable*. You may possess every luxury, but you cannot be solidly happy until sin is forgiven. "Why!" says one, "I am really happy and yet I am not pardoned." Yes, but it is a remarkable thing that happy people of your kind are never pleased while they are quiet. They must get up an excitement and dance, or fiddle, or drink, or play the fool in some sort—or they are not happy. I call that real happiness which I can enjoy by the hour together in my room, alone, calmly looking into things and feeling content. I call that real joy which I feel when I wake up at night and, though full of pain, can lie still and bless God for His goodness. It was said of old, "Philosophers can be merry without music" and so can the saints of God! But the ungodly, as a rule, cannot enjoy themselves without external objects to raise their spirits. The truly happy man is

satisfied from himself. A spring within him of Living Water quenches his thirst so that he never feels the drought.

A man cannot be really happy till his sin is pardoned, because sin brings, more or less, a sense of condemnation. Picture a man in the condemned cell. Try to make him comfortable. We provide him with a dainty supper, we sing him gladsome glee, we exhibit fine pictures to him—but he is condemned to die tomorrow and he loathes our feast and our fineries. Bring in a thousand pounds and make him a present of it. He looks at the golden sovereigns and he says, "What is the use of these to me?" Tell him that a rich man has left him heir to a wide estate. "Yes," he says, "but how can I enjoy it? I am condemned to die." He is always in his dreams hearing his death-knell and picturing to himself the dreary scene when he is to be launched into eternity. If you could only whisper in his ear, "Her Majesty has granted you a free pardon," he would say, "You may take away the feast, I feel too happy to eat! All the gold in the world could not make me more delighted than I am now, as a pardoned man." When men have come out of prison, after they have been shut up for years, everything has been a joy to them. Though they went home, perhaps, and found everybody dead whom they once knew, and saw their own hair turned gray through having lain so long in a moldy den, yet the sweets of liberty made the stones of the streets shine as if they were made of gold and the fields seemed like fairyland to them! Such is the joy of pardon when it comes from our God. A man must have forgiveness, or else everything will be emptiness to him—but when he is absolved, he goes forth with joy and is led forth with peace!

Pardon of sins makes all our sorrows light. If a condemned man is permitted to live, he will not ask whether he is to live like a gentleman or like a peasant. When some kind-hearted men struggle to get the life of a condemned criminal spared, the man's friends think of nothing but his life. When a judge sentences a man to penal servitude for life, it may be thought a hard sentence, but you never hear of complaints when a condemned criminal has his life spared—if we find that he is to be kept a prisoner as long as he lives. The heaviest punishment seems nothing *if life is spared.* You heave a sigh of relief to think that the gallows will bear one less sad fruit and you forget all about the servitude or the imprisonment which the convict will have to endure. So, depend upon it, if you get sin pardoned and so are saved from the eternal wrath of God, you will make no bargain with God whether you have meat to eat and raiment to put on, or are left hungry and naked! No, Lord, I will shiver in a beggar's rags with full content if I am but pardoned. I will dwell in prison with a dry crust for my food if I am but delivered from Your wrath! Thus it is clear that the blotting out of sin takes the sting from every other sorrow.

Let me add that it makes death, itself, light! I remember the story of a felon, in those days when they used to hang people for very little, indeed. A poor man, who had committed some offense, was condemned to die. While he lay waiting for the sentence, the Lord sent a choice minister of the Gospel to him and his heart was enlightened so that he found Christ.

As he was on the way to the gallows, what, do you think, was this man's cry? He was overwhelmed with joy and, lifting up his hands, he said many times, "Oh, He is a great Forgiver! He is a great Forgiver!" Death was no terror now that he had found forgiveness through Jesus Christ! Poverty repines not when sin is removed! Sickness frets no longer when conscience is at ease! It may cost you many a pang to feel yourself melting away in consumption, but what does it matter, now that your transgression is forgiven? Every breath may be a labor, every pulse may be a pang, but when sin is forgiven, the Lord has created such a spring of joy within the heart that the soul can never faint!

Yet again, dear Friend, remember that *the pardon of sin is the guarantee of every other blessing*. When Christ said, "Your sins are forgiven you," was there any question at all as to whether that paralytic man would be healed? Certainly not, for the love which had forgiven the sufferer's sin was there to prompt the Savior to say afterwards, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." So, dear Friend, if your sin is pardoned, it is true concerning you that no good thing will God withhold from you who walk uprightly, and that all things work together for good to you who love God, to you who are the called according to His purpose. Everything between here and Heaven is secured by the Covenant of Grace for your best benefit. And you can sing—

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside—
The Law gives sin its damning power
But Christ, my Ransom, died."

You shall never have a need but God will assuredly supply it since He has already bestowed on you the major blessing—the all-comprehending blessing of forgiveness! Covenant mercies follow each other like the links of a chain—"Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Do you think that God forgives men their sins and then leaves them to perish? Such cruel "mercy" would be more worthy of a demon than of the Deity! Pardon is the pledge of everlasting love and the pledge will never be forfeited!

"Alas," cries one, "perhaps, after the Lord has forgiven me, He may yet turn again and punish me!" Listen—"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That is, God never repents of what He does in the way of Grace. If He forgives, He forgives once and for all and forever! It would be blasphemy to represent God as making a transient truce with men instead of an eternal peace! The Lord casts the iniquities of His people into the depths of the sea and their transgressions He remembers against them no more forever. Is not this a blessed act of Grace? It secures the removal of all the evil results of sin and is the guarantee of all that will be needed this side of Heaven, yes, and of Glory, forever! If you do but hear Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven you," you may also hear Him say, "Be of good cheer," for there is everything in the fact of pardon to make your heart dance for joy!

We will not linger longer upon the doctrine, but make our meditation personally practical by pressing home the work of self-examination.

II. So, now, let us consider THE QUESTION, *Are you forgiven*?

Has God, for Christ's sake, forgiven you? "Ah," cries one, "do not judge us!" I shall not attempt to do so, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. "We cannot be sure of our salvation," answers another. Can you not? Then you ought to never be happy, for a man who is in doubt about a matter so vital as this, which involves his all, ought never to enjoy a moment's peace! How can we rest in fear of Hell, in danger of eternal wrath? Do you not long for certainties? A great novelist began a favorite story with the sentence, "What I need is facts." In that short sentence, he expressed the longing of many a thoughtful soul—many of us feel that we need indisputable facts. Our proverb has it, "Fast bind, fast find." Prudent men will take double care about this weightiest of all concerns and will not be content till they are infallibly cured. I will help you to answer this question by remarking that there *is* a way by which we may know if we are not forgiven.

We may know that we are not forgiven if we have never felt that we need forgiveness. Where guilt has never been perceived, it has never been removed. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If I feel that I am as good as most people and, perhaps, a little better. If I try to justify myself and think of gaining Heaven by my own endeavors, then I am under condemnation! God has never healed the man who was never wounded, nor has He made the man alive who was never dead. If you have never been humbled before God so as to acknowledge your sinnership, then you are still abiding under His wrath. Think of that, I pray you, you who are at ease, wrapping yourself about in the garments of your own merits! "Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," you may be sure that, in God's sight, "you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Dear Friend, I hope it is not so with you.

Again, *he has never been forgiven who does not at this moment hate sin*. Jesus never came to save us *in* our sins, but to save us *from* our sins—and wherever He takes away the guilt of sin, He also kills the love of it. Sin never seems so black as when we see it put away by Jesus' blood. At the sight of the Cross, we grow angry with ourselves for having slain our Lord by our transgressions. Never dream that you can be pardoned and then be allowed to live as you did before—the very wish to do so would show that you were still under condemnation.

Again, *you are not forgiven if you have never sought Christ and His atoning blood*. If you have labored by other means to procure mercy, you have not found it, for no one else can give it but the one appointed Mediator. Can your "priest" grant you pardon? Did you offend the priest? Then the priest can forgive you for offending him, but he cannot forgive you for offending God! None but God in Christ Jesus can blot out sin and you must go to Him—and if you do not, you are not forgiven, whatever you may dream.

Once more, *have you forgiven everybody else*? This is a home question to some minds, but remember how necessary it is to answer it.

If you do not forgive everyone his brother his trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you. There it stands, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." If you cannot pardon everyone, no matter how grievous the offense, neither has God pardoned you. A malicious heart is an unrenewed heart. A revengeful spirit is clean contrary to the Spirit of God who passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. This Truth of God may be little preached, but Holy Scripture makes it very prominent and you will be most unwise if in any measure you ignore it. You are not forgiven if you cannot forgive!

Let me now help you, by some positive test, to see whether you are forgiven. Only one is needed—*you are pardoned if you are a true Believer in Jesus Christ*. It is written, "Jesus seeing their faith"—that is, the faith of the four bearers, and the faith of the man who lay upon the bed—said unto him, "Your sins are forgiven you." The poor palsied man so believed in Jesus that his very face beamed with confidence when he came into Christ's Presence and so Jesus, seeing his faith, said to him, "Your sins are forgiven you. "Do *you* believe in Jesus? I know that you believe that Jesus Christ is God and a great Savior, but is this a mere matter of doctrine to you, or do you really believe in him? You know what it is to believe in a man so that you can trust him and leave your affairs in his hands—do you believe in Jesus in this way? That is the faith which saves. When a man believes in Christ so as to commit himself to Christ for salvation, he believes rightly, for believing is but another word for trusting, relying, depending upon!

Do not trifle with this question. It is my hope that you can answer, "Yes, unless I am awfully deceived, I am trusting the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am so trusting Him that I endeavor to follow in His footsteps and to copy His example." Then you are saved, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Dwell on that word, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." If you really trust Christ, though you have only done so during the last hour, your transgressions are put away and your iniquity is covered, for He *immediately* pardons them who come to Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If you have confessed your sin to Him and trusted in Him, you are most assuredly cleansed by His blood!

Now for my last word. It is this. Jesus said, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Come, then, *let us be of good cheer for our sins are forgiven*. Let us be happy. Let us be merry in the Lord. Let us begin to sing for very joy of hearts because our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake! We are very poor, but our sin is forgiven us. We are very weak, but our sin is forgiven us. We are, perhaps, getting very old, and near to our end, but our sin is forgiven us. We are full of infirmity and vexed with temptations, but our sin is forgiven us for His name's sake! "Son, be of good cheer," said the Savior, and shall we be otherwise? What if our room is a very small one—what does it matter—if our sin is forgiven? "Ah, but there is a sick one at home!" "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." You know how the Master, when the disciples found another source of joy, turned them back to this, "Notwithstanding in

this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." And so, when you find a multitude of troubles, follow the same good advice!

Does someone say, "I am head over heels in trouble, for I am in great straits"? Let me lay my hand upon your shoulder and say, "Brother, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." "Oh, but I have very little to live upon!" True, but you have this comforting message, "Your sins are forgiven you." Be of good cheer—your Lord bids you to be so, for your sins are forgiven you!

If you are not happy, it will be disobedience to Christ, for He commands you to "be of good cheer." It will look as if you did not value the blessing that cost Him His blood. "Your sins are forgiven you." It cost Him His life to buy you this redemption—are you going to groan when you get it? No doubt you are pleased to give good things to poor persons and, if so, you like to see their gratitude. I gave something, not many days ago, to a man and he just put it in his pocket and walked off without a word, as if he would say, "I thought you would have given me at least ten times as much." I thought, "If I had seen the way you would take it, my Man, I would not have been in such a hurry with your gift." When you give your children a little treat, you like to see them pleased and thankful. But if they sit down and fret over your kindness, you are disappointed and are in no great haste to indulge them again! Our Heavenly Father's gifts must be valued and delighted in—if He has forgiven us our sins, let us be happy!

"Son, be of good cheer." Have some regard to the outside world, for, if they are pardoned men and women with gruesome countenances, they will infer that there is not much comfort in the Grace of God, after all. "My wife," says one, "declares that her sins are forgiven her, yet I am sure when there is a little trouble in the house she is more downhearted than I am." "There," cries a woman, "my husband tells me that his sins are washed away, but he grumbles and murmurs till we are all made miserable by him!" Do not let it be so. If you have a cross to carry, let us bear it joyfully for Christ's sake. If we have work to do for Christ, let us do it with delight. Let us live to music. Let us march to Heaven to a gladsome tune, rejoicing in the Lord because our sins are forgiven! And let each one of us say—

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 2.

Verse 10. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightaway many were gathered together, so that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them.* It is a very singular fact that although man, in his natural state of heart, is opposed

to the Gospel, yet he is drawn to hear it. Even though he abhors it, yet oftentimes he cannot help listening to it. Wherever Jesus Christ is, whether He is present in Person, or in the preaching of the Word, it will be certain to be heard abroad and multitudes will come to hear. The grandest attraction either in or out of Heaven is still the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

3-5. *And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And then they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.* In Luke's account of this gathering, we read that "the power of the Lord was present to heal them," and when we ask, "Why was that power so remarkably present?" we think that one reason was because there were persons present who were anxious about the good of others. And, today, wherever four persons come together praying for some poor soul, you may rest assured that the power of the Lord will there be present to heal. I do not think that so much of the success of sermons depends upon the preacher as upon those model hearers who are all the while praying for a blessing and who are making other members of the congregation—those who are converted—the constant subject of their supplication. Christ blessed this man because of the faith of the four who carried him and, possibly, because of his own faith.

Notice that our Lord did not at first say to the sick man, "You are healed of your palsy," but He said, "Your sins are forgiven you." This was laying the axe at the root, because sin is at the bottom of sorrow—and where sin is pardoned, even the effects of sin will be removed.

6-9. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts. Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?* Whichever is spoken, Omnipotence is implied. The Presence and Power of God, alone, could give efficacy to either sentence, but to Him, the one is as easy as the other.

10-14. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying they never saw anything like this before. And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of customs, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed him.* There is a change in the method of displaying Christ's power, but His power is always the same. To the palsied man, He said "Arise, and take up your bed, and walk." But to the man engaged in a calling which degraded him, Christ said, "Follow Me" and, "he arose and followed Him." Blessed be God, we still have in

our midst the living Lord who is as able to work miracles of mercy today as when He was upon the earth! And we have not merely to exhort, to persuade and to entreat, though we have to do all that, but we have also to speak with authority in the name of this glorious Son of God and to command men to repent and believe in Him! He is with us, by His Spirit, to make His Word mighty, so that, to this day, palsied men do arise and walk—and sinful men are led to turn from evil and to follow Christ.

15-17. *And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in Levi's house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto Jesus' disciples, How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* For ordinary Christians to associate with those who are like the publicans and sinners of Christ's day might be dangerous, for, "evil communications corrupt good manners," and Christians should be careful as to the company in which they are found. But for Christians to go among such people to try to do them good is Christlike! The Church of Christ always fails in her duty when she looks upon any class of persons as being beneath her observation, or too far gone for her to reach. Our Lord's mission was to find out and to supply the needs of mankind—and He seems to have paid particular attention to the very worst of men because they needed Him the most. And His Church should always be guided in her choice of work by the necessity of the objects that need her care. And Brothers, you and I who are in the ministry will do well to choose not that sphere in which we may be most happy and comfortable, but that one in which we are most needed. If I were a lamp and had my choice of where I would be hung, I should prefer to be hung up in the darkest place in London where I could be of most service. And I think that everyone of us would make just such a choice if we judged rightly and desired to be where we were needed and to do as the Savior did when He was on the earth.

18-20. *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and said unto Him, why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.* While Christ was with His people in Person, they could not help having joy and gladness. But when He was gone from them, they must lament His absence.

21, 22. *No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up takes away from the old and the tear is made worse. And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine does burst the bottles and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.* The bottles were made of skin and the wine put into them must be of a suitable port. To prescribe

fasting to His disciples while He was making them glad with His personal Presence would have been incongruous and absurd. And there are some things that we ought not to expect from young Christians—and other things that we ought not to expect from old and mature Christians. We should not expect to find new wine in old bottles, nor old wine in new bottles. "A place for everything, and everything in its place," is not only a rule for the home and the merchant's counting house, but it is also a rule which should be observed in the Church of Christ, for God, as a God of order, always puts things in their proper places and in due order.

23. *And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath; and the disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.* They had offended the Pharisees by not fasting and now they were offending them again in a similar way, though with reference to a different matter!

24. *And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful*? According to some Rabbis, you might pick an ear of wheat on the Sabbath, but if you rubbed it between your hands, they said that was a sort of thieving which was a kind of labor that must not be performed on the Sabbath. They made all sorts of ingenious restrictions, too ridiculous for us to quote. These disciples were, therefore, according to them, chargeable with sin because they had plucked ears of corn and had performed the operation of threshing them on the Sabbath. And we have some of that sort of folk living now who take the smallest matter, which is altogether insignificant, and in which there is neither good nor harm, and magnify and distort it—and then make a man a grave offender all for next to nothing. We have learned not to be very much troubled by anything that they choose to say.

25-28. *And He said unto them, have you ever read what David did, when he had fled, and was hungry? He and they that were with him? How he went into the House of God in the days of Abiather the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.* He has made it to be no longer a day of bondage, but a day of blessed rest and holy service for God! Works of necessity, works of piety and works of mercy are not only allowed to be done, but are *commanded* to be done upon the Sabbath.

—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.

SEEING GOD'S GOODNESS HERE
NO. 3017

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1876.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."
Psalm 27:13.

WE were favored with very much of God's goodness last Sabbath evening, when we considered the rule of Grace in guiding a Believer's life, namely, that instead of seeing in order to believe, he has learned to believe in order to see. [Sermon No. 766, Volume 13—BELIEVING TO SEE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Unless I had believed to see," says the Psalmist, "I had fainted." And we should never have known true refreshment, nor enjoyed the comforts of the Lord, but should have been full of doubts and distracted with fears if we had not learned the sacred art of believing although we did not see, or even believing in spite of what we did see, or believing in order that we might see—fully expecting that sight would inevitably follow if our faith were but simple and true!

Those of you who were present last Sabbath evening will remember that I restricted my remarks, for the most part, to the one matter of our salvation. I tried to show to seekers that instead of first looking for evidences of salvation and *then* believing in Christ, *they were to believe in Christ in order to obtain those evidences*—that, instead of looking to their repentance and then having confidence in Christ, their *repentance sprang from their confidence in Christ*—that instead of saying, "We are not fully sanctified and, therefore, we fear we are not saved," they were to remember that the certainty of their being saved by Grace, through faith, would be to their minds and hearts, the great motive power by which they would be enabled to obtain that sanctification which cannot be theirs as long as they remain in legal bondage and have doubts about being "accepted in the Beloved." There were some set at liberty last Sabbath evening who had really known the Lord for years but were afraid to say definitely that they had trusted in Christ and that, therefore, they were saved. May God grant that all of us may not only come to Christ, but may we also exercise a simple, childlike faith which takes God's Word as it stands in this blessed Book, believes it, receives it, lives upon it, asks no questions concerning it and will allow none to be asked by others!

On this occasion I propose to make a particular application of the general principle of our text. David was a man of many troubles.

Especially in the latter part of his life, he was incessantly in the furnace and he says that he would have "fainted" under those many troubles if he had not "believed to see," in the particular matter of his trials, "the goodness of the Lord" in that land which is the special sphere of trouble. David believed to see the goodness of the Lord, not only in the Glory Land yonder, but also in this land here below. He believed to see the goodness of the Lord, not merely when he emerged from the furnace, but also while he was in it! As a pilgrim and a stranger, he believed to see the goodness of the Lord during the days of his pilgrimage. He did not always see it, but he believed to see it—he believed in it and anticipated it and, by believing in it—he did actually come to see it with the eyes of his mind and to rejoice in it!

We all know that this world is a very unpromising field for faith. According to our varied experiences, we must all subscribe to the declaration that this earth is, more or less, a valley of tears, that it is not our rest, for it is polluted. There are too many thorns in this nest for us to abide comfortably in it. This world is under the curse, so it still brings forth thorns and thistles and, in the sweat of our brows do we eat our bread until we return to the earth out of which man was at first taken. Were this world really to be our home, it would be a terrible fate for us! If we were always to live in this huge penal settlement, it would be sad, indeed, for us to know that we had continually to dwell where the shadow of the curse always lingers and where we have only the shadow of the Cross to sustain us under it. But faith comes into this unpromising field and believes that she shall see the goodness of the Lord even here! She rushes into the fiercest fight that ever rages, fully believing that she shall see the banner of the Lord's mercy and Truth waving even there. She bears the burden and heat of the earthly toil and expects to experience the loving kindness of the Lord beneath it all. She knows that she will see more of her God in the land beyond the flood, but still, she believes to see the goodness of the Lord even in this land of the living which is so distracted and disturbed with sorrows, cares and trials and tribulations!

I want to show you, first, *that faith is infallibly persuaded of God's goodness here.* Secondly, that *she expects clearly to see that goodness here.* And thirdly, *that it is this expectation and belief which sustain the soul of the tried Believer.*

I. First, then, FAITH IS INFALLIBLY ASSURED OF THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD IN THIS TIME STATE.

She is persuaded of this from what she knows of God, Himself. She could not believe that He could be otherwise than good. She reads the promises recorded in His Word and she believes that they are all true and reliable. She can detect nothing that is unkind or ungenerous in any of them—they are all couched in the softest, gentlest and most consoling words. The language used seems to her to have been selected on purpose to meet her case and to make the promise suitable and sweet to her sorrowing heart. She feels sure that God could not be unkind. With the Psalmist, she cries, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a

clean heart." And though, like the Psalmist, she may have to write afterwards, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well near slipped," yet she stands fast to her first declaration, "Truly God is good to Israel," however much surrounding circumstances may seem to prove the contrary! She knows that from the necessity of the Divine Nature, God must be good to His people both here and hereafter.

When faith turns to the Bible and reads the history of the Lord's people, she sees that God has been good to them. And, knowing that He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," she draws the cheering inference that He will also be good to her. Inasmuch as she can distinctly see that the trials and difficulties of the saints in the olden times always worked their lasting good, she is convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that her trials and troubles, overruled by the same loving Lord who cared for them, will work to her lasting good and that God will bless her, now, as He blessed His saints in the olden time.

Perhaps some of you have faith, but yet possibly through lack of thought, you have not exercised it upon this particular point. If you are given to murmuring against God, you will often think thoughts which you would not like to hear or to see in spoken or written language. If someone should say to you, "God has been very unkind to you. I am sure that you cannot see the goodness of God displayed in your life," you would at once turn round upon such a slanderer and defend the Character of your God from such an unjust accusation! Although you often murmur against the Lord in your spirit, yet, if another person should say in words what you have felt in your heart, you would then see the wickedness of your murmuring and you would also see that in the depths of your soul, there is a firm confidence in the goodness of God to you. You need to stir up that holy fire and set it blazing, so that you may get comfort from its warmth, for it is true and it must be true, that God is now good and always good, and good to the highest possible degree of goodness to all His children in their worst calamities and their darkest seasons of sorrow.

But there are some conditions of life in which it is really a trial to faith to believe in the goodness of the Lord, as, for instance, that *of long-continued, dire poverty*. Some of God's choicest saints are so poor that they not only lack luxuries, but they even lack the very necessaries of life. As a rule, possibly without exception, God does give His people bread and water, but sometimes the bread is only a very small portion and the cup of water—a very tiny one. I have known a child of God, who has said to me, "I have struggled hard against poverty. I have undertaken first, this, and then that, but, in every case, I have failed. My little vessel has tried to enter the harbor of prosperity, but the cruel winds have always driven it back again into the rough sea of adversity. If I had been a spendthrift. If I had been wasteful in the days of my prosperity, or if I had not used my substance for the cause of God, I could understand my failures. If God would again entrust me with ample means, I would cheerfully give to His cause, as I used to do, but, alas, I have not anything left after my daily needs are supplied." Unbelief asks, "can this

be the goodness of the Lord?" But Faith answers, "Yes, it is, and it must be. I would faint in this poverty. I would give up in despair if, under all my trials and hardships, I were not sure of the goodness of God to me! If I were even starving to death, God would still have a good word out of my dying mouth. Even if He should let me die of starvation, it must be right—and He must be good!"

There are others of God's children whose trials come from *constant sickness*. And some forms of illness are so trying that we are apt to ask ourselves why we should be subjected to them. I talked, this morning, with an aged Sister in Christ who, years ago, met with a Providence by which her head was so severely injured that every other day her pain is almost unbearable. She can never go up to the House of God because the sound of the preacher's voice, or of the singing of the congregation would be more than she could endure. When we talked together, gently and softly, concerning the things of God, she quoted to me Psalm 119:75—"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me." If anyone asks, "Can it be the goodness of the Lord thus to keep away one who really loves His House and prizes His ordinances, to send her such sore sickness?" We must reply, "Yes, it must be right. We cannot see how God's goodness can thus be manifested, but we are to believe that it is." I may be addressing some others who are subject to peculiarly trying infirmities, which keep you from the work you love and the field of service where you have long been so happy and useful. Well, dear Friends, in such a case as that, you must believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living in thus making your life to be one of sickness, weariness and pain!

The same rule also applies to *our bereavements*. How mysterious are the dispositions of Providence in this matter! Many whom we cannot afford to lose are taken away from us—while others who seem to do no good—continue to live. Death appears to spare the hemlock and to cut down the oak and the cedar! Where there is a man who only cumbers the ground, he is often allowed to remain, while others who are like pillars of Christ's Church are taken away. I know a little village where there were but a few poor inhabitants and one man of substance whom I very greatly esteemed. Towards the small salary of the pastor in that village, my friend contributed three-fourths, if not nine-tenths. He was the mainstay of that little Christian community. When I found him, last week, very ill with fever, and joined with other friends in earnest prayer that his life might be spared, it seemed to us absolutely essential to the welfare of that village church that he should be kept here at least a little longer. But now that the Lord has taken him Home to Himself, what can we say? We must not begin to cavil at what God has done, but say to Him, We are sure that whatever You do is right. It cannot be wrong, it cannot be unkind! It must be the kindest thing that could have happened, the very thing which we would have wished to happen if we could have known what You know and if we could have formed our judgment upon the same principle as swayed Your Infallible Judgment."

We sometimes fancy that we should like to make a slight alteration in some of the arrangements of Divine Providence. We would not interfere with the great wheels that are always revolving, but just here and there, where a small cog rather inconveniently touches our personal interests, we would like to have it so altered as to let us alone. But, remorselessly, as we sometimes imagine, the great wheels grind on—our comforts are taken from us and our joy is destroyed. What then? Why, let us still say, "Lord, not our will, but Yours be done." And let us kiss the hand that wields the rod as much as the one that bestows choice gifts upon us! It is far easier for me to say this than it is for yon poor widow to carry it out. It is easier for me to say it than it is for that weeping mother who has seen all her children taken before her to the silent tomb. But, my Sisters, my Brothers, if it is harder for you, then so much the more earnestly would I urge you to say it, for the very difficulty of the submission, when you have rendered it, would prove the sincerity of your confidence in your God and bring more Glory to Him! So, as we take our friends and relatives to the tomb and commit the precious dust to the earth, let us still believe to see the goodness of the Lord even there! If we do not look at our sorrows in that light, we shall faint under our repeated losses and bereavements. But if that is the light in which we view them, we shall see a Glory gilding even the graves that cover the bodies of our departed loved ones—and we shall rejoice in the full assurance of the goodness of the Lord to us, and even more to those who have gone to be "forever with the Lord."

Another matter may, perhaps, have greatly troubled some of you, namely, *your unanswered prayers*. You have been praying for certain people for a long time, but so far you have received no answer to your supplications. There is a Brother here who has prayed for years for the conversion of his wife—yet she is still unconverted. If he yields to unbelief, he will have many difficult questions to answer. God has said, "Ask, and you shall receive." You have asked for a thing which, apparently, is for God's Glory, yet you have not received it. And this will sometimes be a staggering blow to the earnest pleader. Some of you have prayed, as I have done, for the life of a friend, or you have sought some other favor from the hands of God, but He has not granted it. I believe there is a Brother here who has carried an unanswered prayer about with him for ten or a dozen years. I have known cases of Believers praying for 30 years and yet not obtaining what they asked for. And some of them, like the worthies of old, have "died in faith, not having received the promises." They have not lived to see one of their children converted, yet their children *have been converted*, and saved through their prayers, too, long after the parents slept in their graves!

In the cases of unanswered prayers, there is always the temptation to believe that God has not been faithful to His promises, that this bitter draught of unbelief is an addition to the sorrow which you feel at your failures at the Mercy Seat. This is the time when you will faint unless you believe to see the goodness of the Lord even now and here! You must feel that, in any case, God's will must be done. You must still continue to

pray, for you do not know what God's will is, but you must pray with resignation, after your Savior's perfect model in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." You will be comforted and helped if you can look upon your unanswered prayers in that light.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, there is another thing that will sometimes press upon you very heavily, namely, *the desertions which occasionally fall to the lot of the Believer as to his communion with God.* Sometimes we are left in the dark. Whether you are, or not, I know that I have been where I could not see sun, or moon, or stars, or even get so much as a look from my Master to cheer my sad heart, or a word from His mouth to make my spirit glad. At such times we must remember that ancient message, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." If you cannot see, you must believe to see. And if your heart feels like a stone, still believe that Christ is your life. And if, instead of holy meditations, your soul is racked with blasphemous temptations and evil thoughts, still hold on to Jesus, sink or swim! If, instead of clear evidences of salvation, you are half afraid that the Lord has forsaken you, and given you up—and you fall into an unbelieving frame of mind—go again to the Fountain filled with blood, that this sin, like all others, may be washed away! Trust Christ all the more "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," for then, "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Those must be strange Christians who never have any conflict raging within their souls. If that is true Christian experience, I wish I could get it—to be always at peace and at rest and never again have to wrestle with sins, doubts and fears! But, Beloved, if we cannot attain to that position—and I believe that the most of us cannot—let us still walk by faith, for, so we shall walk triumphantly even under the discouragements of our inward spiritual conflicts!

One other point I must mention, and then I will leave this part of the subject. To many Believers, the sharpest trials they ever have to endure arise from *troubles connected with the Church of Christ.* What a grief it is to the godly when any portion of the Church of Christ does not prosper—when bickering arises among the members, when one Brother or Sister is jealous of another and when all our attempts to mend the split only make it worse. It must be very trying for some of you to have to go on the Lord's-Day to listen to a minister who does not edify you, but rather provokes you to wrath! Or to attend church meetings, as I know that some do, and find them anything but a means of Grace. Or to have to meet with professors who, in their common conduct and conversation, instead of leading you onward and upward, do you as much mischief as if they were men of the world! It is sad to see even one of God's ministers sound asleep and to see other professing Christians careless and worldly, and to see the whole ship of the Church like the vessel described by the Ancient Mariner—

"As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean"

when there was no motion, no advance. When—

"The very deep did rot."

It is a dreadful thing when there is such a horrid deathlike calm as this! Yet, even amidst such trials as these, we must believe to see the goodness of the Lord. We must still believe that the great Head of the Church has not forgotten her, that in her darkest times He still wears her name upon His heart and that He will yet return to her in mercy, cast out all her enemies, repair her broken walls and cause the banner of His love to float again over her citadel.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, FAITH NOT ONLY BELIEVES IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD, BUT SHE EXPECTS TO SEE IT EVEN HERE

Sometimes, she sees it very soon. God does not guarantee to let His people see here the reason for all His Providential dealings with them, but He does occasionally do so. There is many a Believer who has lived to see the goodness of God to him. Bernard Gilpin's case was a very clear one. As he was on his way to London to be burned at the stake, his leg was broken and he had to stop on the road. He said it was all for the best, and so it was, for, when he reached London, the bells were ringing, for Queen Mary was dead and Queen Elizabeth had come to the throne—so he was not burned! The breaking of his leg had saved his life! Some of us have also seen the goodness of the Lord displayed under very strange circumstances. It was so in connection with that terrible calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. Notwithstanding all the sorrow and suffering that it brought upon us, as we now look back upon it, we see how God, by means of that calamity, called public attention to the preaching of His Word—and I have no doubt, that for every life that was then lost, a thousand souls have since been saved from going down to the Pit—so let God's name be praised for that gracious overruling of a terrible crime! You may not have to wait even a day before you will distinctly see the goodness of the Lord! But you must believe it before you see it. It must be a matter of duty to you to now believe it and then, by-and-by, it may be a matter of privilege to you to see it!

But *faith does not always expect to see the goodness of God here at once.* She knows that this is the land of mist and fog, and she is glad if she can see even one step before her. Yes, and she is quite satisfied to go on even if she cannot see a step before her. She puts her foot down on what seems to be a thick cloud, but she finds the ground solid beneath her. Without seeing where she is going, she takes the next step, relying upon the faithfulness of God—and again she is safe—and so she pursues her way in the thick darkness and with greater joy than those who see far ahead and compliment themselves upon their shrewdness! She knows that the day has not yet dawned, for the shadows have not yet fled away, so, while she is in this mortal state, she walks by faith, not by sight.

Faith understands, too, that *man is not endowed with that degree of judgment which might enable him, at present, even if the light were clearer, to distinctly see the goodness of the Lord.* With such an intellect

as he now has, a child is not likely to see the wisdom of his father in the use of the rod. Even if he is a well-instructed child, he may still scarcely be able to see it. The father is the better judge—he has seen more of life, he knows what the child does not know and foresees what the child does not even dream of! How can I, who can only see a little pool in front of me, judge as to how the Lord should manage the great ocean? Here I am sailing my tiny toy boat upon a pond—am I to lay down rules of navigation for God in steering the leviathans of the deep across the shoreless seas? Here I am, an ant of an hour, creeping about upon the little anthill which I call my home—am I to judge as to how God manages all the affairs of time and eternity? Down, foolish pride! What do you know? You are wise only when you know that you are a fool! But you are such a fool that you do not even know *that* until God teaches it to you! Lie down, then, and *trust* where you cannot *understand*.

Faith also knows that, *at present, she cannot see the whole plan and procedure of God's Providential dealings with men*. We cannot fairly judge the working of Providence by gazing at a part of it. There is an old joke about a student who took one brick to the market in order to show the people what kind of house he had to sell. But who could rightly judge of a house by looking at a single brick? Yet this would be less foolish than trying to judge as to the goodness of the Lord by the transactions of an hour! If, instead of trying to measure with a ruler the distance between Sirius and the Pleiades, we would just believe that God has measured that vast distance to an inch and leave such measurements to the Almighty Mind which can take in the whole universe at one sweep, how much wiser it would be on our part! God sees the end from the beginning and when the great drama of time shall be complete, then will the splendor as well as the goodness of the Lord be seen! When the whole painting shall be unrolled in one vast panorama, then shall we see its matchless beauty and appreciate the inimitable skill of the Divine Artist. But here we only look at one little patch of shade, or one tiny touch of color and it appears to us to be rough or coarse. It may be that we shall be permitted, in eternity, to see the whole of the picture, but meanwhile, let us firmly believe that He who is painting it knows how to do it and that He who orders all things according to the counsel of His own will, cannot fail to do that which is best for the creatures whom He has made and preserved in being!

III. So finally THERE IS A WONDERFULLY SUSTAINING INFLUENCE ABOUT THIS PRACTICAL BELIEF IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

There is a man lying upon the surgeon's operating table and the skillful surgeon has to cut deeply. Why does the man endure that operation? *Because he believes it is for his lasting good*. He believes that the surgeon will not cause him an atom of pain more than is necessary and, therefore, he lies quietly and endures it all. But imagine that any of us were there and that we fancied that the surgeon meant to do us harm instead of good! Then we would rebel! But the conviction that it is all right helps us to play the man and to bear the pain with patience. That should be your attitude towards God, my dear Friend. May your belief in

His goodness enable you to bear the sharp cuts of the knife which He is using upon you!

He must have been a bold man who was the first to plow the ground, all to bury bushels of good, golden wheat in the earth! But nowadays, our farmers do it as a matter of course. They go to the granary, take out that which is very valuable, go off to where they have made the death trench ready to receive it and cast it in there, knowing that unless it is cast in there to die, it will not bring forth fruit. And they believe they will see the fruit that will spring from it! Every farmer, when he sows his wheat, has the golden sheaves before his mind's eye and the shouts of the harvest home ring in anticipation in his ear! And, therefore, he parts with his treasured store of wheat and parts with it cheerfully. So, dear Friends, let us part with our friends, and part with our health, and part with our comforts, and part with life, itself, if that is necessary, believing that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Let me just add that if there is such sustaining power about believing to see the goodness of the Lord even here, *what must result from the still higher belief of seeing the goodness of the Lord in another and better world than this*? The expectation of that bliss may well bear us up on its wings far above all the trials and troubles of this present life. So let us entreat the Holy Spirit to administer to us this heavenly cordial. Then, in the strength of the Lord, let us go forth to serve Him with body, soul and spirit, to the highest degree that is possible to us!

If there are any of you who have never believed, let me just tell you what is necessary before I close my discourse. The way of salvation is this—Believe God's Word. Believe that your Maker cannot lie. Trust His Son, whom He has given to be the Savior of all who trust Him. And rely upon what His Word has declared—"He that believes on the Son *has* everlasting life." If you trust in Christ, even if you have not a fraction of other evidence of your salvation, you are a saved soul on that evidence alone! Cast yourself upon Him and you shall find that declaration to be true to you, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." But if you believe not, remember that this declaration is equally true, "He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." May God save all of you from that awful doom, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 27.

David is in the darkness of sorrow. His enemies are many and mighty and they make a dead set against him and seek to utterly destroy him. But he finds his comfort where every true Believer must always seek his solace, that is, in his God. Thus sweetly does the Psalmist sing.

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*? David leaves the broken cisterns of the earth which can hold no water, and

goes directly to the Divine Fountainhead. He does not say, "Ahithophel is my light, Uzzia, the Ashterathite, is my friend and my joy. He says, "Jehovah is my light." Candles soon burn out, but the sun shines on and, eventually, "the sun shall be turned into darkness," but Jehovah, our God, is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." David does not say, "Joab is the strength of my life. Benaiah and the Cherethites are my bodyguard." He says, "Jehovah is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" It is the height of Christian faith to find everything good in God. And it is an evil hour for us when we begin to trust anywhere but in Him. Build your foundation for eternity on a firm and unyielding soil, O Believer, and let every stone that is laid thereon be quarried from the Rock of Ages.

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* If we are on the Lord's side, discomfiture of our enemies shall be total and final—they shall fall to the ground. They may be very many, and very varied, so as to be described under two names—enemies and foes. They may be very ferocious, so that, like the wild beasts of the forest, they are ready to tear the flesh of their prey and devour it. And they may be able to make such attacks as actually come upon us—but just at the moment when they think they shall be able to swallow us, our God will interpose for our deliverance! It is marvelous how near to the edge of the precipice of ruin the Lord sometimes lets His people go, yet He always delivers them just at the right moment—and causes their enemies to stumble and fall.

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.* True and simple faith in God alone always begets courage. It is the man who is trusting to the creature who is the coward. He who truly trusts in the Creator becomes a hero. Faith is the food upon which God would have His children fed. So, if you would do deeds of daring, lean only upon God—and then you shall have your heart's desire.

4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.* A true Christian is a man of one idea, but that one idea is the noblest that ever possessed the human mind, or influenced the human heart. This idea is one which not only finds a lodging in his brain, but he carries it on in the practice of his daily life—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." And what is that one thing?

4. *That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His Temple.* That is, to gaze upon the mystery of God in Christ, for is not Christ "the beauty of the Lord?" He is rightly called "the brightness of His Father's Glory, and the express image of His Person." So all that we need on earth, or in Heaven, is a perpetual vision of Jesus Christ! "To behold the beauty of the Lord," and constantly to be enabled to present our petitions in His Temple, and to receive gracious answers of peace to our supplications. "Father, my soul would gladly abide within Your Temple, near Your side. But if my feet must depart from there, still keep Your dwelling in my heart."

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* The pavilion was the many-colored tent of the king, embroidered with needlework and richly furnished. It was always placed in the center of the encampment, so that if there were a night attack, the enemy must first break through the ranks of the armed men before reaching the royal pavilion. So the Christian is put into the very center of the Lord's host! God's Sovereignty encloses him and God's angels surround him—and the enemy must first break through the angelic guard and overcome all the heavenly powers—before any Believer can be destroyed.

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.* "The secret of His tabernacle" was the Holy of Holies, into which no man but the high priest ever entered—and even he only entered it once a year! But now the Christian is admitted into the holiest place of all, through the Sacrifice of Christ, and Christ's Atonement and the Sovereignty of God conjoin to make the Christian's position absolutely safe forever!

5. *He shall set me up upon a Rock.* The Rock of ages is immovable. It stirs not in the fiercest storm that ever rages. God is Immutable. He abides the same forever, so that we have three firm grounds of confidence—God's Sovereignty, Christ's Sacrifice and God's Immutability.

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies around me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy: I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* As David's trust was in his Lord, all his praise was to his Lord. And where we place our confidence, there let us also display our gratitude. If we trust in men, it is not surprising if we worship and praise men. But if we trust alone in God, our homage and gratitude will be laid at His feet.

7, 8. *Hear, O LORD, When I cry with my voice: 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.* Happy is the man who has a tender conscience—whose heart is like the waves of the sea which are easily moved by the breath of Heaven—so that when God breathes upon him by His Holy Spirit, his soul is moved and controlled by that Spirit.

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger.* The sharpest trial a Christian can know is to be forsaken of his God. As the very pith of the agony of Christ upon the Cross lay in His being deserted by His Father, so the extremity of a Believer's anguish is found when he, also, has to cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Send us any trial that You will, O Lord, but let us never lose the light of Your Countenance! We are rich in poverty, we are strong in weakness, we are healthful in sickness, we are living even in death while we have our God with us—but if our Lord shall once hide His face from us, we are in trouble, indeed!

9. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, use your past experience to encourage you for the present. Draw arguments from your past experience to use with God in prayer, even as David did—"You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my soul was burdened with sin, You were my Helper. You did

enable me to look to Christ when I lost friend after friend, when I passed through fierce conflicts with the devil, when I was sick, and health and strength failed me, You were my Helper." Many of you can thus look back upon a long life and say to God of it all, "You have been my Helper." And this gives you a foothold in your wrestling with the great Angel of the Covenant—so mind that you grasp Him firmly and say, "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!"

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me.* They are not likely to do that, yet, if they should do so, what then?

10, 11. *Then the LORD will take me up. Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* This is a prayer which all Christians have good need to pray, for there are so many enemies who will, if they can, cause us to stumble. So many who watch for our halting that we need to pray, "Lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies." Yet let me also say to you that it matters not how carefully and warily you may walk, nor how holy you may be—you will be sure to be slandered—yes, and sometimes by Christian people, too! There are always some to tell the lie, and others to repeat it, and some to believe in it, and even to rejoice in it. It would be a mercy if some people had no tongues, for, if they had none, they would commit far less sin than they now do!

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses have risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* David found enemies, as will you—and the holier you are, the more shall you have of them. Birds pick the ripest fruit. The highest towers cast the longest shadows and so is it that the highest holiness is generally the object of the most cruel attacks. Well, what are they to do who are passing through this trial? Do? Why go to their God about it as well as about everything else!

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* With troubles without, and fears within, and slanderers and enemies of all sorts around him, the Christian had almost fainted; but faith puts the Divine smelling salts to his nose and as soon as ever the nostrils perceive the sweet perfume of God's faithfulness, the man is revived! "I had fainted, unless I had believed." So you see that you must do either the one or the other—you must either believe or faint, for, by unbelief and sin, a spiritual fainting fit will soon come on.

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* Wait on no one else! Wait only on Him and then you shall not be discouraged or faint-hearted. Therefore, "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.

THE TRUE LINEAGE
NO. 3018

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.

"And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, More than that, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it." Luke 11:27, 28.

Was this a loving-hearted woman who had been moved by the dear Savior's discourse? Many, doubtless, had listened to the same gracious words—some of them with wrath and others with stern complacency—but it may be that her soul began to swell with holy wonder at the marvelous things which proceeded out of His mouth and her soul felt such an affection for the Man from whom so much of Grace proceeded that she cried, "Blessed is the womb that bore You!" Was it so? Perhaps it was an ignorant but passionate love breaking through all restraint. Sometimes, among our Primitive Methodist friends, we hear the same kind of thing—they get so carried away by the power of the Truth of God which has just been stated that they cannot refrain from crying out, "Glory!" or, "Hallelujah!" Throughout all Wales, this custom, which I am far from condemning, prevails through the whole sermon, often very much to the comfort of the speaker, enlivening him and cheering him on—and making him rise to greater flights than otherwise he might have taken. Perhaps we may look at this interruption of the affectionate woman in that light.

Possibly, however, there was bold, blank ignorance rather than intense affection. Hers may have been a sort of vacant wonder at what she had heard and, involuntarily, she betrayed it with her tongue. So have I noticed, sometimes, when I have been preaching the Word among our Primitive Methodist friends that they have not always put the "Glory!" in at the right place, or the observation with which they have favored us has been as inappropriate as it well could be! Though I have been glad, at times, to hear some emotional response when it seemed to come from true sensibility and was compatible with common sense, I have not been quite so gratified when ignorance has been the prompter. Perhaps it was so with this woman. Such, at least, is the opinion of many sound expositors—and Jesus does not appear to commend her at all. She was a poor ignorant soul who, perhaps, had never listened to any preaching before—and certainly had never listened to such preaching as that of Jesus Christ—and so she cried out, in a sort of stupid wonder, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You."

Anyhow, whichever it might be, this woman was but a specimen of very many in her own age and a representative of many millions in successive ages. She turned her admiration, you perceive, from the Person of Christ to the person of His mother. There was some sort of tendency of this kind on other occasions in Christ's life—and he rebuked it as He did here—for, you will observe, though He says nothing disrespectful of His mother, yet He at once puts the extinguisher upon everything like blessing her as though she were so highly favored above all other Believers in Himself. On the occasion of the marriage in Cana of Galilee, Jesus answered His mother—I will not say roughly—that was not possible for Him—but somewhat sternly when He said, "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." He purposely discouraged what He must have perceived was the natural tendency of people's minds to reverence His mother unduly. And it does seem marvelous to any thinking man that after such words as these of my text, Mariolatry should have prevailed in the Church of Rome to so frightful an extent as it has done and as it still does! Why, for every prayer offered to Jesus Christ, I believe there are fifty, at the present moment, offered to the Virgin Mary. At all events, in the Romanist's rosary, there are nine beads for the "Hail Mary" to every one for, "Our Father."

Observe that she is to be held in profound respect, she is "blessed among women." There should never come from the lips of any Christian a single word of disrespect to her—she was highly favored, she was a sort of second Eve, as Eve brought forth sin, this woman, this second Eve, brought forth the Lord who is our Salvation. She does stand in a very high position, but still, in no respect is she to be an object of worship! By no means is she to be lifted up and extolled as though she were immaculately conceived and afterwards lived without sin and was taken up, as the Papists declare, by a marvelous assumption into Heaven—an assumption, indeed, on *their* part, and nothing better than an assumption, without any foundation whatever in fact! No, Brothers and Sisters, the Virgin Mary was a sinner, saved by Grace, as you and I are! That Savior whom she brought forth, was a Savior to her as much as to us. She had to be washed from sin, both original and contracted, in the precious blood of her own Child, "the Son of the Highest." Neither could she have entered Heaven unless He had pronounced her absolution and she had been, as we are, "accepted in the Beloved." Yet I do not wonder that there was a tendency to exalt her unduly—however, I do marvel much that, after Christ has spoken so plainly and so expressly, men should have had the impudence, and the devil should have had the audacity to delude millions of professing Christians into a worship of her, who is to be reverenced, *but never to be adored.*

If you look at the text, you will see that there is something very beautiful about it. This woman pronounced a benediction upon the Virgin Mary—Christ lifts that off and puts it on all His people. She said, "Blessed is the woman who brought You forth." "Yes," said Jesus, "she is blessed, but (in the very same sense) they are blessed who hear the Word of God, and keep it." Thus, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever blessings pertain to Mary, pertain to you and pertain to me if we hear the Word of

God and keep it! Whatever we may suppose to have been the mercies comprehended in Mary being so highly favored a person, those very same mercies are yours and mine if, hearing the Word of God, we truly keep it.

I. It is supposed by many and very naturally, that it would have been a delightful thing to have been the mother of our Lord, BECAUSE THEN WE WOULD HAVE HAD THE HONOR OF THE CLOSEST ASSOCIATION WITH HIM.

To have seen that Infant in His cradle and nursed Him upon one's knees. To have marked the ripening years of the Holy Child, to have observed His gracious words, His holy piety, His complete obedience to His parents. To have remained with Him the 30 years which, doubtless, Joseph and Mary spent with their honored, glorious Son, must have been no small blessing! The same spirit, you know, comes out in Mrs. Luke's pretty hymn, such a favorite with our dear children, which we all of us love to sing—

"I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men—
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me—
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

Yes, many a mother might feel that to be kissed with those little lips, to have had her neck surrounded by those blessed arms, to have had her eyes looked into with the love-flashing eyes of such a Child as that would have been a gift to be craved for every day! Well, so it looks, Beloved, and yet, if we come to think rightly of it, the illusion is quickly dispelled. It was a high privilege to be associated with Christ, but, unless spiritually sanctified, it was a solemn responsibility sinking the soul deeper in guilt, rather than raising it higher in sanctification! Let me venture to remind you of one who had the very closest intimacy with Christ in the days of His public ministry. He was so trusted by the Savior that he kept the little treasury in which Christ put, when there were any, the excessive gifts of charity. He was the treasurer of the little company—you know him—Judas. He had been with Jesus almost everywhere. He had been His familiar friend and acquaintance and when He dipped the bread with Him in the bowl, it was but an indication of the close association which had been preserved between the Divine Master and a vile creature who was utterly unworthy of such a privilege! There was never such another "son of perdition" as Judas, the friend and acquaintance of Jesus Christ. Never has any other man sunk so low in the depths of Divine Wrath, with so huge a millstone about his neck, as this man with whom Christ took such sweet counsel and went to the House of God in company! The same sun ripens the corn and the poppies. This man was ripened in guilt by the same external process that ripened others in holiness.

It is not, then, after all, so great a gift, looked at as a natural blessing. But, whatever the blessing may be, it is open to every Christian spiritually. Beloved you may have an acquaintance with Christ if you are His people! Quite as near and far more enduring than any acquaintance

which His mother could have gained by merely dandling Him on her knees, or supplying His needs from her breasts! Today you may talk with Jesus, you heirs of Heaven! Your Divine Elder Brother's company is free to you—you have but to go to Him and He will bring you into His banqueting house and His banner over you shall be love. Still is His left hand under the head of His saints, and His right hand does embrace them. There are dearer things than ever the Infant Christ could give to His mother! There are kisses of His lips more sweet, more spiritual than any which Mary received. You have but to long for them and to pine after them and, when you get them, you have but to prize them and you shall have them every day! I trust, Beloved, some of us need not cry with the spouse in the Song, "O that you were as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you," for we can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His…Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." I say, then, that all the honor of associating with Christ may be had, at the present moment, by His people! The sweetest of fellowship can be enjoyed by us in the highest and purest sense, so that the blessing which Mary had is ours and we may say, with Christ, "Yes, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it."

II. Again, it is naturally supposed, by some, that it must have been a sweet thing to be the mother of our Lord BECAUSE THEN WE WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH HIM AND HAVE KNOWN MORE OF HIS HEART.

If He had any secrets, surely He would confide them to His mother! There must have oozed out, in His private life, some things which men did not see in public. Perhaps there may have been something which He could not very well unveil to the gaze of the millions which would be perceived by Joseph and by His admiring mother. She was behind the scenes. She had the benefit of looking into His very heart in a way in which we cannot do. Well, there may be something in that, but I do not think there is much. I do not know that Mary knew more than others—what she did know, she did well to lay up in her heart—but she does not appear, from anything you read in the Gospels, to have been a better instructed Believer than any other of Christ's disciples. And we have no indication of her having made any extraordinary advances in the spiritual instruction which her Son had given.

But certain is it that, whatever Mary may have found out, you and I may find out now—not naturally, but spiritually. Do you wonder that I should say so? Here is a text to prove it—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." I remember also the Master's words where He said, "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." No, so blessedly does this Divine Revealer of secrets tell us what is in His heart that He keeps back nothing which is profitable to us—and can say to us as He said to His disciples—"If it were not so, I would have told you." Christ keeps nothing back from His chosen. Between the heart of a true saint and Christ there are no secrets!

We pour our hearts into His heart and He pours back His heart into ours. Does He not, this day, manifest Himself unto us as He does not unto the world? You know that He does! And therefore you will not ignorantly cry out, as this woman did, "Blessed is the womb that bore You," but you will intelligently bless God that, having heard the Word, and kept it, you have, first of all, as true a communion with the Savior as the Virgin had, and you have, in the second place, as true an acquaintance with the secrets of His heart as she can be supposed to have obtained!

III. Further, perhaps a more common remark is this, "I wish that I had been Christ's mother, so that I MIGHT HAVE NURSED HIM AND SUPPORTED HIS NEEDS, watched Him in His weakness, put Him to His rest and heard the first lisps when He began to speak. Oh, it would have been something to have said, when I was in Heaven, that I had nursed the One who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers, that I listened to the cry of His Infancy and relieved His needs."

Well, that would be something, but let me say to you that you may have it, Beloved—every child of God may have it! Christ is still on earth—not as to His bodily Person, but as to His mystical Person—and you may still nurse that mystical Person. We, ministers of God, are we not nursing fathers unto the Church of God? And you, each of you, in your sphere, as you teach the ignorant, guide the wandering and comfort those that are bowed down, are hearing the plaintive cry of a suffering Savior! And you are, with the breast of your consolation, supplying the needs of His yet infant Church. Perhaps it is better, and far nobler, to have the honor of nursing Christ's mystical body than it was to care for His corporeal frame because there is a much wider range here. It was but a little cup He needed. If was but a morsel and a drop the Savior sometimes needed. But now His great body, stretched as it is from Japan to America—His great body, found as it is in every part of this world—His great body, found in yonder sick one, in yonder poverty-stricken ones, requires vastly more and, therefore, of your substance you may give more, yes, your whole strength you may offer up, that you may feed Him and supply His spiritual needs! Whatever honor, then, the Virgin had in this respect, Christ's pure virgins may still have if they will wait upon His Church and minister to it of their heart's substance—

"Jesus, poorest of the poor
Man of Sorrows! Child of grief!
Happy they whose bounteous store
Ministered to Your relief.
Jesus, though Your head is crowned,
Crowned with loftiest majesty,
In Your members You are found,
Plunged in deepest poverty.
They who feed Your sick and faint
For YOURSELF a banquet find!
They who clothe the naked saint
Round YOUR loins the raiment bind."

IV. It may be very possible that some others have looked at it in another way. They have said, "Blessed is the womb that bore Him, and

the paps that gave Him suck, for had it been our lot to be His mother, then we believe HE WOULD HAVE BEEN READY TO HEAR OUR CRY, for a son cannot surely resist the prayer of His own mother. And when a mother says, 'My Son, help me, I am sinful. I believe in You, help me. When she cries out to Him whom she had conceived, 'Help me, blot out my sins,' why surely Jesus would heed, with ready ear, and say, ' Mother, your sins are forgiven you.'"

But, Beloved, this is only our fancy, for Christ is just as ready to save *any* sinner in this place as He was to save His mother, for it is His greatest delight to see a sinner, with tears in his eyes, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." If I had power to pardon you, I think you know how cheerfully I would do it. Oh, could I break your hearts and bind them up again, God knows that I would not let this night pass without doing it! And do you think that my Lord and Master is less loving than I am? You feel, if He were here tonight, and you were His mother, that He would be sure to hear your cry and answer you. But Jesus Christ said, on one occasion, as He looked upon the crowd gathered together, when someone said to Him, "Your mother and Your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with You"—what did He say? "Who is My mother? And who are My brethren?" And then He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." And you, if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not stand second to His mother! No, shall I not say it? You shall even have the preference! Christ was preaching and they said, "Here is your mother." Did He stop to attend to His mother? No, but first He would feed His disciples! First He would teach them! And so, Sinner, you shall not be second to the mother of the Savior! Do but cry to Him now! Oh, that the Holy Spirit might show you your lost state, reveal to you your need, and put a penitent cry into your mouth for, when you can cry, "Jesus, pity me and save me," you may cry to Him with the greatest confidence, for—

"He is able, He is willing,
Doubt no more!"

You need not seek to move His heart with many cries, for His heart is moved already! He loves the sons of men. His delights are with them. You cannot do Him a greater service than by letting Him save you. Submit yourself, with all your emptiness, to the fullness of His unspeakable compassion! Is there not a thought here that might woo some—I am holding it now like a loadstone—is there no metal here that will be attracted by it? The love of Christ to His people, to poor sinners who seek Him, is as great as any love He ever had to His mother—and even greater! You may come with boldness to Him, though you never sought His face before!

V. Again, I think some have thought that if they had been His mother, THEY COULD HAVE COME TO HIM WITH GREATER EASE.

"It is so easy to speak to one whom we know. We are not at all afraid to tell our needs to one who has been so near to us as Christ was to His mother." Yet I would have you remember that Christ, as the Son of God,

was not the Son of Mary. Christ, the Divine Savior, was no nearer to Mary than He is to us. Christ was merely the Man Christ that was conceived in her womb, or that sucked at her breasts and, therefore, in His Divine Person, He towers as much above her as He does above us! And then, though He was born of the substance of His mother, yet was He of our substance, too, for He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—a Man, such as we are. If He were an angel, being of a different kind, we might be afraid to come to Him, but He is a Man, He has a man's emotions, a man's heart, a man's compassion, a man's love and we need not be afraid to come to Him! What though He was not born of us, yet is He of us. Though we are not His mother, yet, we are His brothers and sisters. So let us come boldly to Him. Sinner, you have as much right to come as Mary had. She had none except what Divine Grace gave her—you have the same. Did Christ ever cast away one sinner who came to Him? No. Did He ever reject one that was ever brought to Him? There was a woman taken in adultery and she did not come willingly, but they brought her to Him, thinking, "Surely, Christ will condemn her." What was the result? After driving all her adversaries away, He said to her, "Go, and sin no more," And so will He say to you if your doubts and trembling and fears should bring you to Him. When He casts one soul away, then let other souls be afraid to come to Him, but while my blessed Master stands with open arms and takes the foulest, and vilest, and poorest to minister unto His love, I pray you stand not back through shame or fear! As much as if you were His mother and He your Child, come to Him, for He invites you to come, saying, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." With tearful eyes He entreats you to come to Him— and if you will not, He does but relieve His heart by crying, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!"

VI. Perhaps, if you will think this over, you will see much more that is beautiful. I am sure there is no topic more consolatory than that which my text contains. THE VERY BLESSING WHICH BELONGED TO THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF JESUS BELONGS TO EVERY SOUL THAT HEARS GOD'S WORD AND KEEPS IT.

Now you hear it. Do you hear it with your inside ears—with the ears of your heart? And when you hear it, do you keep it in your memory? Do you keep it in your faith? Do you try to keep it in your obedience? And are you daily testifying to its truth? If so, all these blessings are yours and let me say to any trembling, awakened, convicted sinner—all these blessings may be yours if you hear the Word of God and keep it tonight! Here are one or two words of God that I want you to keep—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Will you not come and reason with God and talk this matter over? You have heard the Word, I pray you to keep it, that is, to *obey* it. Here is another message from the Word of God—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came

into the world to save sinners." You have heard that—keep it! Believe that although you are a sinner, He came to save you. Rest in it, trust in it. Here is one more, and I pray you, as you hear it, keep it—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." You have heard it—now keep it. To believe is to trust. Trust Christ now! I pray God to constrain you to do it before you pass those doors. Fall flat on your face upon Christ's promise! As for your own righteousness, away with it to the dogs! No prayer, no tears, no vows, no sighs of yours can do anything in the matter! Trust Jesus Christ wholly, now! And then if you have heard that Word and shall thus keep it, go your way, and let Satan say what he will and let the flesh make what noise it pleases—Christ has blessed you and you are blessed! He has said to you, sinners as you are, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." When you and I get to Heaven, may we find it to be so! May we glory there and sing as loud a song as even Mary did when she said, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden"—for all generations may call that one blessed who has sought and found the Savior! O Beloved, even in Heaven, that song of Mary shall make a sweet song for us all! May we begin to sing it here and Christ shall have the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Luke 11:14-54.

Verses 14, 15. *And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spoke and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casts out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.* One would hardly have thought that they could have gone to such a length as that—but when men hate Christ, there is nothing they will not say against Him. It is no subject of surprise when great heresies arise, for they are the natural outcome of human enmity against Christ and His Truth. People in such a state of heart will say anything. They will give utterance to thoughts that you could not have imagined would have entered any human brain—it is the enmity of the heart to Christ that produces this blasphemy of the tongue!

16. *And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven.* "You are working this work from beneath," they said, "now do something that is really from above." They must have known that the casting out of the devil was from Heaven, for Satan would never cast out Satan!

17, 18. *But He, knowing their thought, said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.* That was a very good and sufficient answer to these cavilers. It is a comfort to us to know that any error is very vulnerable—there is always a weak point about it. In this case, Christ permitted it to turn its sting upon itself.

19. *And if I, by Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges.* For some of these men had

sons who either did really cast out devils, being disciples of Christ, or else professed to do so, being exorcists, pretending to a power they did not possess. In either case, the argument was good as against the objectors.

20-22. *But if I, with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils.* This is how Christ drives out the devil by sheer force of arms—He overcomes him and drives him out. He does not cajole him, invite him, or persuade him to go, but He fights with him, puts forth His Omnipotent Power against him, overthrows him, takes away his armor and divides the spoil. Were you ever conscious of such a fight as that? If not, be afraid of your so-called reformation, for there is no true reformation and no true conversion in which there is no conflict between Christ and Satan!

23, 24. *He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me scatters. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man.* This is the kind of "conversion" which is not genuine—"when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man"—"gone out" on his own accord—and he may do that. He may leave a man, for a while, with the evil purpose of getting him more completely into his power afterwards. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man."

24. *He walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house from where I came out.* It was his house all the while! He left it voluntarily—he was not driven out by force—he simply left it for a time in order that he might return to it and retain it the more completely. Now he goes back to it.

25. *And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished.* There has been a reformation of a sort—the man has given up drunkenness, left off swearing and become, in certain respects, a better man. The house is swept and garnished, but there is no new tenant of Mansoul—there is no Christ come to take possession of Heart Castle.

26. *Then he goes, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* It often happens that when men make a profession of reformation and then relapse into their former state, they become far worse than they were before. The so-called "reformation" is all of their own doing—or rather, the greater part of it is the devil's doing. The demon within the man voluntarily went away and now that he is back, he brings with him "seven other spirits more wicked than himself." And so the man is more than eight times worse than he was before the demon left him for a while!

27, 28. *And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You. But He said, more than that, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* The enthusiastic woman was so carried away with admiration for Christ

that she thought His mother was a highly-favored woman and she called her, "blessed." "Yes," said Christ, "she is blessed, but still more blessed are they who have the Word of God in their hearts, who regard it as their own, and keep it as a great prize."

29. *And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign.* Look back to the 16th verse—"Others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven." Christ had answered those who imputed His miraculous works to Satanic agency—now He answers these others.

29, 30. *And there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the Prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation*. Jonah rose, as it were, from the dead, for he was buried in the deep, in the belly of the whale! And Christ was buried in Joseph's tomb, yet He came back from the grave on the third day.

31, 32. *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here*. The Resurrection would make Christ the most conspicuous sign of God's Presence among the people! It would be the testimony of God to His Son that He was, indeed, the Messiah.

33-35. *No man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light, but when your eye is bad, your body is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness*. If your religion is irreligion, if your hope is a false one, if your highest aspirations are untrue, what is your position in the sight of God? Where are you?

36, 37. *May your whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle does give you light. And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat.* It was often a matter of marvel to the onlookers that Christ went among publicans and sinners—but is it not a greater wonder that He went among Pharisees? If they asked Him to their houses, it was usually because they hoped to entangle Him in His talk, yet the condescension of our Master is so great that again and again, "He went in, and sat down to meat."

38. *And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not just washed before dinner*. Not because Christ's hands needed washing, but because it was the custom of the Pharisees to wash before eating, and our Lord broke through the customs as He was known to do, for He cared nothing for their inventions!

39, 40. *And the Lord said unto Him, Now do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. You fool, did not He who made the outside make the inside, also*? "One needs washing as much as the other. You

are so careful of your hands—will you not be more careful of your hearts?"

41. *But rather give alms of such things as you have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.* "When you are full of love to your fellow men, and make a practice of helping them, you have cleansed your heart from selfishness and have really washed yourself."

42. *But woe unto you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* How many, in these days, are very particular about very little things, but very careless about great things? They would not violate the law of their sect or party for the world, but the Law of God is of small account to them.

43. *Woe unto you, Pharisees! For you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.* They loved to be called Rabbi, Learned Doctors of the Law. Any title that made them appear great was very sweet to them.

44. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.* Nobody but Christ knew how base they were. They were fair to look upon, but He knew that they were villainously hypocritical and He, therefore, denounced them. Ah, dear Friends, the great matter is to have Grace in the heart—to have the Divine Light within in the soul—but if we have not this, vain is a fair profession, vain is everything that comes from man! If we are to be saved, we must have the Grace that comes from God alone.

45. *Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto Him, Master, thus saying you reproach us also.* There was no great difference between the scribes and Pharisees and the lawyers, as this man evidently perceived, and as our Lord also soon confirmed by pronouncing upon them the same kind of, "Woe," that He had pronounced upon the other false teachers!

46. *And He said, Woe unto you also, you lawyers! For you load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.* Their regulations as to moral and ceremonial observances were like huge bundles of firewood or crushing burdens bound together and made into a weight intolerable for any man to carry! Many of these rules, by themselves, were grievous enough—but all together they formed a yoke that neither the people nor their fathers could bear. The scribes, Pharisees and lawyers piled the great load upon them—but none helped them to sustain it, nor offered to relieve them of any portion of it. "You load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers."

47, 48. *Woe unto you! For you build the sepulchers of the Prophets and your fathers killed them. Truly you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and you build their sepulchers.* They pretended to have such regard for the holy men of the past that, being unable to honor them in person, they would set up

monuments to their memory and adorn their resting places with tokens of respect.

Out of their own mouths our Lord condemned these hypocrites—"Truly you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers." In effect, Jesus said to them, "You confess that you are the sons of the murderers of the Prophets. That admission carries with it far more than you imagine. You are their sons, not only by birth, but also by resemblance—you are veritable children of those who killed the Prophets. If you had lived in their day, you would have committed the crimes you pretend to condemn."

49-51. *Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them Prophets and Apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute, that the blood of all the Prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, which perished between the altar and the Temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.* The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Truly, the blood of the martyrs was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood. It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the Gospel by the Apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Church—and for the gathering out of those who recognized the Crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful ending which the Savior foresaw and foretold.

51. *Woe unto you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered.* This "Woe" is similar to that pronounced upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, and it was a terrible charge to be brought against them by Him who could read their hearts and who could truthfully say to them, "You have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered." They ought to have helped men into the Kingdom. Instead of doing so, they hindered those who were entering. Are there not false teachers, nowadays, who put stumbling stones instead of steppingstones in the way of those who are entering the Kingdom of Heaven?

53, 54. *And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things: laying wait for Him and seeking to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him.* Thus they proved the truth of the accusations that He had brought against them! But all their plots and traps were in vain until the hour appointed for His great Sacrifice to be offered on Calvary.

—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 HUNGRY FILLED, THE RICH EMPTIED
NO. 3019

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1906.

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"He has filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich He has sent away empty."
Luke 1:53.

Divine Providence is like a wheel and as the wheel revolves, that spoke which was highest becomes the lowest, and that which was lowest is elevated to the highest place. It seems to be one of the works in which God delights to cast down the lofty and to lift up the lowly. He hurls down princes from their thrones and lifts up beggars from the dunghill! "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." Like the woodman with his axe, the Providence of God is cutting down the high and goodly cedars while making trees that were dry and withered, fruitful. That which is full, God empties. And that which is empty, God fills. That which is something, He makes to be nothing, and that which is nothing, He makes to be something. That which is reckoned the wisdom of this world, God makes to be utter folly, but base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen that He may elevate them and crown them with His Glory.

I am going to take our text as one instance of the general Providence of God and to use it, first, in reference to sinners. Then in reference to saints and, lastly, in reference to saints in their capacity as workers for Christ.

I. First, then, WITH REFERENCE TO SINNERS it is true that, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."

"*The hungry*" *are the poorest of the poor*. When a man is homeless, he is poor, but he may still have something in his purse with which to supply his present necessities. When a man is penniless, he is certainly poor, yet he may have just satisfied the cravings of his hunger and before the time shall come for another meal, he may be able to procure it. But when the hour has passed in which the man should have refreshed himself and he is liberally hungry, yet has no means of getting food, then he is one of the poorest of the poor! There are thousands in London who are very poor, but still, they are not actually hungry. They are brought down to poverty, but yet, by some means or other, they are able to get their daily needs supplied. The hungry man is worse off and he represents the lowest degree of *spiritual* poverty. When a man has lost all his former treasures of self-righteousness, when he has no merits, no

strength, no might whatever—when he is entirely empty and his soul craves for what it cannot find in itself, nor earn of itself, nor by any possibility procure by its own merit or power—then is the man in the lowest state of spiritual destitution. And when he is brought to that state, then may he expect, in his experience, the fulfillment of the first part of our text, "He has filled the hungry with good things."

More than that, the man who is hungry is not only abjectly poor, but *he feels his poverty in a way that does not permit him to forget it*. The man who has but few clothes upon his back may, by reason of the genial weather, scarcely realize that he is wearing the garb of poverty. A man who sleeps in a miserable hut may seldom have been better housed and, therefore, may scarcely recognize that he is dwelling among the very poor. But he that is hungry has internal evidence that will not allow him to deny, nor even for a moment to forget, his destitution! So is it with certain sinners. They have within them an insatiable hunger which causes a desperate unrest. There is no peace for them—neither by day nor by night can they be at ease. Their sins haunt them and the fear of punishment dogs their heels. They long to find mercy, but know not how to seek it rightly. They would be thankful, indeed, to be saved from the wrath to come, but they wonder whether salvation is possible for them. They know they are guilty in the sight of God yet, possibly, they feel grieved to think that they do not feel as much grieved as they should—and are vexed to think that they are not more vexed on account of their sins! All this shows very clearly how utterly destitute they must be, and how truly they may write themselves down among the spiritually "hungry."

I hope I am now addressing some who are in this condition. Dear Friends, you are well aware that there is no good thing in you, yet you wish there were. Sometimes you fear that you have not even the desire to be right. To be able to confess your sins with a proper tenderness of conscience seems to be a task beyond your powers. You say that you wish you could repent and could believe—but I think you *are* repenting and believing all the while! But even if you are not, this only proves how abjectly poor you are spiritually and how far you have gone astray from God—and how lost, how undone you are! And then comes in this blessed message of our text, "He has filled the hungry"—that is, such sinners as you are, so full of needs—"He has filled the hungry with good things."

How is it that the hungry get filled while the rich are sent away empty? I think it is, partly, because *the hungry are not to be satisfied with anything but bread*. There are many in the world who spend their money for that which is not bread—and they are content with an unsubstantial diet. But a really hungry soul knows that it needs bread and will not be put off with anything else. When a soul really feels the pressure of sin, it needs to have it pardoned, and it will not be content with anything less than pardon. It needs peace with God, and it will never rest till it gets it. The soul that once hungers after God, the living God, will not be put off with ceremonies and so-called "sacraments." It needs Christ, Himself! It needs to hear Him say, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven; go in

peace." You can pacify those whose desires are only whims, but when men's desires are based on such voracious appetites as the hungry have, you cannot satisfy them by the clatter of plates and dishes, or the rattling of knives and forks, or even with the sight of food. They must have it to *eat*—they will not be put off without it! They cry until they get it and, therefore, they get it, for God hears their cry and grants their request. If a man's prayer is of such a character that only Sovereign Grace, real pardon and true salvation will content his soul, then he shall not be put off with anything else, but he shall have that for which his soul craves. Such a man prays with one of our hymn-writers—

"Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear.
Hear my never-ceasing cry,
Give me Christ, or else I die!
Lord, deny me what You will,
Only ease me of my guilt!
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ or else I die!
You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe—
Lord, I know You cannot lie.
Give me Christ, or else I die!"

How vain a thing it is for a man to boast of the privileges he enjoys rather than of the use which he has made of them! How many say, like the Jews of old, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these," because they think they belong to an orthodox denomination or they are members of a church which is correct in its creed, or they attend a ministry which God has greatly blessed to the salvation of souls. Ah, Sirs! But if the Creed is not believed in your heart, and if the ministry is not blessed to you, your boasting is as vain as that of one who was clothed in rags, died in poverty, but who boasted of the wealth of London! Or of the man who shut his eyes, but who, nevertheless, boasted of the light that shone upon his countenance. Unless you *use* your privileges. Unless you get through the external husks into the very spirit and kernel of them, instead of boasting, you have reason to be ashamed and to hide your heads! But the truly hungry soul is not satisfied with privileges and opportunities—he wants Christ! To sit in a place of worship to hear a Gospel sermon, he counts to be a favor, for he is very humble, but it is a favor that cannot content him. His soul cries, "Lord, give me Christ! Give me salvation! Give me assurance to know that my many iniquities are cast behind Your back, to be remembered against me no more forever!" He cannot be content with anything short of a full Christ for his poor empty spirit!

Further, a hungry soul is likely to get the blessing it craves *because it is an importunate soul.* You know that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His parable of the widow and the unjust judge, set forth the prevalence of importunate pleading with God. And, on another occasion our Lord used the figure of one who, though not himself hungry, was able to satisfy the hunger of a friend who had unexpectedly called upon him when he had

nothing to set before him. But, by his importunity, he obtained for his friend the food that he needed. Yes, and let a man really have the fear of Hell before his eyes and a sincere desire for reconciliation with God—let his soul be really hungering after peace with God through Jesus Christ—and he will be at Mercy's door both night and day! He will hammer away at the knocker and give God no rest until He puts forth His hand and gives the Bread of Life to that poor starving suppliant. Yes, it is holy importunity that wins the day—and the spiritually hungry man gets the blessing because his importunity gives success to his pleading with God!

I feel sure that there are some in this place who, knowing their need—being painfully conscious that they have no good thing of their own—are hungering after eternal life. I trust that this hunger will grow into a craving that will never be satisfied until you get what your spirit wants. I pray God that you may never be comforted till Christ comforts you—never get peace till He becomes your peace, never feel that you are safe till you get into the very heart of Christ—and never suppose that you are clean till you are washed in the Fountain filled with His blood! Beware of getting peace apart from Christ! Always be afraid of a hope that is not grounded upon Him, for it is far better to continue to hunger and to thirst than to be satisfied with the dust and ashes of this world's religion, or this world's pleasures! O you hungry ones, hear the words of the text and be encouraged—"He has filled the hungry." Look at that blessed word, "filled." He has not merely given them a little refreshment, or administered some temporary consolation to them, but, "He has *filled* the hungry"—given them all that they can wish for, all that their souls really need! Turn to this blessed Book of God and see what promises are there for needy souls. Do they need pardon? There is plenteous forgiveness! Do they need adoption? "They shall be My sons and my daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Do they need comfort? There is the Holy Spirit, Himself, to be their Comforter. Do they need anything on earth or in Heaven? Then it shall not be denied to them, seeing that, in giving Christ to them, God has given them all things! "He has *filled* the hungry."

It is a blessed thing to see the man who was once spiritually hungry, after he has had his soul filled by God. How he rejoices! He dances like David did before the Ark—no, more than that—his soul seems as though it would dance into Heaven itself with glorious leaps of overwhelming joy! As Christ is mine and Christ is All, I have in Christ all that I can ever desire! It is a blessed fullness, a Divine satiety, a heavenly satisfaction which the Lord gives to us when He makes our youth to be renewed like the eagles by filling our mouth with good things!

We must notice one other word in the text. "He has filled the hungry with *good* things." I shall not be altering the text, but only giving its true sense if I say that He fills the hungry soul with the best of things. They are positively good and they are comparatively good—better than all the good things of the world. And they are superlatively good, for even Heaven, itself, has no better things than God gives to poor hungry souls when they come to Him by faith in Jesus. We are apt to think that if men are starving, the most common kind of food will do for them as long as

they are able to keep away from death's door—but it is not thus that God deals with the spiritually hungry. He spreads the table bounteously, royally, with the best of food and fills the hungry with good things—not simply with *a* good thing, but the word is in the plural, "with good things." Their needs are many, so the mercies given to them shall also be many! Their needs seem to be as many as their moments, but the mercies of God exceed their utmost needs! All their capacious souls can wish, they shall find in Jesus Christ, who shall be their All-in-All.

The text, you observe, refers to the past, but it may be taken for granted that what God did yesterday, He will do today—and what He does today, He will do forever, so far as it is necessary and right. And as He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," all the blessings that He gives to His people shall be continued to them as long as they need them. Some of us can say that we were filled with these good things 20 years ago, and we have never again hungered as we hungered then. The Lord has satisfied our souls by giving us Christ—and we are fully content with Him! His own word is true to us, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." God is still filling the hungry with good things. There are many in this house who can testify that in answer to prayer, they have had their griefs relieved and heavenly comforts granted to them and, poor Sinner, God is willing to do the same for you! If you are hungering and thirsting, come unto Him, for there is as much Grace in Him today as there ever was! So come, just as you are, and trust Him—rely upon Him and you, too, shall be filled with good things!

The other half of the text, in its reference to sinners, I shall touch upon very briefly—"The rich He has sent away empty." Oh, how many sinners there are who think themselves rich! According to their own valuation, they are rich in merit, but the Gospel has nothing to do with merit! It only deals with misery and, therefore, it sends them away empty because it does not conduct its business on the lines that they approve. There are many sinners who are so rich in their own estimation that they will not take Christ and His Cross for nothing. David knew enough to say to the Lord, "With the froward You will show Yourself froward. For You will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks." If a man thinks that he is so good that he does not need the Gospel, God regards him as so vile that the Gospel brings no message of mercy to him until he humbles himself and repents. Jesus said, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Of all the sins that can happen to us, perhaps the deadliest of all is that of not being conscious of having any sin. A good old Scotchman used to say that there was no devil in the world so bad as having no devil at all, and that not to be tempted was the worst sort of temptation. I agree, and not to be conscious of any sin is, perhaps, to be at the furthest point from God to which any human being can go, for, the

nearer we are to God, the more conscious we are of our own shortcomings and the more earnestly do we struggle to overcome every atom of sin which we discover to be within our souls.

"The rich" are those who are far from being hungry—they have enough, and to spare. Instead of going down upon their knees, like beggars, to ask mercy from God as a charity, they talk proudly about what they *deserve*, what good deeds they have done and what they mean to do in the future and, therefore, they thank God that they are not as other men are.

Now, what becomes of these sinners who think themselves so rich that they have no need of the good things with which God fills the hungry? The text does not simply say that they are not fed. It does not say that the door of Mercy is shut in their faces, but it says that they are sent right away from Mercy's door because they have no right to stand there! Why should a man be allowed to pray when he has nothing to pray for? These rich people are sent away from Mercy's table because they do not want to feed on Mercy's fare. Why should they sit there and uselessly occupy places where hungry ones might sit and feast? So they are sent away.

And, mark you, it is an awful thing to be sent away from the Gospel. And it is a remarkable thing that the only people who are sent away from the Gospel are those who consider themselves spiritually rich. You who think yourselves so excellent, moral and amiable. You who cannot see any fault in yourselves. You who think you are going to Heaven because of your good deeds—the Gospel not only does not open its door to you, but it even sends you away from its door! And how does it send you away? The text says, "The rich he has sent away *empty*." Empty even of what you once thought you had! I only hope that the gracious meaning of the text may be fulfilled to some of you and that while listening to the Gospel, you may be made to feel that, after all, you are not spiritually rich, but that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." It will be the best day's work that was ever done for you if you are brought to realize your true position and come to Christ confessing your abject poverty! For, as Joseph Hartwell says—

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."

We know what happened to the two debtors. [See sermon Number 3015, Volume 52—THE TWO DEBTORS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." But if they had had anything with which they could pay, there would have been no forgiveness vouchsafed to them. Oh, for such an emptying that you may afterwards be filled with good things!

But there are some who are sent away from hearing the Gospel with the same conceit of fullness as they had before—and they are allowed to remain empty without discovering their true condition. This is a dreadful state for anyone to be in—to go on deceiving one's self and thinking all is well for time and eternity—and only to find out one's fatal mistake where

the discovery will come too late! "Woe is me," cries the self-righteous professor, when he wakes up in the world to come and finds that he is shut out of Heaven—"Woe is me that I should ever have fancied that I had a sufficient store of good things for eternity, yet now I have not so much as a drop of water to coat my tongue and I am tormented in this flame! Woe is me that I am banished forever from the Presence of God, and from the glory of His power—'sent away empty!'"

O my dear Hearers, may this text be fulfilled to you in a gracious sense, and not in this sense of terrible justice! One of the two it must be, for if you are "rich" as the text uses that term, you must be "sent away empty" in one sense or the other. I pray that instead, you may be filled with good things because the Spirit of the Lord has caused you to hunger and thirst after righteousness!

II. I shall now briefly use the text WITH REFERENCE TO SAINTS.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if your experience at all tallies with mine, I think you will have found that the first clause of this portion of Mary's song is most true to you in your spiritual experiences. I find that whenever I am hungry—that is to say, conscious of my utter unworthiness, weakness, insignificance—then it is that Christ is most precious to me. The promises are peculiarly sweet, the Covenant of Grace is a dainty morsel and the assembling of myself with the Lord's people brings me to the King's banqueting table! Is it so with you? When you are hungry, do you get filled with good things? You remember when you were under the Lord's chastening hand and much broken in spirit through bodily pain, how precious that promise was, "You will make all his bed in his sickness"? You were laid aside both from the means of Grace and the cares of business life—and your soul had time for thought and meditation—and in its hunger, the Lord was made very sweet to you. You remember when you were poor, some years ago, when you had to live from hand to mouth, what blessed times you had with your Lord and Master?

You are supposed to be better off now, but you are really worse off if you do not have so much of Christ as you had then! You used to, then, take the promise, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" in a more literal fashion than you do now. A message which came to your soul with quickening power was this, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You were hungry then, so your Lord filled you with good things. Every now and then the pangs of this hunger seize us—our spirits sink, our confidence grows dim through the smoke of our sin and we get such a sense of our sinnership as we have not had, perhaps for months. We feel as if we ought never to have made a profession of religion. We are so ashamed of ourselves that if we could ship with Jonah to go to Tarshish, we would be glad to flee from the Presence of the Lord and from the presence of His people, too! At such a time as that, if we hear a Gospel sermon preached to the very chief of sinners, if the preacher opens his mouth wide concerning Sovereign Grace, and forgiving mercy, and the cleansing

power of the precious blood of Jesus, oh, how welcome the message is to us! We go to the sanctuary, not to criticize the preacher, but to seek spiritual food for our souls—and if the preacher does the work which God gave him to do, we are filled with good things!

But, on the other hand, those who reckon themselves to be spiritually rich are "sent away empty." Yes, "sent away empty" from a full Gospel! How many people there are who have such peculiar tastes—they call them such *refined* tastes—that there are only one or two ministers whom they can hear in a radius of twenty miles! It is a sure sign of a bad spiritual appetite when you must always have little dainties all to yourself, or, in other words, when the old-fashioned Truths of God become distasteful to your palate. There are two things that I always like to see on the table—whether at breakfast, dinner, or tea—they are never out of place. And those two things are bread and salt. And the old-fashioned Gospel, like bread and salt on the table, ought to be in every sermon! And those whose souls are in a right spiritual condition will always want to hear it. There are some who crave fancy cookery—this dish must be prepared after the Plymouth fashion and that dish must be spiced according to some other mode. And if it is not made according to the last new fashion in theology, there are some who cannot feed thereon. Oh, to be brought down from such richness as that and to be made spiritually poor! I am sure that our Bibles would be a hundred times richer to us than they are now if we were a hundred times poorer than we are—by which I mean that the Bible would be more truly to us what it really is if we had a truer sense of what we really are. As we went down in our own esteem, it would go up, and the Doctrines of the Bible, the Promises of the Bible—yes, and even the Precepts of the Bible—would possess a wonderful sweetness to us if we had a greater spiritual hunger. Solomon said, "The full soul loathes honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." There is such a thing as getting full of our own graces, full of our own prayers, full of our own sermons, full of our own good works, full of ourselves—and what state can be worse than this? It is being blown out almost to bursting. Then, Soul, empty yourself of yourself! And when you think of yourself as you ought to think, you will abhor yourself. You will see no good in yourself whatever, but you will see the black fingerprints of your fallen nature even upon the bright alabaster works of Divine Grace within your soul—and you will mourn over even your best things because you have defiled them. When we become thus empty, God will fill us with good things.

III. Now, lastly, I believe, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that our text is true WITH REFERENCE TO CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CAPACITY AS WORKERS FOR CHRIST.

Give me hungry dogs to hunt with and give me really hungry workers to work with for the Lord Jesus Christ! I mean, men and women who are dissatisfied with the present spiritual condition of the nominal Christian Church, dissatisfied with the progress that is being made, earnestly longing for something better, determinately set on doing something that shall be for God's Glory and the good of the people—crying and sighing

for the conversion of souls, not satisfied with ones and twos, but wanting to see the Kingdom of Christ come in all its power and the will of God done on earth as it is done in Heaven! Give me men who will not slumber although the professing Church of God slumbers! Men who cannot rest because sinners do not find rest in Christ! Men who have no peace because Christ has not become the sinner's peace! Give me such men, for they will be filled with good things. A Church that longs for the blessing and will not be content without it, will get it, but, on the other hand, the "rich" church which says, "We have got the blessing. We are doing very well. We cannot see anything in which we could improve—we preach the Gospel, we have all the usual agencies, they are all conducted with propriety and with a measure of success. Everything goes on exceedingly well. On the whole, we, perhaps, are ahead of the rest of the churches—we ought to let well enough alone and not try to get up excitement, or be seeking after what is not attainable and attempting such great things that we are pretty sure to fail in our attempts." Such "rich" people will be "sent away empty."

Self-satisfaction is the death of progress. Contentment with worldly goods is a blessing, but contentment in spiritual things is a curse and a sin. What did Paul say? "Not as though I had already attained." Some of us think, "If we could get as far as Paul did, we would be satisfied." But Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained," and then he added, "Forgetting those things which are behind"—why, some of us wish we had such things to remember! But he wished to forget all that he had done and to think only of what *remained to be done*—"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Oh, for this sacred forgetfulness, by way of contentment, of all successes and achievements so as still to be pressing forward! I would that every Believer had, for the Glory of God, that spirit which is never satisfied, but always cries for more! I would have the hearts of Christians insatiable as death and the grave, for how can we stand that men should be forever lost? How can we be quiet while Hell is being filled and souls are perishing day and night? How can we be at ease while God is blasphemed, while Christ is unknown in a great part of the world, and where He is known, He is not loved? How can we be contented while the black Prince of Hell seeks to steal the crown rights of King Jesus? Contented and satisfied? Never! Until all over this, our highly-favored land, Christ shall reign as Sovereign Lord! No, not then, nor till in every continent and island the nations of the whole world shall have heard the Gospel and vast multitudes have prostrated themselves at Messiah's feet in loyal and loving adoration!

Up, saints of God, from your resting places of inglorious sloth and begin to cry aloud, and spare not! Come to God's Throne with a sacred spiritual hunger, for thus shall the Church of God be filled with good things! May God, in His Infinite Mercy, bless this message and HIS shall be the praise and Glory forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 1:26-56.

Verses 26, 27. *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary*. It was by the temptation of an evil angel that man fell and Paradise was lost. It was, therefore, most appropriate that good angels should be sent to announce the coming of the Restorer, through whom Paradise is regained. "Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth." Christ's coming to earth must be announced in the lowliest of cities and He must be born in the small Judean town of Bethlehem. But it was also decreed that He must die at Jerusalem—in the metropolitan city. Mark the simplicity, and yet the sublimity of the arrangement by which the meek and lowly Savior was to be born in our nature. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin, whose name was Mary.

28, 29. *And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this was*. The best of news may sometimes cause the greatest trouble of mind and heart. If you feel troubled when you receive a message from God, do not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened to you. See how Mary, who was told that she was to receive the greatest honor and favor possible to a mortal being, was troubled by the angel's speech, perplexed by his extraordinary salutation.

30. *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God*. If we have found favor with God, there is no cause for us to fear. If God is gracious to us, we are raised above all reason for alarm. Some court the fickle favor of men but even if they gain it, they may well fear that they may shortly lose it. But the angel said, "Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God." And having found that favor, she would never lose it.

31, 32. *And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great.* How true is that prophecy—"He shall be great." Christ is the greatest of all great ones. How great He is in our esteem! The tongues of men and of angels could not tell all His greatness! "He shall be great."

32-37. *And shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, your cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived*

a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible. It seemed meet that the Gospel dispensation should thus begin with two great wonders. The age of wonders has opened upon us now that the day of Grace has dawned. Now shall the barren woman keep house and be the joyful mother of children according to the ancient prophecy.

38. *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word*. Oh, that we all had such a spirit of submission as she had, that we might be willing to place ourselves absolutely at God's disposal, for Him to do with us as He pleased!

38. *And the angel of the Lord departed from her*. His mission was accomplished, so he might go back to the Glory from which he had come at God's command.

39-43. *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 Zachariah, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me*? The most gracious people are always the most humble people. This question of Elizabeth, "Why is this granted to me?" has been one that we have often put concerning ourselves. She was the older woman of the two, but she felt herself highly honored by this visit from her younger relative whom the Lord had so wondrously favored. It is well when Christian people have a high regard for one another and think less of themselves than they do of others whom God has especially favored. It is one of the traits in the character of God's true people that they have this mind in them—while they who think themselves great prove that they are not the Lord's. If you think much of yourself, He thinks little of you.

44, 45. *For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed.* Not only Mary, who believed the angel's message, and was, therefore, blessed, but everyone of us who believes in God may share in this benediction!

45, 46. *For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said.* This humble Jewish maiden was a woman of great natural ability. This song of hers is worthy to be sung throughout all ages. It is true that it is mainly taken from the song of Hannah and other songs of devout persons in former ages, but this shows how Mary had studied the Word of God and laid it up in her heart. The best preparation that you young people can have for the highest honor and service in your future life is to bathe frequently in the Word of God and to perfume your whole life by a familiar and accurate acquaintance with Scripture Truths. Nothing else can make you so pure, or so prepared for all service which God may yet have for you to perform.

46. *My soul does magnify the Lord*. That is a good beginning. Mary does not magnify herself in her Magnificat, she has nothing to say concerning her own dignity, though she was of a noble lineage. But she sang, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

47. *And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior*. She needed a Savior as much as we do, for she was a sinner like ourselves. And though she was blessed among women, she here indicates that she owed all that blessedness to the Grace of God, who had become a Savior to her, as well as to us.

48. *For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden.* The family from which Mary sprang had become poor and she dwelt in lowliness at Nazareth.

48, 49. *For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name*. She was indeed a blessed woman to have such holy thoughts, such reverence for God, such a true idea of His might and majesty—and of the marvelous favor which He had shown to her.

50. *And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation*. Remember this, it was not mercy to Mary only—it was mercy to us, and mercy to all who truly trust the Savior in whom she trusted!

51. *He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*. Sometimes we read of God's "finger." That refers to a part of His great power. At other times, we read of His "hand." That is a more brilliant display of His power. But here, as elsewhere, we read of His "arm." This is the majesty of His Omnipotence. Pharaoh's magicians told the king that it was the finger of God that worked the plagues of Egypt, but it was with His outstretched arm that He divided the Red Sea and overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts. Mary felt that in the work of salvation we see God's arm—not merely His finger, or His hand.

52. *He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree*. This is what God is constantly doing—casting down the high and mighty ones and lifting up the meek and lowly!

53. *He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty*. They who are self-satisfied shall sooner or later be cast out, but those who look to God, alone, and are hungry after Him, shall be satisfied with His favor.

34-56. *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.*

—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.

END OF VOLUME 52.